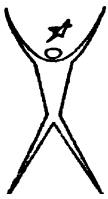


# The Talwars of Pathan Land and Subhas Chandra's Great Escape

BY

BHAGAT RAM TALWAR



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*Dedicated*
*to my brother*
*Martyr Hari Kishan*

# FOREWORD

Bhagat Ram Talwar, the author of this volume, and the patriotic Pakhtun family to which he belongs occupy an honoured place in the history of our freedom struggle against the British raj. His second eldest brother, Hari Kishan, was hanged in 1931 for making an attempt on the life of the Punjab governor and for killing, in selfdefence, a police officer following that incident. His father, Gurudasmal, was also an ardent nationalist and a living inspiration to his patriotic sons. He too died a premature death as a result of the persecution inflicted on him by the imperialist masters. All seven brothers too had their share of suffering and imprisonment at their hands. Bhagat Ram himself had served a prison term during the civil disobedience movement as a loyal soldier in Abdul Ghaffar Khan's Khuda-i-Khidmatgar legion and on coming out had plunged himself headlong into the struggle of the oppressed kisans of the area. This brought him in touch with the Kirti Kisan Party of the Punjab and soon after he joined the Kirti group of communists led by Teja Singh Swatantra, which was a part of the Communist Party of India.

A well-documented account of Hari Kishan's trial and the vindictive persecution of Gurudasmal and the whole Talwar family based upon court proceedings and judgement, reports in contemporary newspapers and the evidence of other friends and revolutionaries constitutes the first part of this volume.

The second part which is actually the main part of the book gives out for the first time an authentic and almost hourly account of the final lap of Subhas Chandra Bose's thrilling escape in January 1941 from India, across the tribal area, to Afghanistan and his extremely hazardous stay there for almost two months before he finally left for Berlin via Moscow. The first account of the escape had, of course, appeared in February or March 1946 in a series of articles by Uttam Chand in the

*Hindustan Times.* The latter was, for some time, Subhas Chandra's host at Kabul, whose help Bhagat Ram was forced to seek under the precarious circumstances described in this book. Uttam Chand's account also had appeared in various other journals, including the special Subhas number of the Hindi weekly *Abhyuday* edited by Padma Kanta Malaviya (Vol 40, No 6, 6 May 1946). A shorter account of the escape by the present author had also appeared serially in the weekly *Blitz* in five instalments from 9 March to 7 April 1968.

Apart from providing a much more detailed account of that period, this part also includes, for the first time, its aftermath, i.e. an authentic account of the subsequent contact maintained with Subhas Chandra Bose after he had left Kabul.

And all this comes from one who happened to be throughout Subhas Chandra Bose's sole loyal companion and guide—Bhagat Ram Talwar.

Though the literature of *Subhasiana* is already considerable and still growing, no apology is therefore needed for adding to it this indispensable volume.

*New Delhi,*
*5 March 1976*

CHINMOHAN SEHANAVIS

## PREFACE

Three and a half—in fact, nearly four and a half—decades have passed since the events dealt with in this volume. As one intimately bound up with most of these events, therefore, I owe an explanation to the readers for this delay in publication of this volume.

What had happened was that I had started with the second part of this book dealing with Subhas Chandra Bose's escape to Afghanistan up to the time of his leaving Kabul. Even so, I did not hurry with the work though, all along, I had kept, as the readers will observe, detailed notes about the daily, almost hourly happenings during those thrilling days. Rather I thought it wise to wait and let their significance sink into my mind before setting about this task. Any way, the relevant account was at last got ready by 1961 and handed over to Netaji Research Bureau of Calcutta. As, however, its publication was being delayed, I allowed it to be published serially in the weekly *Blitz* from which a Bengali version was prepared a few years later.

Meanwhile my brothers and other members of my family who had also played a vital role in helping me to keep contact with Subhas Chandra Bose after he had left Kabul pressed me to include this story of the aftermath in my proposed volume together with an account, at the outset, of our family including its two martyrs—my father, Gurudasmal, and my second elder brother, Hari Kishan. The whole thing had, therefore, to be planned anew and relevant material had to be collected over the years before it could be put into a proper shape.

Unfortunately, before all this could be done and the volume published, my eldest brother, Jamuna Das, whose interest in its publication was perhaps the keenest as also Teja Singh Swatantra under whose direct guidance I had worked during

those difficult days, passed away suddenly. I have hardly any words adequate enough to express my anguish on this account.

To members of my family, numerous friends and comrades who had helped me and fought alongside me during these difficult years, to others like Niranjan Singh Talib, Achhar Singh Cheena and Dr Sisir Kumar Bose, whose interviews or writings I have used in the Appendix, Chinmohan Sehanavis who helped me in the preparation of this manuscript, and others who helped in its publication, above all to my party—the Communist Party of India—I offer my sincere gratitude. But for their unstinted help, this book would never have been published.

*New Delhi,*
*12 March 1976*

BHAGAT RAM TALWAR

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PART ONE

# THE TALWARS OF PATHAN LAND

# The Pakhtun Land and Her People

On the railway line to Peshawar, Attock is a small station on the left bank of the Indus. From here across the river one can see a whole range of barren mountain stretch far into the beyond. Attock itself is on a plateau. Close by stands an imposing fort still proclaiming the vanished might of the great Mughal, Akbar. The Indus here flows into a narrow gorge and the ripples of the meandering river glide over huge boulders and touch the massive walls of the fort. Across the river almost opposite the fort is the small village of Khairabad.

The Indus is spanned by a bridge at Attock and the train after crossing over it passes through a long tunnel to Jahangira which is the first village of the Pakhtuns for a visitor from the south.

The Pakhtuns of central Asia are an ancient, sturdy and proud people mentioned in the Rig Veda three thousand five hundred years ago. They inhabit a vast stretch of land between the river Amu (or Oxus) in the north and the Indus in the south. Time and again the Pakhtuns defended this sacred land of their birth with utmost courage against all invaders from the days of Alexander the Great up to the time of the British. And though due to its geographical position their land had been repeatedly overrun by conquerors, they never accepted the bondage of the foreigners for long and rose against them, again and again, till they were free. The stories of their heroism and gallantry are indeed legendary and historians of different times and climes have borne testimony to their remarkable simplicity, great courage and determination. Thus, an old Turkish writer describes the Pakhtuns as clean in body and soul and simple and unassuming in habits and work. Sayyid Jamaluddin Afghani says, "They are a brave people and redoubtable in war. They will never tolerate foreign domination over them. Their loyalty to their leader is exemplary. To turn back in a fight is like death

to a Pakhtun." Colonel Holdrich says that the Pakhtuns are a freedom-loving people who are always prepared to lay down their lives for the freedom of their country and Colonel Nelson writes: "The Pakhtuns are large-hearted, liberal and lavish in the treatment of their guests and visitors." While the great poet Iqbal thinks that the Pakhtun land and the people constitute the heart of Asia, their own great Pashtu poet, Khushal Khan Khatak, who fought valiantly for the freedom of his people against the mighty Aurangzeb, ends one of his famous poems with these flaming lines:

*Ah God! Grant honour, concord, sweet refrain,*
*And old Khushal will rise, a youth again!*
*Sweeter to him is death than any life*
*Missing the spur of honour, the thrill of strife;*
*In life, in death, let honour be his guide,*
*So shall his memory in the grave abide!*

One of the cardinal principles of life in the Pakhtun land is indeed 'Azad Usa, Azad Mar Sha', that is, 'Live as a free man, die as a free man'.

A few miles north of Khairabad mentioned earlier we come across another small village on the bank of the river Kabul. This is Akora, the birth-place of the great poet Khushal. Beyond Akora, and on the river Kabul is Nowshera which used to be a big military cantonment during the British raj. A few miles north-west of Nowshera begins the hilly terrain leading on to the wellknown Khaibar Pass. Through this historic pass had come Alexander the Great, Babur, the founder of the Mughal empire in India, and the marauding Ahmad Shah Abdali and from our side the great Asoka had sent his bhikshus through this pass to preach the noble principles of pancha shil to warring nations. Free and independent tribes of Afridis, Orakzais and Shinwaris have their homelands around this pass. The British carried out systematic raids here but failed to annex these lands to their empire.

From Nowshera cantonment a railway line branches off towards the Malakund Agency area in the north. Four miles from Nowshera on this line is Risalpur which used to be one of the largest air bases of the British in this area. Five miles north of

Risalpur is the small village of Rashkai, also on the same branch line. From this village a foot and cart track takes us to a smaller village Ghalla Dher which is where we shall stop now to take up the thread of our story.

# Genesis of the Talwars of Ghalla Dher

Ghalla Dher is a small village in the heart of the Pakhtun land, now in Pakistan. This village of hardly seven hundred houses is about six miles from the district town of Mardan. They are mostly kutcha mud houses belonging to poor Pakhtun peasant-tenants of a big nawab and only one or two pucca houses of bricks and mortar. The peasants here toil hard all the year round on small patches of land owned by the nawab and try to eke out a precarious existence with whatever produce of their labour is left after the nawab, his henchmen and the moneylenders have had their pick. Besides the houses the village comprises of fertile agricultural plain land in this rugged border region of the Pakhtun land and stands at the confluence of the two rivers, Bhallar and Kalpani.

At the time we are speaking of the retail trade of Ghalla Dher used to be in the hands of a few Hindu families. There was also a pucca house belonging to a Hindu khatri family which owned some land and had taken to farming as a profession. This family of the Talwars was destined to play an unforgettable role not only in the struggle of the local peasantry against the rapacious nawab but also in the larger sphere of national struggle of the Indian people for freedom from foreign bondage.

Most land in this village, at one time, used to belong to individual cultivators. How this ownership later passed into the hands of the nawabs is a story of sordid deals between the nawabs and the British. Qader Khan, the nawab of Toru which is a small town about three miles from Ghalla Dher, helped the British with men, arms and money in their war against the Sikhs. The British after establishing their raj in this region, conferred jagir rights on their loyal ally. And the land revenue imposed by them was so heavy that small holdings became a burden on the impoverished peasantry. The nawab, in collusion with the British, saw his chance and worked through his agents

to grab the ownership of the entire land belonging to these cultivators. From then on the nawab of Toru became the overlord of Ghalla Dher and treated the villagers as serfs.

The ancestor of the Talwar family who first struck roots at Ghalla Dher was Sardar Jassa Singh. He migrated from Bhera-Miani in the Punjab and settled down in this village during the struggle for supremacy in the Punjab between the British and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Pakhtun land, at that time, was infested by dacoits but Jessa Singh who had training in the use of fire-arms undertook the task of uprooting the menace from this area. This he did with a large measure of success and brought peace in the area, of course, with the help of other men of good will of the surrounding locality.

Sardar Jassa Singh had taken up farming as his profession and later his son, Diwan Chand, also followed in his footsteps. He was hard-working and peasants used to come to him with their problems for advice. He became a fairly prosperous landowner, but due to his honesty and sociable nature was widely popular among the people of the area. Even the poor tenants of the nawab would sometimes come to him with their complaints and take from him medicines about which, it seems, he had some knowledge.

Diwan Chand's growing affluence and popularity caused intense jealousy in the mind of Nawab Qader Khan of Toru. After his death his brother Mohabhat Khan inherited the gaddi. Karim Khan, the younger brother of the new nawab, was a notorious bully and exploiting the protection of the British he used to carry on loot, arson and even murder in the area with impunity. He conspired with the nawab to have Diwan Chand moved out of the way in order that they might grab his property. So at the head of a gang of local hoodlums Karim Khan one day set out for Ghalla Dher at the dead of night and on reaching Diwan Chand's residence one of them knocked at the door and asked Diwan Chand to come with him as his father required urgent medical assistance. But as soon as Diwan Chand opened the door the gang treacherously pounced on him and began to stab him. He was a brave man but unarmed and he never expected that the brother of the nawab himself would thus come to murder him at the head of a gang of dacoits.

Meanwhile his wife, Laxmi Devi, heard the noise and apprehending danger hid her son, Gurudasmal, who was barely two and a half years old, in a heap of cotton in a corner of a room. The dacoits broke open the door and looked for the child in order to finish him too. But Laxmi Devi did not lose her nerves and calmly said that her son had gone to the next village with her sister. They plundered the house taking with them all jewellery and ornaments that they could lay their hands on but the child was thus saved. Diwan Chand died of his wounds three days later at the hospital at Mardan.

# Gurudasmal and His Family

The child grew up to be a man and soon after took over complete charge of the property of his forefathers from his sister's husband who had been looking after it since Lala Diwan Chand's tragic death. But this was not all. For the conditions prevailing at that time in the neighbourhood of Ghalla Dher were anything but normal. Brigandage and murder had cast a dark shadow over the entire area. As police help was not forthcoming in an adequate measure notorious dacoits, particularly the three brothers—Suleman, Ismail and Zarin—could, with impunity, terrorise the people by their continuous depredations, murders and forcible collections of a part of the produce of every peasant as ransom.

Young Gurudasmal, however, flatly refused to submit to all this and challenged the outlaws who were wanted by the police for numerous criminal activities to do their worst. One day he encountered the infamous brigand Zarin when the latter was coming back with his booty after a dacoity, overpowered him and handed him over to the police. Zarin was tried and sentenced to fourteen years' rigorous imprisonment. Soon after Gurudasmal and his friend Mohammad Azam Khan came face to face with Ismail while returning to Ghalla Dher from Mardan. He too was captured but was let off with a warning not to persist in his criminal activities in future. However he soon broke his promise and had eventually to be captured by the police with the help of Gurudasmal and sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment. Soon after this, Suleman, the third brother, too, got arrested during a dacoity and later died in jail. The government highly appreciated the services of Gurudasmal in helping to rid the locality of this scourge of dacoity and issued him licence for keeping fire-arms.

Developments all over the Pakhtun land, however, were soon taking a different course. For while sending the dacoits to jail

the wily British, on the other hand, were all the time tightening their grip over the entire Pakhtun land. They were indeed too clever for the simple and generous Pathans who were outwitted and gradually pushed to the wall as a result of British perfidy as also their superiority in modern arms. And so ensued the unequal but heroic struggle of the Pakhtuns against the hated Feringhees in which hundreds of Pakhtuns laid down their lives to save the honour of their sacred land. The names of such martyrs and heroes of freedom struggle are enshrined for ever in their memory and serve as a perennial source of inspiration to all Pakhtuns. Thus Ghazi Mohummad Akbar Khan, General Mohammad Ayub Khan, Ghazi Mohammad Jan, Ghazi Umrao Khan, Ghazi Ajab Khan Afridi, Ghazi Mahsal Khan Swat Sahal, Haddi Sahal, Badhi Mullah Saheb, Haji Saheb of Tarangzai, Mullah Pewanda Saheb and Fakir of Ippi will always occupy a special place of honour in their heart alongside Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his brother.

Gurudasmal had been brought up in the feudal tradition of the region and soon came to be widely known as a true Pakhtun who rigorously followed the code of honour and customs of the Pakhtun land. He also continued the tradition set by his father of always taking up the cause of the people, particularly the downtrodden peasantry of the area. But with the intensification of the British suppression of all rights and freedoms which the Pakhtuns had always enjoyed, he soon turned bitterly anti-British and began to cherish a burning desire to work for the freedom of the motherland. He started subscribing to Tilak's *Kesari* and reading books and pamphlets propagating nationalist views on Indian problems. In 1921 he along with his wife, Mathura Devi, attended the Congress session at Ahmedabad. There he was so impressed by the speeches of the national leaders that after his return he started distributing Congress literature among his friends and relatives and indeed ran a one-man campaign on its behalf. From then on he regularly attended almost every session of the Congress.

Meanwhile the national movement in India was fast gathering momentum and the demand for complete independence was daily becoming more and more irresistible. To disrupt the surging movement by holding before it a vague and distant promise, the

British government decided to send a royal commission to India under the leadership of Sir John Simon to devise some sort of a constitution for India. Such however was the temper of the country that wherever the Simon Commission went, it met with huge hostile demonstrations asking it to go back. This very often led to clashes where people got shot or beaten up. Even a leader of such national eminence as Lala Lajpat Rai was thus so severely wounded that he died a few days later. All this naturally roused the people all the more and the Congress on 31 December 1929 resolved to set complete independence of India as the goal of our national movement.

It was during these days that Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan of the village Utmanzai (Hashtnagar) of the North West Frontier Province of India first came up as the unquestioned leader of the great Pakhtun people. He carried the message of national independence now propounded by the Congress to the remotest corners of the Pakhtun land and organised the famous 'Khudai Khidmatgars' which was, indeed, a marvel of a volunteer organisation.

Of Gurudasmal's nine sons and a daughter the eldest, Jamuna Das, after passing his matriculation examination had joined the D.A.V. College at Lahore but in March 1928 he quit his studies to look after family matters. The second, Hari Kishan, left his studies when he was at school and plunged into the national movement as a full-time worker of the Red Shirt or Khudai Khidmatgar volunteer brigade. The third, Bhagat Ram, i.e. myself, also became an active worker of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha while studying at Har Bhagawan Memorial High School at Ferozepur. Later I, too, joined the Khudai Khidmatgar movement as a volunteer. The others were younger but as the years passed all the brothers and, in fact, all members of the Talwar family served as loyal soldiers of the great battle for independence of our motherland and as a consequence underwent immense sufferings in the process.

# Father Prepares Son for Martyrdom

By the beginning of 1930 both Hari Kishan and myself were drawn into what has been described as the third great wave of our national struggle (1930-33) as full-time workers of the Red Shirt movement. Dressed in red uniforms and under the leadership of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan we carried the message of complete independence of India to the remote villages of the province and from hundreds of demonstrations, processions and meetings served notice on the British rulers to quit. They, in turn, let loose violence on the unarmed Pakhtuns at Peshawar and in other places and hundreds of them were shot down and thousands put into prison.

By the middle of 1930 both of us were arrested. I was sentenced to 1½ years' rigorous imprisonment and sent to Peshawar central jail. But as the jails were overflowing with political prisoners the government started releasing some of them after making them sign a form in English which was actually an undertaking not to repeat the offence. Hari Kishan not being conversant with English was persuaded by the authorities to sign this form and was, therefore, released. When Gurudasmal came to know this he scolded Hari Kishan saying that he could not forgive his son for offering what amounted to an apology. Hari Kishan tried to convince his father that he had actually been tricked into signing it but Gurudasmal continued to blame him and said that he should have followed in the footsteps of his younger brohter, Bhagat Ram, who had not signed the form and was, therefore, still in jail, He also pointed out to Hari Kishan the example of other young revolutionaries of Bengal—some of them even girls in their teens—who were languishing in jails for years without any thought of offering apology for what they had done.

Hari Kishan was deeply hurt by his father's admonitions which, indeed, proved to be a turningpoint in his life. For

though he was, in fact, tricked into signing the apology, he now blamed himself for it and decided to atone for what he had done even though inadvertently. He decided, therefore, to redeem his honour by making the supreme sacrifice for the liberation of his motherland. He read over and over again the following lines of a poem published in *Pakhtun,* the organ of the Red Shirt movement:

*When my friends find me freshly laid in grave,*
*They may curse me all if I have entered it as a slave.*
*If I am not bathed in my blood, as per my pledge,*
*With my unholy touch do not desecrate the mosque's edge.*
*If I am not torn apart by British bullets as I have sworn*
*With what face, dear mother, for me will you mourn?*

It was in such a frame of mind that one day he disclosed his resolution to his relative Chaman Lal Kapoor. This young man had come of a well-to-do family of Mardan and while a student at D.A.V. College at Hoshiarpur come in touch with young revolutionaries like Ranbir Singh of the *Daily Milap,* Durga Das Khanna and Wasandha Ram. Very soon he too had joined them and become an active worker of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha.

During the second half of 1930 this group of revolutionaries connected with the Naujawan Bharat Sabha secretly decided to shoot Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency, the governor of the Punjab. Meanwhile Chamanlal in his talks with his comrades had spoken very highly of the revolutionary ardour of Hari Kishan and of his determination to make the supreme sacrifice for the liberation of India. He had also told them that Hari Kishan was a crackshot. They now decided to approach Hari Kishan with the request to undertake the task of shooting the governor. And so Chamanlal one day paid a visit to Ghalla Dher with this object in view. As soon as Hari Kishan heard of this plan he was extremely happy for this was just the opportunity he was looking for and he readily agreed. Between Chamanlal and Hari Kishan it was decided that the latter would shoot the governor inside the university premises during the convocation meeting to be held on 23 December 1930.

For finalising the details of the plan Chamanlal now became a frequent visitor to Ghalla Dher. One day not finding Hari

Kishan at home he went in search of the latter to the orchard belonging to the Talwars just outside the village. Hari Kishan was there but so also was his father. Aware of the political leaning of Chamanlal, Gurudasmal had, of late, grown suspicious of the frequent visits of the former to his son. He therefore asked Chamanlal pointblank the object of his visit. Chamanlal was, at first, hesitant, but on Gurudasmal's assurance he revealed the plan. He also told Gurudasmal that the Punjab revolutionaries were badly in need of arms, particularly revolvers.

Gurudasmal heartily endorsed the patriotic determination and plan of the young revolutionaries and was happy that his son had been chosen to undertake the task. One thing however worried him a little. Hari Kishan, he thought, was much too young and simple for the job. He therefore took his son aside and explained to him the implications and consequences of the step he was going to take. It meant almost certain death for him. Gurudasmal asked his son to think it over coolly and not to hesitate to turn down the assignment from a false sense of pride if he felt any doubt on the score. Because, if he tried to retrace his steps at a later stage it would only bring shame not only on him alone but on the Talwar family as a whole.

Hari Kishan assured his father that being the true son of a valiant Pakhtun he would never betray the trust and begged his father to give him his blessings. And when Gurudasmal felt convinced that his son would never falter and was determined to carry out his assignment, come what may, he was greatly relieved and happily undertook the task of training Hari Kishan properly for the job. He himself went to Toru to procure from one of his friends the revolver to be used by his son on the fateful day. He was a crackshot and wellknown in the locality for his sure aim and cool courage. Almost every day with a bag full of cartridges he would now make his son practise revolver shooting for hours in the first storey of his village residence and like an expert and fastidious teacher he continued training the young man for several weeks before he was fully satisfied. At the same time he went on building up the morale of Hari Kishan by telling him, all the time, the stories of great and historic freedom fighters of India like Sivaji, Rani of Jhansi, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and such others.

On 19 December 1930 Lala Gurudasmal escorted Hari Kishan and Chamanlal up to the Nowshera railway station where the two young men were to catch the Bombay Express for Lahore. Before parting he embraced both the patriots and turning to Chamanlal said: "Hari Kishan is young, simple and unassuming and does not know the ways of this world. Please take good care of him and never let him down." Chamanlal assured Lalaji that they would swim or sink together. Gurudasmal's last words to Hari Kishan were: "All human beings have to die one day or the other. But those who die for their country become immortal. I know you will not falter or stray from the path you have chosen for yourself. I am certain that you will not tarnish the good name of the Talwars."

Gurudasmal had tears in his eyes when he waved farewell to his young son who, he knew, was going to his death. As Chamanlal Azad of *Daily Pratap,* himself a revolutionary, said later in his tribute to both father and son: "This, perhaps, is the only instance in history where the father is known to have himself trained and sent his young son to the gallows for the freedom of his country."

# The Fateful Day

Hari Kishan, the second son of Lala Gurudasmal, was born some time in January 1908. As we have already seen he had left his studies early and used, in the beginning, to help his father in farming. He was very popular among the younger generation of the Pakhtuns of the area, particularly among the poor tenants of the nawab. Affectionately they used to call him 'naik', that is, 'master'. He went with them fishing, hunting as well as for work in the fields and later worked shoulder to shoulder with them in the Red Shirt movement also.

We have also known of his determination to shoot the Punjab governor at the convocation function in the University Senate Hall and his setting out for Lahore to carry out this decision. On reaching Lahore he was told that his comrades had meanwhile decided to drop the plan for lack of proper arrangements. This upset him greatly but he quite firmly informed that he would not now go back, for he had promised his father not to retrace his steps or return without fulfilling his mission. He said he would not require any help and offered to go it alone. The only thing he wanted of his comrades was to make sure that the plan did not leak out so that he might not be forestalled while working out the plan. This, of course, they promised and he went ahead with his plan.

At Lahore Hari Kishan met Ranbir Singh, Durga Das Khanna, Ihsan Elahi and some other active members of the Punjab Naujawan Bharat Sabha. He was taken around the University Senate Hall where the convocation was to be held to give him an idea of the place and to explain to him how he was to enter the hall for his mission. They procured for him the necessary entry pass and the graduate's gown. They helped him also to carve out a place for the revolver in a book which he would carry when entering the Senate Hall.

On the morning of 23 December 1930 the police and security

guards in plain clothes were posted all along the roads leading to the Senate Hall. Security arrangements were, indeed, very strict for after Saunders's murder in broad daylight on the streets of Lahore, the police were certainly not taking any chance where the highest executive of the province himself was concerned. Everybody passing into the hall had to show his or her entry pass.

Hari Kishan was absolutely calm when on the morning of 23 December 1930 at 11 a.m. he was showing his entry pass at a number of places before he could reach his seat inside the convocation hall among other students who had come to take their degrees. There were also high police and other officers all over the hall. The governor, Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency, entered the hall at the scheduled hour surrounded by a large number of security men. After a few minutes Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan got up and delivered the convocation address. The governor then gave away the degrees, made the usual speech for the occasion, and was just going to leave the hall when Hari Kishan rose from his seat. Initially he had decided to execute his plan before the proceedings had actually started. But once inside the hall he changed his mind and decided to put it off till the very end. But not being conversant with English he was taken a little unawares when to him the proceeding seemed to have ended abruptly and those sitting on the dais started moving out.

However Hari Kishan now quickly got up on a chair and started firing at the governor. As soon as the firing started, pandemonium was let loose in the hall. Even some big police officers started running for their lives. The guests started falling on one another. The scene was later described thus to one of our brothers by his professor who was present in the hall that day for taking his degree: Hari Kishan did not show the least sign of nervousness; his face was aglow with fiery passion. As there were a number of people on the dais around the governor it was perhaps quite a problem for him to shoot the governor without hurting others. However his first bullet grazed over the chest and wounded the left upper arm of the governor. The second grazed over his back causing a slight injury. By this time the governor was surrounded by the police officials and high dignitaries present on the dais. Hari Kishan did not want to hurt any of them, parti-

cularly Dr Radhakrishnan at any cost. Meanwhile Chanan Singh, a subinspector of police, was advancing towards him, revolver in hand. Hari Kishan's third bullet passed through Chanan Singh's jaw and the latter rushed out of the hall to the lawn outside, fell down and died soon after. The fourth bullet hit CID inspector Budh Singh Wadhawan while the fifth hurt a lady doctor, Miss Dermitt of Lady Hardinge Women's College of Lahore.

Meanwhile Hari Kishan had come out into the verandah and fired the last shot at the opposite wall. As long as he had a bullet in his revolver nobody dared approach him. But now police sub-inspector Dewan Chand, police inspector Jawaharlal and others surrounded and overpowered him. He had of course another six bullets with him but had no use for them now as his prey had already been whisked out of the hall to an adjoining room where Col Harper Nelson gave him first aid. Later the governor was shifted to the Mayo Hospital and after necessary treatment sent back to his residence.

Years later president Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan narrated the happenings on that day to a deputation of All India Sikh Federation which appeared thus in the 20 September 1963 issue of the *Indian Express*:

"The president today recalled a 33-year old incident pointing out how a 19-year boy took precautions to 'save' him (Dr Radhakrishnan) when he was aiming his revolver at the then governor of the Punjab, Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency...

"Dr Radhakrishnan said it was December 23, 1930 when he delivered a convocation address of the Punjab University. After the address when he was coming out of the hall, Hari Kishan who was standing near the entrance shot at the Governor. The shot was aimed at the Governor's legs.

"The boy later told Dr Radhakrishnan that he could not take the risk of 'hitting Doctor Saheb'."

# Ordeal

Immediately after arrest Hari Kishan was taken to an adjoining room in the university building and after a preliminary interrogation was taken to the nearest police station at Anarkali. Here he was beaten and tortured to betray his comrades who had helped him so that they could also be apprehended before they managed to escape. When they failed to extort any information excepting his identity and address, they sent him to the Lahore Fort in a police van to continue their job more thoroughly.

For the Lahore Fort was, at that time, notorious for the brutal methods of torture applied there on political prisoners and for officers who enjoyed their expertise in this regard. They now started working on Hari Kishan with all their zeal. He was tied hand and foot and made to stand naked round the clock continuously for days together without food so that he might not get a wink of sleep. In the severe cold of Lahore winter he was made to lie down naked on ice slabs and they covered his body with ice slabs also. He was forced to sit on a chair with spikes on the seat. Notorious police officers like K. B. Sheikh and Abdul Hamid who had previously tortured the prisoners of the Lahore Conspiracy Case gave him needle pricks on the back of his hands which bled profusely and forced the nails out of his fingers which caused intense pain. And a doctor was all the time in attendance so that as soon he lost consciousness as a result of all this, he could be immediately revived with an injection.

Hari Kishan however withstood all this heroically. His only answer to all tortures was: "I am alone responsible for all this. I had come alone from my home to shoot the governor. I had nobody else to help me in my mission."

The police finally gave up. Under section 167 of Criminal Procedure Code, a magistrate was specially called to the Lahore Fort where Hari Kishan was kept locked up in a cell. The magistrate

recorded his statement which clearly said that he had come to Lahore alone from his home with the set purpose of shooting the governor who symbolised the British raj responsible for countless atrocities perpetrated on the people of India. He added that he did not want to hurt anybody else but had to fire at Chanan Singh in selfdefence and others got hurt because they came in the way.

The magistrate remanded Hari Kishan to jail custody and so on 2 January 1931 he was shifted to the Borstal jail, Lahore. Next day he was produced before the additional district magistrate of Lahore, E. S. Lewis. At this first hearing Rai Bahadur Ishwar Das Mehta, DSP, conducted the prosecution and P. N. Dutt, registrar of the Punjab University, CID inspector Jawaharlal, subinspector Dewan Chand, Rai Bahadur Diwan Chand, DSP, Anarkali Kotwali, S. P. Singh, assistant controller of the Punjab University, Lieut-Col Harper Nelson, Col Bharucha, Surat Singh, subinspector Labhu Ram, head constable Mohd Ghaznafar and constable Iwan Din were examined as prosecution witnesses. But nobody from the defence was called and none of his relations were even allowed to be present. The defence, in fact, went totally unrepresented.

Hari Kishan was completely calm during the proceedings. He only repeated what he had all along been saying: "I am alone responsible" and refused to divulge where he stayed at Lahore and who arranged for his entry pass into the convocation hall.

It may be stated here that even after the recording of his statement to this effect by the magistrate at the Lahore Fort (so that he would not be able to change it at a later stage), police themselves later changed their tactics and kept on requesting him to retract his statement and refuse to admit that he had shot at the governor on 23 December 1930! They tried this game in order to withdraw public sympathy from him so that as soon as he was sentenced, they could execute him quietly without any agitation and demonstration on his behalf. But Hari Kishan never faltered, he was proud of his action and openly proclaimed that he was eagerly looking forward to the day when he would kiss the hangman's noose and himself put it round his neck. He also added that he would certainly repeat his action if he got a chance.

At the next hearing of the case on 5 January 1931, the magistrate framed charges against Hari Kishan under section 302 for

the murder of S. Chanan Singh, ASI, and under section 307 for attempting to murder the governor and after a very brief hearing committed him to the sessions. At this hearing also the defence went totally unrepresented, though captain R. O. C. Drummond, ADC to the governor, Mr Lewis, manager, Water Locks & Co, Mr Abdul Rehman, government contractor of Lahore, inspector Budh Singh Wadhawan, Mohammad Khan, bearer to the governor, Ramlal, governor's washerman, and Basant Ram, his tailor, were examined as witnesses for prosecution. Hari Kishan himself at the very outset also had requested the magistrate to allow him to leave the court as he would not be taking part in the proceedings. In a Peshawari patka, a dark brown coat and a salwar he was looking very pale and weak after the ordeal he had gone through and also because he was at that time on hungerstrike.

Later on Hari Kishan stated before the magistrate that he had come to Lahore from his village to kill the governor. He had aimed two shots at the governor whom alone he wanted to kill and had not wanted to even hurt anybody else. He had, however, to fire one shot each at subinspector Chanan Singh and inspector Budh Singh Wadhawan in selfdefence. He also admitted that the revolver, six cartridges, clothes and the ring produced at the court, all belonged to him.

# Persecution of the Talwar Family

Meanwhile the news of Hari Kishan's attempt on the governor's life had spread like wild fire. That day all trains from Lahore were detained and passengers thoroughly searched. A vast network of police and CID officers was spread from Lahore to the North West Frontier Province to carry out indiscriminate search and arrest of young men on the least suspicion.

That day—23 December 1930—Gurudasmal had gone to visit his son, Bhagat Ram, who was serving a sentence of one and a half years' rigorous imprisonment at the central jail in Peshawar. On coming back home he heard of the firing on the governor at Lahore and immediately felt that the testing period for the whole family would come soon. He had not long to wait. For on that very day in the dark hours of midnight a large contingent of police with rifles, revolvers and torches in their hands swooped upon the house of the Talwars at the small, sleeping hamlet of Ghalla Dher. They in fact approached and raided the house as if they were storming a fortress occupied by the enemy. They searched every nook and corner of the house, turned out of it Hari Kishan's old mother, aunt and young brothers into the bitter cold of a December night and took possession of the house as if they had captured an enemy fortress. Of course they did not find anything incriminating. All that they found were the certificates once issued by the government commending Hari Kishan's father, Gurudasmal for his courage and determination in exterminating the dacoit gangs who had preyed upon the peaceful people of the locality!

Yet they arrested Gurudasmal and took him to Mardan where they kept him for two days in detention. At first they thought of making out a conspiracy case involving both father and son. But as they wanted to send Hari Kishan to the gallows as early as possible they ultimately decided against it as conspiracy cases take time and such charges are also difficult to prove. So a case under section 40 of the Frontier Crimes Regulation Act was

framed against Gurudasmal. The assistant commissioner of Mardan later stated in connection with this case that "Gurudasmal is the same person who helped the British Sarkar in liquidating gangs of marauders and outlaws. His son has now fired at the Governor of Punjab." Gurudasmal's reply came later in course of his statement before the court: "These certificates (of the British commending his services (in exterminating the scourge of brigandage in NWFP—BRT) were given to me ten years ago when we were not very conscious and did not fully realise the humiliation that people enslaved by foreign rulers have to suffer. We know now how you have occupied our country. It is our moral duty to free our nation and people from your clutches."

The eldest son of Gurudasmal, Lala Jamuna Das Talwar, had been in government service since September 1929 and posted at the office of the deputy commissioner of Sheikhpura in the Punjab. At midnight on the same day—i.e. 23 December 1930—his quarters too was surrounded by the police. Jamuna Das was arrested along with his younger brother Ishwar Das who had been staying with him those days for his school education. Jamuna Das's wife and only child were forced to quit and the quarters was locked. In the morning they carried out an elaborate search but did not come across anything which might be even remotely construed as incriminating. Yet Jamuna Das was taken to the superintendent of police who came of a feudal family—the Arbabs of Peshawar district. This extremely arrogant, rude and cruel police officer abused and insulted Jamuna Das saying that he belonged to a family of traitors to the cause of the benevolent and civilised British! The police thereafter sent him to the Lahore Fort where he was severely beaten up in an effort to extract information from him about Hari Kishan and his comrades. Jamuna Das went on repeating that he knew nothing—for at that time actually he know nothing, not even what they expected him to know—and yet the police continued their torture. When at last they were convinced that he really had no knowledge of even the shooting incident, he was released on the evening of 26 December.

Jamuna Das immediately went back to Sheikhpura where he came to know of the whole episode from the papers. His anxious letters and telegrams to his father were intercepted by

the police and Gurudasmal himself was, for a time, detained. The police tried to extract information from him about the friends of Hari Kishan and as to how the latter had managed to get the revolver he had used. He divulged nothing and asked the police to release him so that he could go to Lahore and arrange his son's defence.

It was not until 2 January 1931—ten days after the incident —that Gurudasmal was at last allowed to leave. He went to Sheikhpura to meet Jamuna Das on 3 January and with him left for Lahore the next day. Jamuna Das on meeting him asked Gurudasmal, "Pitaji, you always consult me even on trivial issues. But why did you not tell me anything about such a dangerous course which you had planned for Hari Kishan?" Gurudasmal replied, "Our country needs the sacrifice and blood of young patriots. I have nine sons—I wanted one of them to make the supreme sacrifice for the country."

Jamuna Das recalled that almost a month before his fatal journey to Lahore Hari Kishan had visited Sheikhpura perhaps for bidding his elder brother a last, silent farewell but had said nothing about his mission.

By the time Gurudasmal and Jamuna Das reached Lahore Hari Kishan had been shifted from the Lahore Fort to the Borstal jail. They sought an interview with him which was granted. When they came to meet Hari Kishan his whole body and face were still blue and swollen as a result of continuous torture and he could hardly open his eyes. Gurudasmal said: "Son, these blood clots on your face and on your swollen body speak loudly of the hell let loose on you by them. But tell me"—and here he broke into Pashtu—"how could that giant of a man (for Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency was, indeed, a huge man physically—BRT) escape? I had worked so hard in training you." The CID and jail officers immediately intervened and stopped their conversation in a language which they did not follow. But Hari Kishan said smilingly, "Success of a mission lies in the hands of the Almighty. I believe in the teachings of Geeta and have faith in the transmigration of soul. I have tried to serve my country in a humble way. I know I shall be hanged. I am prepared for it. But I shall be born again, and lay down my life again for her sake and thus continue the cycle till, at last, she is free."

# Trial and Judgement

Lala Gurudasmal and Jamuna Das booked a room in Shafi Sarai at Anarkali, Lahore, for preparation of the defence case for Hari Kishan. Jamuna Das who had undertaken the main responsibility for these preparations decided to resign his job to devote himself wholly to this work. But on the advice of some national leaders he did not do so. He was however soon dismissed from service on 31 May 1931. Meanwhile a defence committee comprising mostly of lawyers of nationalist views had been set up in the Punjab for defending all cases involving freedom fighters. It included such eminent lawyers and public figures as Amin Chand Mehta, Puran Chand Mehta, Dr Satyapal, Kumari Lajjavati, Jiwanlal Kapur and some others. This committee deputed Puran Chand Mehta for the defence of Hari Kishan. He was soon after joined by the wellknown Congress leader and eminent barrister, Asaf Ali, on his release from Gujarat jail. A few other lawyers were also associated in this work. Asaf Ali and Puran Chand Mehta took great pains to prepare and conduct the defence of Hari Kishan. Asaf Ali in fact used to sit till late at night for this purpose in his room at Flatti's Hotel in Lahore along with Jamuna Das. Here he once confided to the latter that when he had first read of this incident in the papers he wished he were out for taking up the defence case. As a lawyer he had to visit Hari Kishan quite often but during his first visit he cut it short in protest against the presence of CID officers at the interview. As a result of his representation this practice was later discontinued, though the CID kept strict watch over every movement of Gurudasmal, Jamuna Das and other relatives of Hari Kishan and even of Asaf Ali.

Hari Kishan, as we have already seen, was committed to the sessions by the additional district magistrate of Lahore, Mr E. S. Lewis, on 5 January 1931. Three days later the sessions judge, Lahore, fixed the first hearing of this case on 14 January.

At this hearing at the court of Mr A. H. B. Anderson, district and sessions judge, Lahore, an application by Jiwanlal Kapur and V. R. Sethi, defence counsel, prayed for adjournment on the ground that due notice of the case had been received by the accused only on 9 January 1931 and the counsel therefore had not had sufficient time to prepare the case. This was rejected by the court. But the defence prayer at this hearing for Hari Kishan's trial by jury was upheld by the court on 16 January. At the next hearing on 21 January twenty persons were called for the purpose out of which the following were selected by the judge to serve on the jury: Karam Chand Kakkar of the financial commissioner's office; Mohan Singh, lecturer, Government College, Lahore; Mahbool Shah of the office of the director of land records; Nasiruddin of North-Western Railway; Prof George of the Mission College; Hassain Ali Sarby, Mr Smith and Mr Wallington of the North-Western Railway. Prof George was made the foreman of the jury.

This panel of names of the members of the jury was decided upon in very great haste and over the objections of the defence counsel. Out of 20 persons called, the court selected 5 Indians and 4 Europeans. The defence counsel objected to seven of those selected on the ground that as government servants they could not be expected to be impartial in this case. The objection was overruled except in the case of one person.

During the hearings Asaf Ali pleaded for a trial outside the Punjab because the chief executive of the provincial government, governor Geoffrey de Montmorency, was personally involved in the case and so he was afraid he could not expect a fair trial in that province. This plea was rejected. He also made several protests on different occasions in course of the trial and once even walked out of the court in protest against the naked and open violation of elementary rules of conduct to cut short the trial and send Hari Kishan to the gallows as early as possible. This indecent haste was also evident from the fact that the hearings at the sessions court started on 14 January followed by subsequent hearings in quick succession as on 15, 16, 21 and 22 January and judgement was delivered on 26 January.

It would be difficult to find another instance where a case involving death sentence had been disposed of in such record time.

After the prosecution closed its case the accused was asked to make his statement. Hari Kishan looked cheerful, even happy as he stood in the dock. There was a glow on his young, innocent and handsome face. A faint moustache on his lips and a slight growth on his chin spoke of his tender age. Calmly he repeated what he had already said before the magistrate, in reply to the questions of the sessions court. He also read out a written statement exposing the British atrocities when their armed forces fired on unarmed crowd of Pathans in Qissa Khwani Bazar at Peshawar on 23 April 1930 killing many innocent men, women and children. The British army also showered bullets and lathi blows on the peaceful and unarmed Khudai Khidmatgar volunteers at Mirwas Dheri near Mardan killing several of them. A young patriot Habib Nour was hanged in Peshawar jail within 24 hours of the framing of charges against him to the effect that he had attempted to fire a pistol at the British assistant commissioner of tehsil Charsadda.

Hari Kishan further said in his statement that he did not bear any ill will against the British people as such but he certainly wanted to smash the system wherein a few foreigners were keeping the entire Indian nation under their iron heels and exploiting the people of the country for over a century.

Hari Kishan further said: "I know what is in store for me. I have no misgivings on that score whatsoever. If sacrifice of my life helps to bring the goal of independence of India any nearer, I am prepared to lay down my life not only once but after every rebirth thousand times over. For I am certain after my death thousands of Hari Kishans will be born here to carry on the battle till our independence is achieved. I want the British to realise that the time has come for them to make due amends for the crimes against our people and quit the country as soon as possible."

Hari Kishan ended his statement with the slogan 'Inqilab Zindabad' immortalised by his hero, Bhagat Singh. He refused to produce any witness in his defence when the court adjourned to resume the next day for the judgement.

On 26 January 1931, when the judgement was to be delivered armed police and the military were posted all along the route from the Borstal jail up to the court building. People gathered in

groups at the street corners long before the prison van carrying Hari Kishan from the jail to the court passed by. They responded lustily to the slogan of 'Inqilab Zindabad' raised by him from the van.

Immediately on arrival at the court the district and sessions judge, Mr A. H. B. Anderson, called upon the jury to place their verdict before the court. The jury unanimously declared Hari Kishan guilty but, in consideration of his tender age, recommended a life sentence. But the judge disregarding the recommendation of the jury sentenced Hari Kishan to death for wilful murder of subinspector Chanan Singh and to a life sentence for a murderous assault on the governor of the Punjab. He was also sentenced for life on the charge of murderous assault on inspector Budh Singh Wadhawan, and the lady doctor Miss Dermitt.

Hari Kishan took the judgement very calmly and thanked the judge for enabling him to fulfil his heart's desire. A story went round that he had, in reply to the judgement, asked the judge: "Please tell me whether I am to be hanged after undergoing 28 years' rigorous imprisonment (for a life sentence usually means a 14 years' term in jail—BRT) or if I am to be kept hanging for 28 years inside the jail compound!"

Asaf Ali and Jamuna Das immediately decided to file an appeal to the high court against the judgement of the sessions court but Hari Kishan at first refused to sign papers authorising them to do so on his behalf. On their insistence and the permission of Gurudasmal later on he signed the papers but as soon as he reached the jail he again wrote to the sessions judge that his letter of authorisation might be treated as cancelled as he did not want to appeal to anyone for anything. Meanwhile after the judgement he had been transferred from the Borstal jail to the central jail, Lahore.

At the first hearing of the appeal to the high court, Lahore, which took place in March 1921 the government lawyer raised an objection stating that the case could not be taken up as the accused had withdrawn the authority for an appeal on his behalf. Bhagat Ram Puri, the wellknown barrister of Lahore, who was conducting the defence case said in reply that death penalty could not be awarded without the confirmation of the high court

and it is the duty of the state to arrange for defence of the accused in such a case if the defendant had no arrangement of his own. The objection of the government counsel was therefore overruled.

The defence counsel, with specific instances, pointed towards the unseemly haste with which the case was being pushed through without giving sufficient time and opportunity to the defence for the preparation of their case. He exposed and laid threadbare the many weaknesses and contradictions of the case for prosecution.

The appeal was however rejected by the high court on 10 March 1931. On the advice of national leaders an appeal was immediately filed with the privy council to gain time as negotiations between the government and the national leaders were in progress, at that time, giving rise to a faint hope that the government might ultimately agree to release all political prisoners—at least commute death sentences to life terms.

But even that was not to be. The privy council, too, rejected the appeal and Hari Kishan stood condemned to death.

# Hari Kishan's Martyrdom

Meanwhile the country, particularly the Punjab, was in turmoil. As Hari Kishan's intended victim, Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency, had written in a letter to the viceroy, Lord Irwin, on 13 March 1931: "We are having a very difficult time here. With the removal of 'bans' the Youth Leagues have got busy on an immense campaign in favour of saving Bhagat Singh and his companions and Hari Kishan from the gallows . . . We seem to be boiling up for a row as big and as serious as in 1919" (Home/Political File No 33/II, 1931).

The continuous angry demonstrations, processions and meetings in this connection all over the country had, indeed, impelled the rulers to recall the days of Amritsar and the Jallianwala Bagh. And soon after the rejection of his appeal by the privy council Hari Kishan was secretly transferred to the Mianwali jail. Before that at the Lahore central jail he had, meanwhile, managed with the help of a sympathetic official to meet his hero, Bhagat Singh, for a few brief moments. This meeting for him was indeed a fulfilment. For such was his admiration for Bhagat Singh that according to Gurudasmal Hari Kishan had taken this desperate step to shoot at the governor "simply to have the *darshan* of Bhagat Singh in jail" (Home/Political File No 33/II, 1931).

On 23 March 1931, contrary to normal practice Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were hanged at the dead of night and British soldiers wrapped up their bodies in gunny bags and carried them secretly in jeeps to Hussainiwala near Ferozepur. There the bodies were soaked in petrol and hastily burnt in the bushes on the bank of river Sutlej. Despite the strictest secrecy maintained the news however leaked out and spread like wild fire. People in thousands visited the site, picked up the still unburnt limbs of the martyrs, carried them in a procession and performed the last rites in a manner befitting these great sons of India. And the indignation of the nation against the British rulers rose all the more.

But Mianwali, at that time, was comparatively speaking a backward area of the Punjab where feudal landlords, with the help of British rulers, used to keep the impoverished peasantry in bondage. This was therefore considered by the government to be fairly safe against any chance of troublesome public agitation. Even so Hari Kishan's transfer to the Mianwali jail was at first kept a closely guarded secret and when his elder brother, Jamuna Das, went to the Lahore central jail for an interview, they merely told him that Hari Kishan was not there. It was not till the home secretary was approached that at last the information was received that he had meanwhile been transferred to the Mianwali jail.

As soon as Jamuna Das met Hari Kishan at the Mianwali jail the first thing the latter asked him for was information about Bhagat Singh and his two comrades. When Jamuna Das hesitated for a moment to break the news of their execution to him Hari Kishan at once said that he knew that they had already been hanged. He was now very anxious to welcome the day when he too would have the hangman's noose round his neck so that he might join the ranks of the great revolutionaries who had laid down their lives for the freedom of our country.

The date of execution was fixed for 9 June 1931. As soon as Jamuna Das got to know of this from the superintendent of the jail he sent a telegram to his father asking him to reach Mianwali along with other members of the family for the last interview with Hari Kishan on 8 June 1931. Meanwhile Bhagat Ram, too, serving a sentence at the central jail in Peshawar, had come to know the date fixed for the execution and had, at once, applied for permission for a last visit to Hari Kishan. This was granted and it so happened that Gurudasmal and other family members boarded the same train from Nowshera in which Bhagat Ram was being taken to Mianwali under armed police escort.

Soon after reaching Mianwali on the morning of 8 June Bhagat Ram was taken to the jail for his last interview with Hari Kishan. And at noon the same day his parents and other near relations were allowed to see him for the last time. The superintendent of the jail was of course present throughout the interview. When Gurudasmal asked his son what his last wishes were Hari Kishan replied that all that he wanted was that no tears be shed over his death. Even earlier at the Lahore jail when his only sister had

broken down on seeing, for the first time, her brother in a dark cell behind the bars, he got visibly upset and asked his father not to bring with him people who had no control over their emotions. On the other hand he used to like to hear the hopeless words of encouragement of his grandmother who would pat him on the back through the iron bars of his cell.

During this last interview Hari Kishan told his father that this was no occasion for mourning for he had no regrets whatsoever for what he had done. Rather his death, he felt, should be celebrated for he firmly believed that "I shall only be changing from old into new 'chola' and will be reborn and repeat what I did and continue the cycle till my country is, at last, free."

Hari Kishan's elder brother, Jamuna Das, asked him if after his death his body was to be taken to their beloved Ghalla Dher and a memorial erected in the family orchard. Hari Kishan replied that he knew his body would never be handed over to his family and would be disposed of in the same manner as those of Bhagat Singh and his two comrades. In case, however, the government did decide to hand it over to his relatives, he wanted it to be cremated at the site where the bodies of Bhagat Singh and the two others had earlier been cremated.

The interview, at last, came to an end with the jail superintendent's announcement that the scheduled time of one hour was over. The Talwars had to leave with heavy heart but all ennobled by the inner glow that had lit up the young and handsome face of Hari Kishan.

Jamuna Das and some others then asked the jail superintendent when they would be handed over the body. He put them off saying that he had not received any orders in this respect and that he did not even know when Hari Kishan would be hanged. He directed them to see the deputy commissioner, Radha Kishan, who was a perfect loyalist. At first he would not even meet Jamuna Das but on the latter's insistence asked him to contact the home secretary, government of the Punjab, at Simla for instructions as to whether they would get the body or not. Jamuna Das immediately sent a telegram to Simla to which there was no reply.

Meanwhile the police and the CID circulated a rumour in and around Mianwali that the date of execution had been postponed and Hari Kishan was not to be hanged on 9 June 1931. Diwan

Bhanju Ram Gandhi and some other Congress leaders, as soon as they heard of it, came to Lala Gurudasmal at the sarai and told him not to rely on it as it was only meant to make him and others leave the place so that the execution could be carried out without any fear of agitation.

Gurudasmal and other members of the Talwar family spent a night of anguish at the sarai and left at 4 in the morning for the jail. They found mounted and armed police posted all along the road up to the jail gate and busy preventing people from collecting. From a distance they saw a jail van loaded with fuel wood leaving the jail gate for the deserted graveyard far beyond the other side of the jail. At about 6 in the morning they suddenly heard the slogan 'Inqilab Zindabad' raised three times which indicated that Hari Kishan was being led to the gallows and other inmates of the jail had joined him in raising the slogan from their cells.

After a while the main gate of the jail opened once again and the body of Hari Kishan was taken out in a stretcher and placed in the van which immediately left for the cremation site. A large police force followed which prevented everybody including the Talwar family from approaching the spot though they begged insistently to have a last darsan.

The body of Hari Kishan was actually cremated in a remote and deserted place outside Mianwali proper. None was allowed even to approach this area. Tilok Chand Mehroom, the well-known Urdu poet, happened to be in Mianwali that day. He expressed his anguish over this in a poem which rendered into English by M. S. Batra runs as follows:

*In the heart of the desert again*
*The flames leapt from a funeral pyre.*
*No kind heart could reach there,*
*The path was ridden with quagmire.*
*There was no cry of agony,*
*Nor pain, nor even a sigh;*
*No kindred near,*
*No grieving friend could pass by.*
*Oh, in the heart of sand*
*A lone pyre burning in the morning red,*

*No one said 'Goodbye',*
*Or looked wistfully at the dead.*
*There was no mourning song,*
*No tearful eyes to behold.*
*But laden with sorrow,*
*The breath of the wind was cold.*
*Look, the flames are smouldering.*
*Seems satisfied the fire.*
*How soon is burnt a youth*
*With all his desire.*
*This is the prize for love*
*For the dear motherland.*
*Many more will follow*
*To hold it in their hands.*
*Don't scatter them, Breeze,*
*These are Hari Kishan's ashes and*
*He is gone for ever*
*Redeeming the honour of his land.*

Jamuna Das and others later approached the jail superintendent for the ashes of the martyr so that they might at least perform the last rites. But as before he only referred them to the deputy commissioner who flatly turned down the request.

Next day as Jamuna Das and other members and friends of the family were going along the road towards the cremation spot they could see from a distance some policemen sprinkling water over the ashes of Hari Kishan. They then put the ashes into a couple of bags which were placed in a van and taken towards the river under strong police guard. The bags were then carried to the middle of the river and emptied there one by one to ensure that not a piece of bone of the martyr might, per chance, be picked up by anybody.

# Aftermath

In the evening after Hari Kishan's execution Gurudasmal and other members and friends of the family left for Ghalla Dher. Meanwhile as the news of Hari Kishan's martyrdom spread far and wide there was a spontaneous upsurge among the Pakhtuns of the Frontier province. Thousands of them started moving towards the village and on 12 June swarms of Khudai Khidmatgars in red uniforms were seen marching to Ghalla Dher from all directions to pay homage to their great martyr. The government got panicky and immediately imposed section 144 in the area and the military with machineguns and rifles surrounded the village from all sides. Even Abdul Ghaffar Khan was intercepted on his way to Ghalla Dher to pay his respects to the martyr. He was informed of the sudden ban on the proposed gathering which was really spontaneous. He wanted to avoid an incident that would further rouse the passion and wrath of the people who were deeply agitated over the martyrdom of Hari Kishan. He therefore issued instructions postponing the meeting but the people were so excited that they approached Gurudasmal for permission to hold it immediately. However as a disciplined soldier the latter told them that Abdul Ghaffar Khan was their leader and they should therefore take the instructions from him. Thus was avoided what would have inevitably led to a bloody massacre.

The British vindictiveness did not however end with Hari Kishan's execution and ban on his memorial meeting. Their wrath now turned towards the entire Talwar family and it is said Sir Olaf Caroe, the governor of NWFP, had himself given special instructions in this regard. Gurudasmal was prosecuted under section 40 of frontier crimes regulation act. Three weeks after the execution of Hari Kishan he had to appear at the court of the assistant commissioner Major Hey at Mardan to answer three charges: first, that he conspired with his son Hari Kishan to kill the Punjab governor; second, that he furnished arms and provid-

ed shelter to revolutionaries and third, that photographs of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and such other leaders had been recovered from his house during a search. He was also asked to furnish a security under the frontier crimes regulation act.

Gurudasmal made a statement at the court denying the first two charges, vigorously defending his right to keep the photographs of our national leaders and refusing to furnish a security, for in his opinion that would amount to offering an apology for what he had done.

The court after the first hearing of the case asked Gurudasmal to appear before it again on 7 July 1931 but did not press for security. On that date while on his way to the court accompanied by Jamuna Das from the house of a friend, Sardar Attar Singh, he suddenly had a severe fit of epilepsy. Wellknown doctors and friends at Mardan struggled hard to save his life. Their sincere efforts in this regard however proved fruitless and the great patriot expired at 4 in the same afternoon—just twentyseven days after the execution of Hari Kishan. His name has rightly been included in the *Who's Who of Indian Martyrs.**

Gurudasmal was a man of great integrity of character, of a militant personality and enjoyed immense popularity among the people of the Pakhtun land. The news of his death therefore spread far and wide and even Pakhtun women in purdah came out on the streets to mourn his loss.

From then onwards, all adult members of the Talwar family were harassed by frequent cases for defending which their landed property had either to be sold or mortgaged. The police also raided their house again and again even during the days of mourning and friends or relatives who came to express condolence were intimidated and terrorised. Jamuna Das too like his father was arrested under section 40 of the frontier crimes regulation act and locked up in the district jail at Mardan. He had to remain there till a heavy security was furnished by the family.

Meanwhile the third brother Bhagat Ram was serving a 1½ years' imprisonment at Peshawar. The superintendent of Pesha-

* See Vol I, p 124.

war jail received instructions not to release him even after the expiry of his term but to transfer him to the district jail at Mardan to face trial in other cases to be brought against him under various sections of the frontier crimes regulation act.

In July 1933 Jamuna Das was summoned to Peshawar by the inspector general of police of North West Frontier Province and Khan Bahadur Sheikh Abdul Aziz, the redoubtable superintendent of police (CID). They at first tried to win him over with a promise of a good job in return for his loyalty to the raj but failing threatened him with dire consequences for his continued intransigence. They therefore brought several cases against him one after the other. For instance, a charge, under section 19 of the arms act, was that two cartridges of .455 bore revolvers had been recovered from his house during the police search. The evidence for this was so flimsy that as soon as he was produced before the magistrate it was thrown out and he was acquitted.

The government however was not in a mood to let him off so easily. So this time they brought another charge against him and his (fourth) younger brother Ishwar Das under section 302/115 IPC for allegedly writing letters to high British officials threatening to murder them. In their frenzy for taking revenge against this patriotic family the cases were somehow rushed through the courts with unseemly haste and on 15 December 1932 the city magistrate of Peshawar sentenced Jamuna Das to seven years' RI and a fine of Rs 500 under section 506/507. In case of failure to pay the fine he was to undergo a further term of one year.

Similarly Ishwar Das was awarded a sentence of rigorous imprisonment for 4 years and a fine of Rs 500 and in case of failure to pay it a further sentence of one year RI. The cases were such blatant frame-ups and the sentence so savage and vindictive that there was a big agitation against them in the press and among the people all over the country. Referring to Jamuna Das's case Jawaharlal Nehru himself thus wrote from the prison a few months later: "Our Judges are, let us hope, large-hearted; they are certainly long-sentencing. Here is an Associated Press message from Peshawar dated December 15, 1932: 'For writing threatening letters to the Inspector-General of Police and other high officials of the Frontier soon after the Coldstream murder,

accused named Jamnadas has been sentenced by the City Magistrate of Peshawar to eight years' imprisonment under Section 500/507 IPC'. Jamnadas was apparently a young boy."*

After some time in Peshawar jail both the brothers were transferred—duly fettered and handcuffed—to central jail, Haripur (district Hazara). Meanwhile appeals had been filed at the court of judicial commission against the savage sentences. As soon as the appeals came up before the court the sentences were again quashed. Yet the government continued to be adamant. Immediately after release from Haripur jail Jamuna Das was taken straight to Mardan jail to stand trial on another charge. But the charge here also was so bogus that after a month at Mardan jail Jamuna Das had at last to be released. But at the jail gate he was served a notice from the chief secretary confining his movements within the limits of his own village, Ghalla Dher. He was ordered to present himself every day at 4 p.m. at the police station at Mardan, about 6 miles from the village. Similar notices had already been served also on his two younger brothers—Bhagat Ram and Ishwar Das who had also been interned meanwhile at their village. Three CID men were also permanently posted at Ghalla Dher to watch and report on the movements and activities of the three brothers.

* Jawaharlal Nehru, "Prison-land", *Recent Essays and Writings*, 1934, Kitabistan, Allahabad, p 99.

PART TWO

# SUBHAS CHANDRA'S GREAT ESCAPE

# My Days of Apprenticeship

I, Bhagat Ram, third son of Lala Gurudasmal and younger brother of Hari Kishan, was born at Ghalla Dher, some time in November 1908. Though himself born and brought up amidst a feudal setting my father was very serious in imbibing new and progressive ideas of his time. The Arya Samaj movement which was considered a progressive one at that time somewhat interested him in the beginning. Soon afterwards he turned towards politics and started taking active interest in the activities of the Indian National Congress. He had a strong and impressive personality and played a dominant role in moulding the characters of his sons. His personality, strength of character and stature in society would never allow them to stray from the right path. He kept a sharp eye on them to ensure that they grew up as useful and honest citizens of the country and kept them under strict discipline. Once for example I had stealthily crept into a neighbour's field where some beautiful flowers had caught my fancy. I plucked a few and brought them home. When my father saw them he grew suspicious and asked me from where I got them. When I told him that I had plucked them from the neighbour's fields he was very angry and admonished me severely. He said I had sinned twice as I had not only taken what actually belonged to another man but had also spoilt the beautiful garden of a peasant.

In the school I became quite popular with my fellow students and also with my teachers on account of my active habits and interest in social work as well as in the extracurricular activities of the school. In the eighth class, I was elected secretary of the Arya Kumar Sabha with a big majority, my juniors and seniors alike having voted for me in large numbers. I was also in charge of the library and reading room which gave me an opportunity to come in close contact with the daily press and periodicals.

In those days political developments in Afghanistan were hot news and struck the headlines of our newspapers. Power struggle

between Amanullah, Bachha-Sakka and Nadir Khan had considerable interest for me because of the proximity of that country to ours. During this period Bhagat Singh-B. K. Dutt bomb incident in the central hall of the central assembly was headline news which roused my keen interest in the field of revolutionary activities in our country. I felt a strong urge in me for such work. With some colleagues from different schools we indeed started revolutionary work in our own way. Our idea of such work was at that time to beat up and, if possible, even murder British officials at the first opportunity. Once I with one of my friends, Ajit Singh, had actually gone out with the intention of murdering the then deputy commissioner of Ferozepur, Mr Harren, at the dead of the night. We were armed only with daggers. Before going there we had collected some details about the bungalow where the deputy commissioner used to live through Ajit Singh's father who was a carpenter sometimes working for the deputy commissioner at his bungalow. It was summer and the deputy commissioner used to sleep outside in the open. When we approached his bed with the mosquito net wrapped around it in the courtyard, we found, to our great disappointment, that the bed was empty. Later on we learnt that he was out of station that night.

At that time there was no particular organised group in Ferozepur district for carrying out revolutionary work. But preparations on a big scale were going on at that time for the annual session of the Indian National Congress to be held in Calcutta in December 1928. The activities of all political workers in our district were intensified as a result of these preparations. The death of Lala Lajpat Rai in 1928 at Lahore consequent to the brutal lathicharge on him by the police also had a great impact on us. Lastly the great revolutionary work of Bhagat Singh and his comrades in taking prompt reprisal for it by shooting down Saunders thrilled our young heart. We plunged into the political and revolutionary struggle of that period and started going to mass meetings and joined the volunteer corps of Indian National Congress.

After Calcutta congress in December 1928 preparations got under way for the next session which was held at Lahore in December 1929. This was a historic session over which Jawaharlal Nehru presided and where the famous resolution for complete independence for the country was adopted on the banks of river

Ravi. I attended this Lahore congress along with Ajit Singh and some other comrades. There I came into contact with Chamanlal Kapur and other volunteers who had come from the North West Frontier Province for this session.

In April 1930, the civil disobedience movement started under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. In different parts of the country specially in the Punjab, Bengal and UP revolutionary groups had meanwhile become active. We regularly attended Congress meetings, took part in parades and organised hartals at the time of arrest of Congress leaders. When I came to my village after my matriculation examination in March 1930 three CID men used to follow me as Ferozepur police suspected that I had connections with underground revolutionary movement at Ferozepur. Only a day atfer my arrival at the village the police from Mardan came to me and warned me against taking part in political activities. I told them if I needed any advice from them I would certainly ask them for it; meanwhile I preferred to do just as I pleased. So they went back but posted one of their men to keep watch over my activities. However I continued my work relating to the civil disobedience movement. I went to a conference held at Utmanzai, the village of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, at the end of March 1930. On return I started work in the Red Shirt movement and took active part in organising parades, public meetings and demonstrations in connection with the civil disobedience movement. As a result I was arrested in May 1930 nearly two months after my return from Ferozepur but was released after a fortnight of detention at Mardan jail.

After release from jail I stepped up my political activities and went to attend a big conference held at Ziarat Kaka Saheb in Nowshera tehsil where Red Shirt leaders collected to chalk out their future programme of action. By this time Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and other big leaders had already been arrested.

On return from the conference in June 1930, I was again arrested and sentenced to 1½ years' rigorous imprisonment after a brief trial. After conviction, I was transferred to Peshawar central jail from Mardan district jail.

In those days the conditions inside jail were very bad. A large number of prisoners were herded together and kept in the same barrack. There was resentment against this kind of treatment to

political prisoners who raised the slogan of 'Inqilab Zindabad' in protest. As a punishment young political prisoners were often flogged. I was also once earmarked for this punishment but because of my tender age was spared at the last moment.

The jails were then jampacked with political prisoners. Even the judicial lock-ups were sometimes emptied to accommodate them. Once I was made to wake up at the middle of the night and taken to the office of the superintendent of jail (it was on the night between 23 and 24 December 1930—BRT) and interrogated for over an hour. They asked me of my brother, Hari Kishan and some other relations and friends. Since I did not at that time know anything about the Punjab governor shooting incident at Lahore (on 23 December 1930), I answered their questions in the normal way. I was thereafter brought back to my prison. Next day I learnt from the papers we used to smuggle into the jail that Hari Kishan had fired at the governor of Punjab at Lahore and that he had been arrested on the spot. Then it dawned on me that the police had interrogated me in the middle of the night because they wanted information from me about Hari Kishan, his colleagues and his possible accomplices in this case and also about our relations who might have given him help.

A few months later, almost all the political prisoners were released under Gandhi-Irwin pact but I, being a young brother of Hari Kishan, continued to be detained in jail. A couple of other prisoners who were accused of murder of an English officer at Qissa Khwani Bazar were also not released. During this period in jail, I met some great revolutionary leaders like Haji Mohammad Amin of Shinwari tribe who had organised and led an attack on Makri godown of the British army and waged a valiant battle against their army at Peshawar. I also met another great revolutionary, Sanobar Hussain, who was the president of the Frontier Province Naujawan Bharat Sabha. Whereas Sanobar Hussain was released after Gandhi-Irwin pact, Haji Mohammad Amin was sent up for trial but as they could not make out any case against him, he too had to be released. On release he escaped to tribal area whence he made his way to Afghanistan. There due to his social and religious status he became a very important personality at Adda Sharif, a renowned Muslim shrine a few miles from Jalalabad on Peshawar-Kabul road. I also came in contact

with Abdul Latif Affandi who belonged to Malakand Political Agency. He had gone to Afghanistan from where he had proceeded to Turkey at the time of the Hijrat movement. During Indian independence struggle he had again returned to his country and had plunged into the movement.

When I learnt that Hari Kishan was to be executed on 9 June 1931 in Mianwali jail I applied to the jail authorities for permission to see my brother before he was hanged. My request was forwarded to the state government which granted it.

I was taken to Mianwali jail in handcuffs under police escort, leaving Peshawar on 7 June 1931. By a coincidence my parents and relations were also travelling by the same train from Nowshera. We reached Mianwali next day. From the railway station I was taken straight to the jail where I was taken for an interview with my brother, Hari Kishan. My parents and other relations too paid their last visit to him on the same day.

I was very much surprised at my first glimpse of Hari Kishan because of the pink of health I found him in. There was, indeed, a glow on his face which seemed amazing. I had never seen him in such good health ever in my life. He being only 11 months older than me, we used to feel we were almost of the same age. We were brothers, friends and comrades rolled into one. We had grown up together and always confided to each other. I knew, and of course he also, that he was going to be executed the next day. I was therefore very much surprised to see him so cheerful, even jovial. He asked me of my health. I told him not to worry about my health. On the other hand I was so worried about him and assured him that every effort was being made to save his life. He said, "O ! They should not do so; I am anxiously awaiting the day when I will put the hangman's noose around my neck." I always knew him to be brave and a patriot with deep passion for his country. But I was amazed to see now his self-possession and strength of character at such a moment. It was only then that I actually realised the extent of human endurance a person is capable of, who stakes his all for a really noble cause. The passion and love for his country can indeed impel a man forward to almost limitless sacrifices. Hari Kishan had faith in the philosophy of rebirth and so he said, "I want to get it over with as early as possible so that I may be born again

and repeat my action. I am very happy that very soon I will join my mentors like Bhagat Singh and his comrades." At last we parted but in my heart I found his stature had meanwhile grown immeasurably.

I was taken back to my solitary cell in Mianwali jail where I stayed overnight. My cell was a small dark room infested with bugs and mosquitoes. As the latrine was also inside the cell the stink was unbearable. Mianwali is known for scorching heat in this month of June. I could neither eat nor sleep. The next day early in the morning, slogans of 'Inqilab Zindabad', 'Bharat Mata Zindabad', 'Bhagat Singh Zindabad' rang in my ears. I could hear these slogans for some time and after that there was sudden silence. I understood what had happened. And there was now a sudden hush in the entire jail for a long time.

At about 10 in the morning, a warder and an assistant jailer came to my cell, opened the door and let me out into the small courtyard of the cell. They arranged for some water to be brought for me for washing. The assistant jailer showed some sympathy and told me, Hari Kishan died a true hero's death. He said that never before had he seen a young man facing death with such courage and smile on his face. He died with the words 'Bharat Mata Zindabad', 'Inqilab Zindabad' on his lips. He had put on 13 lb in weight since he came to Mianwali jail. The same evening, I was again taken to Mianwali railway station for my return journey to Peshawar central jail. During this return journey also my parents and relations travelled by the same train, back to their village.

After some days I found many more workers of Naujawan Bharat Sabha of Peshawar being brought into the prison for holding demonstrations, meetings and protests in violation of section 144 against the execution of Shahid Hari Kishan. During these days Ram Kishan who was once upon a time president of Punjab Provincial Naujawan Bharat Sabha was also arrested on the frontier borders and sent to jail. He was wearing a long beard and was disguised as a mullah named Ghulam Murtaza at the time of his arrest. After some days of his arrival he had a talk with me. He asked me to help him have a shave to avoid identification. To me he disclosed his real identity as also his past and asked me to arrange information to be sent to his contacts at

Lahore. I arranged all this for him. We were together during my last three months in jail that time. We used to discuss all the time about the political developments, tactics and ideology of our struggle. It was as a result of these discussions that I learnt a good deal about political struggles and attained some ideological maturity. I still consider him my ideological guru.

After expiry of my sentence in September 1931 I was taken to the jail at Mardan under police escort and detained there under frontier crimes regulation act. After some days in jail I was produced before a magistrate who asked me to furnish a security of Rs 5000 under the frontier crimes regulation act (with five sureties of equal amount) or to go in for another three years' imprisonment. The police had already arrested my elder brother Jamuna Das as also my younger brother Ishwar Das under the same regulation act in an effort to terrorise and destroy our family as a whole. Many of our relations, Charan Das Kapur, Kanshi Ram Kapur, Radha Kishan, Gokal Chand and others, were also arrested and detained at Mardan jail. In spite of every intimidation by the police, the sureties were somehow arranged. The government had therefore no option but to release me.

After the failure of the talks at the round table conference in London Gandhiji was arrested immediately on return to India. Mass arrests of political leaders and workers followed. Unprecedented terrorisation and suppression by the police and military came in their wake. Under section 17B I was rearrested in the month of June 1932 and taken to Mardan jail where I remained under trial for nearly 5 months when I was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment and taken to Haripur central jail. My brothers, Lala Jamuna Das and Ishwar Das, were already serving their terms there. I served about 3 months there when I was released at the beginning of 1933 on an appeal. During these three months I along with a number of other political prisoners of Haripur central jail demanded that the prisoners must be given footwear also. This movement caught on and almost the entire jail supported this demand. To keep other inmates of the jail on his side the superintendent of jail had previously reduced somewhat the workload on these prisoners. This policy of jail administration had caused some disunity amongst the ranks of political prisoners. This new struggle and demand for footwear now

reunited the ranks and brought in militancy and sense of unity amongst them. I was in the meantime released on appeal in the month of February 1933. Almost immediately after release I was served with a notice that I was to remain within the village boundary and that I was to report to Mardan police station every day, rain or shine, at 4 in the afternoon. This police station was six miles away from my village. Thus I remained interned till about the end of 1936.

# Ghalla Dher Tenant Agitation and After

The tillers of Ghalla Dher were all tenants of the nawab of Toru who had managed with the help of his agents in the village and the British to have the ownership of almost the entire land of the village transferred to himself. The nawab used to collect heavy rents and all sorts of illegal exactions from the tillers with the help of his agents and with British law and patronage behind him it amounted to a systematic and naked exploitation of the poor tillers. I may here very briefly narrrate some of the customs and practices of the period:

1) On the occasion of any marriage in the peasant families both the parties had to pay certain fixed amounts to the nawab.

2) Standing trees in the fields of the tillers were regarded as the property of the nawab.

3) All families had to do 'begar' (i.e. work without any wages) for 3 to 4 days every month for the nawab at his bidding.

4) In cases of disputes and quarrels amongst the tillers, the nawab would impose heavy fines and thus add to his revenues.

5) The nawab treated the tillers as serfs who had to dance to his tune and turn up to pay respects to him during his visits. They had to bear the burden of his luxurious living during his visits to the village. They had to suffer all sorts of indignities and harassment at the hands of his henchmen. They had to pay heavily for any displeasure of the nawab incurred by them. The nawab later distributed all land of our village among his 4 sons and after taking charge of their respective share they immediately started serving eviction notices on the tillers because,

i) There was growing political consciousness and discontentment amongst the tillers on account of the zoolum of the nawab. The tillers had of late shown sympathy with and even taken part in the Red Shirt movement for the freedom of the country. The nawab could not stand all this new development and apprehended that the tillers might defy him and try to retain possession of

the land even against his wishes. There were instances where the peasantry resisted carrying out the wishes of the nawab.

ii) The nawab wanted to pass on the land on higher rents to new big contractors.

iii) They started growing large orchards on their lands for bigger profits but the result of this was also the same, i.e. dislodging the peasant tillers from their lands.

As against all this the growing resentment of the peasants gradually took the form of organised agitation.

A bullock belonging to a tiller Gulzada trespassed into the fields of a neighbouring tiller who reported the matter to the nawab's son, Azim Khan. He promptly imposed a fine of Rs 40 on this tiller who had no means to pay. To recover the fine, Azim Khan took away his bullock and sold it. This infuriated Gulzada as this bullock was his only property. He came to me with his complaint. I considered it proper to make this issue a startingpoint for developing and organising a movement amongst the tillers for putting an end to the zoolum of the nawab. I therefore advised him to uproot the newly planted orchard of Azim Khan. Gulzada did this in the middle of one night and threw the plants into the river. This gave a big jolt to the nawab and his sons who could never dream of such behaviour from their tenants. But instead of handing over the matter to the police they took the law into their own hands. They imposed a fine on the entire village for damages. They knew of course that it was done by Gulzada who had no other property to make up for the loss. This naturally created a great resentment in the entire village.

I was also asked to pay a share of this collective fine. I told the nawab's son that he had no authority to impose such a fine and challenged him to collect it. This started off the agitation of the peasants against the nawab and his sons which became a wide movement for land reforms in the area. It had a big impact on the surrounding villages also where the peasants were undergoing similar hardships. I organised the peasants into a solid phalanx for action against the zoolum of the nawab and for land reforms. They got together in meetings, processions and made representations to the government and district authorities. The movement spread to the neighbouring villages also. Though efforts were made to keep the movement nonviolent people were

so desperate as a result of the zoolum of the nawab, his sons and their agents that a few misguided and overenthusiastic young men murdered one of the most notorious agents of the nawab, Dalel Khan. This gave a handle to government and the nawab who let loose a rein of terror and tried to suppress the movement. Many peasants were put behind the bars but they did not yield and somehow continued to keep possession of their land. The outstanding achievement of this movement was that the tradition of 'begar', collection of collective or individual fines, and other such feudal practices were abolished for good.

The peasants had to make many sacrifices in this struggle but their gains were considerable. This gave them confidence in their unity and strength. I was extremely proud and happy of my contribution towards bringing about this success in spite of all the handicaps of internment in the village and constant police and CID surveillance. I was also conscious of a feeling of personal vendetta on the part of the nawab against me. I too of course had not forgotten that it was these very nawabs who had my grandfather murdered so treacherously for very similar reasons. My father too suffered much at the hands of these nawabs.

In Peshawar and Mardan districts a large number of peasants cultivating the lands owned by nawabs and other such feudal khans belonged to Mohamand and Saffi tribal areas. In this movement they saw their own emancipation and started looking up to me for guidance for similar movements against their own exploitation. This gave me a chance to build and develop contacts with the tribal area which proved very helpful in my future political work.

In 1937 general elections were held in the different provinces of India. My elder brother Lala Jamuna Das fought the election from Mardan and Peshawar constituency on Congress ticket and won with a thumping majority against heavy odds. For our family at that time was financially very hard up and no help could be given to us from our organisation either. Anyway the Congress government came to power under the chief ministership of Dr Khan Saheb, elder brother of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. With the coming into power of the Khan brothers and the Congress in the province the hopes of the peasantry which had suffered untold hardships under the feudal system protected by the

British rose high. They saw their chance for a general relief and particularly for land reforms which were long overdue.

On the other hand the feudal nawabs and the khans of the province also started uniting as advised by the British. They too began to creep into the Congress organisation and the government and build their influence there. This was no difficult because in this province many leaders of the Congress organisation and the government themselves came from this feudal class of big landlords. Because of all this the Congress government did not introduce radical land reforms which somewhat disillusioned the peasantry causing acute discontent among them. They began to lose patience and started organising themselves for struggles for reforms. The peasantry of Ghalla Dher area having an earlier experience of similar struggles naturally took the lead in this new upsurge.

We began by making representations in 1938 to the government and district authorities and even to the nawabs. I led several deputations of the peasantry of the area to these quarters but with no response. On the other hand the nawab and his sons started serving eviction notices and were pressing for actual eviction in the manner they had done earlier during 1933-34. The peasantry which had been tilling the land for generations had nowhere to go. It was now a question of life and death for them and therefore they sent appeal after appeal to 'our own government' not to help the nawabs in their nefarious game, but all this fell on deaf ears. The district administration and the police gave all-out support to the nawabs to throw away the tillers from the land. But the cultivators naturally could not allow all this. And we organised a strong resistance movement against ejectment from the land and the households. When the nawab's men and the police tried to take possession of a plot of land the peasantry of the entire village and even those of the surrounding villages offered powerful and united resistance making it impossible for them to carry out their plan. The nawab's men and the police force had to turn back without achieving their objectives. Even in cases where a certain plot was taken over, it was reoccupied in no time.

The nawabs, however, were adamant and had the support of the entire district administration behind them. The police lathi-

charged the peasantry on several occasions to disperse them so that they could hand over possession of the land to the nawab. Even children and women were not spared.

Local leaders of the Congress Socialist Party and other progressive organisations also joined our movement. The police started arresting the leaders. In the first batch they arrested some leaders like Mian Mukaramshah of Dag-Ismail Khel. I somehow evaded arrest to help continue the movement. In the next batches Maulana Abdul Rahim Popalzai, Acharaj Ram Ghumandi, Sadhu Singh, Ram Saran Nagina and others were arrested. I too was arrested some time later when leading a huge demonstration which passed through the main bazars of Mardan. In spite of these arrests the movement gained momentum and spread to other villages. The administration became panicky and desperate. They started mass arrests. Once almost the entire adult male peasant population of the village was arrested including my younger brother Anant. Many teenagers were also roped in and it was left to the women folk and the children to resist the efforts of the police and the nawab to take possession of the lands.

The movement meanwhile had gained very wide publicity which perturbed Dr Khan Saheb and his government when the matter came up before the All India Congress Committee session at Delhi in 1938. The All India Congress Committee deputed a committee comprising of leaders like Acharya Narendra Deva, Munshi Ahmad Din and others to make an inquiry and report on this movement. The peasantry had suffered immensely but the efforts of the nawab to eject them had not borne fruit. Over 300 adult males were arrested from a single village, our Ghalla Dher.

This agitation also had an impact on the national scene which started a chain reaction and brought to the forefront the urgent need for reforms in land system all over the country. Because of public pressure those arrested had, therefore, to be hurriedly let off.

From all this it is evident that I started my political work in the North West Frontier Province in the Red Shirt movement and the Congress organisation. I remained president of the Halqa Congress committee at Mardan from 1937 onwards. I was a member of the executive of the tehsil and district Congress committees and when in 1939 Subhas Chandra Bose contested the Congress pre-

sidential election in opposition to Dr Pattabi Sitaramayya, nominee of Mahatma Gandhi, I vigorously supported the former in this contest. And in course of the consequent struggle between Subhas Babu and Gandhiji when the former had left the Congress and formed the Forward Bloc, I helped organise the Forward Bloc in the province and became its provincial propaganda secretary. Subhas Bose at this stage undertook an extensive tour of the country which brought him to Peshawar also in 1939 where he was given a rousing reception by all sections and specially the people of Peshawar city. It was when he was being taken in a huge procession in the city that he came to know about the death of Dr Khan Saheb's son. He immediately stopped the procession and went straight to Dr Khan Saheb's residence at Peshawar to convey his sincere condolence at his bereavement.

A huge public meeting was held in the evening at Peshawar where Subhas Chandra Bose explained why he had left the Congress organisation.

# Preparations for Escape

Meanwhile in the international arena various forces were regrouping themselves and the clouds of the impending world war had begun to engulf all nations. In India, too, the revolutionary camp started thinking of taking advantage of the situation by procuring for ourselves the help of anti-imperialist nations in our neighbourhood. It was in connection with this that it became necessary for me to explore different routes across the border of our country and establish contacts on these routes through the tribal area to help achieve the objectives of freedom. By 1939 I had, meanwhile, become an active member of the Communist Party, at that time known as the Kirty Party. The party assigned me the duty of rendering help to patriots and revolutionaries coming over to the country from exile outside. It also became my duty to arrange help to our revolutionaries in crossing over the border to other countries. To successfully discharge my duties, I had to explore various unfrequented tracks for safe conduct of these workers and to establish fresh contacts on such routes. For this purpose I made a trip to Chitral up to Mastuj in August-September 1939. And it was when I was in Chitral that the second world war broke out.

We held several meetings in the Frontier province and the Punjab to chalk out our strategy and future line of action in the new circumstances. I met my guru, Ram Kishan, and Dhanwantary, one of the greatest revolutionaries of that period at Lahore. After long discussions, we came to the conclusion that I should gradually withdraw from day-to-day political work along the old lines and confine my activities to my own special field of helping revolutionaries to cross the borders.

For reliable contacts in the area, it was essential to educate the tribals as regards political objectives and the revolutionary struggle for attainment of freedom from the British. The party (called Kirty Party at that time) decided to depute Gur-

charan Singh Sarsra for this job. He was posted at Takht Bai, Peshawar, Badrashi, Mardan and many other places in turn where he gave lessons and training to such contacts as were called to these places from time to time.

In May 1940 I married although the nature of my political work that lay ahead was not quite suitable for such a step. However because of social customs prevailing in the family and among my relations I had to agree to this marriage.

In the month of February that year, Ram Kishan and Sodhi Harmindar Singh came to see me at my village, Ghalla Dher. The war had started in Europe. We had our contacts in the Indian army who worked inside the armed forces. Some of our men in the army refused to go abroad. Some even deserted. It became a problem how to maintain them and utilise them in political work. It was proposed to explore the possibility of shifting them to tribal area for training in anti-British sabotage work. I was asked to go over to the tribes for discussion with our comrades there about the possibility of implementing this proposal. I went to the territory inhabited by the Bajaur tribe and met Sanobar Hussain and had discussions with him on this issue. He was of the opinion that the matter must be discussed with Haji Mohammad Amin Shenwari who had come at that time to the Mohamand tribe from Adda Sharif. We went there but he had already left the tribal area again for Adda Sharif. We however met there other comrades and friends and held discussions with them. According to the proposal a large area of land was to be purchased for a colony where these ex-armymen were to be lodged and trained. This was considered possible but the general opinion was that their services could not be utilised for sabotage work in India because the British, too, had their agents among the tribes who would keep watch over them and inform their masters. It was however possible to utilise their services in the event of a war between the tribes and the British. On return I reported the results of my discussions to Ram Kishan. This plan was given up. As an alternative these men were distributed in small groups and deployed in different parts of the country for underground work of our party (CPI).

It was about a fortnight after my marriage in May 1940 that Ram Kishan and Achhar Singh Cheena came to me in my

village at Ghalla Dher. They told me that the party wanted to arrange for the crossing over of a very important person of international eminence to the Soviet Union and very sure and safe arrangements were required to escort him across the borders and then to the Soviet Union. In those days after the arrest of Baba Gurmukh Singh all our contacts in Kabul had been arrested. It was therefore very essential that the arrangements should be very sure and pucca. Next day all three of us left for Peshawar to discuss and plan our arrangements.

At Peshawar we met one of our very old contacts, Abad Khan. He was formerly in transport service between Peshawar and Kabul, and as such was at one time a link between the comrades in India and Baba Gurmukh Singh in Kabul. He was a reliable, politically conscious and helpful comrade. We discussed with him the various routes to Kabul and the arrangements required for safe conduct. In the absence of a contact in Kabul for a long time the contacts on various routes were also not sure. It was therefore decided that because of the great importance of the mission all arrangements should be made de novo. We felt that it would take some time to make and finalise these arrangements, and therefore decided to arrange safe accommodation for lodging the VIP at Peshawar till the arrangements were complete in all respects. Abad Khan, Ram Kishan and myself—all of us individually started making necessary investigations for such arrangements. Within a week each one of us could give relevant details after reconnaisance and study, making arrangements along the proposed routes. We exchanged notes and the final route decided was from Peshawar to Shabkadar, then to Gandab valley, Lalpura, Jalalabad, from there to Haji Mohammad Amin at Adda Sharif and again back to Jallalabad and finally from there to Kabul. Achhar Singh Cheena was deputed to contact the VIP for arranging his journey to Peshawar. We had fixed up a house inside Kissa Khwani Bazar where the VIP was to be lodged. This house belonged to Mian Feroze Shah.

Acchar Singh Cheena at this time informed me that he had just learnt that the VIP for whose escape we were making all these arrangements had issued an ultimatum to the Bengal government to remove the Holwell monument by 4 July 1940. He

came to know of this new development through the press and wondered whether, it was a change of plan on the part of Netaji Subhas Bose (for he was the VIP—BRT) or was only meant to divert the attention of the government from his proposed journey across the borders. We were of the opinion that he would not back out of his declared course of action. Achhar Singh met Netaji on 1 July 1940 according to the previous plan and informed him of the arrangements made for his escape. Netaji said that he was very much disappointed, that he could not immediately undertake his proposed journey on account of the agitation for removal of the monument. He was apprehending arrest any day and told Achhar Singh that the journey would have to be postponed in that eventuality. Achhar Singh returned to Peshawar and told us all this.

We continued our work of checking up various routes and establishing contacts on the way. It was also decided to send Ram Kishan to Kabul and further to the Soviet Union to establish fresh contacts. He left for Kabul on 5 or 6 July 1940. After a month I received a written message from him from Kabul stating that the people at Kabul were not in a cooperative mood and did not trust him. He therefore asked for further instructions. At that time most of our party leaders were in prison. It was very difficult for me to get him instructions from party leaders as those still outside the prison could not be located readily. Somehow I managed to establish link with Achhar Singh Cheena. I had suddenly come across Gurcharan Singh through whom I sent a message to Achhar Singh that I must meet him. On receipt of my message he came to meet me in my village. I told him of the situation at the Kabul end. He said that he had instruction from the party to go to Kabul personally, if necessary. He therefore asked me to come to Peshawar with him and arrange for his journey to Kabul. We went to Peshawar, contacted Abad Khan and arranged for his journey. Achhar Singh Cheena reached Kabul safely but he too failed to establish contact with the Soviet Union through their embassy at Kabul. Ram Kishan and Achhar Singh, therefore, decided to cross over to the Soviet Union and make direct and personal efforts on their own for contacting the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. They reached successfully up to the Soviet borders, but while

Achhar Singh succeeded in crossing the river Amu, Ram Kishan swept away by its current and killed. Thus did one of the noblest sons of India lay down his life in a far-off land. Achhar Singh however was arrested by the Soviet border security guards who informed their superiors in Moscow about him and conveyed his message. A person who knew him because of his earlier visits to Moscow was immediately sent to identify him. He was then taken to Moscow but we did not hear from him for a long time.

It will not be out of place here to mention how the Kirty Party (Communist Party) came to undertake the responsibility of arranging for the safe escape of Netaji to the Soviet Union. Sardar Naranjan Singh Talib, who was then the editor of *Desh Darpan* in Calcutta, was a good friend of Netaji. Netaji had confided to Talib his desire to escape to the Soviet Union and sought the help of the Communist Party of India in making this possible. Talib contacted Achhar Singh Cheena, an underground communist leader then staying in Calcutta. In his schooldays Cheena had gone to England, crossed over to the USA where he joined the Ghadar Party. The Ghadar Party later on sent him to the Soviet Union for studies. He remained there for a considerable time and then came back to India. He was one of the top leaders of the Kirty Party in those days. Talib conveyed to him Netaji's wishes. Achhar Singh desired to meet Netaji personally to discuss with him the political aspects of his mission before he could ask the party to undertake such a responsibility. This meeting was therefore arranged.

The story of the discussion between the two was later narrated to me by Netaji himself during our stay at Kabul. Achhar Singh had asked him to tell him the purpose of his mission. Netaji had told him, inter alia, that in a situation where:

(i) The rightist forces within the Congress had succeeded in dislodging him from the Congress presidentship;

(ii) The leftist forces could not be mobilised against the Gandhites on the one hand and the British on the other;

(iii) Netaji was convinced that the British could not be driven out without an armed uprising in India; and

(iv) The second world war had now created a good opportunity for such an uprising, he had decided on a policy of secur-

ing armed help from a friendly, anti-imperialist country, viz the Soviet Union. He also made it clear that it was only the Communist Party which could help him in his bid for escape.

Netaji had also mentioned to Achhar Singh that he had discussions about his mission with leaders like Rabindranath Tagore, Jayaprakash Narayan, Lala Shankarlal of Delhi, Sardul Singh Kaveeshar and others on whose opinion he counted a good deal and they had all approved of his plans.

And as he was firmly convinced that this objective could only be realised by a person of his stature and calibre, he had started taking practical steps in this direction, some time in February or March 1940.

After hearing from him about the purpose of his mission and his faith that it was only an anti-imperialist power like the Soviet Union which could render us effective help in our struggle against the imperialists and for independence, Achhar Singh promised to convey his wishes to the party. Our party discussed the issue thoroughly and concluded that his anti-imperialist stand was in keeping with the policy of the party, and in coming to this conclusion we had the benefit of consulting Teja Singh Swatantra also who happened to be in jail at that time. Moreover, once in the Soviet Union he would come to know many things and would develop into a more consistent anti-imperialist. He was a big personality and could be an asset to the cause of anti-imperialist forces and should be given all help —that is what we thought. The Soviet Union, at one time or the other, might be in a position to render effective help to our country in the attainment of our objectives. The party therefore decided that his escape should be arranged very carefully after going through every detail very minutely, taking no risks or chances to ensure his safe escape because he was an important political figure and it would be a big slur on the party if he were arrested. And so the party deputed for the purpose only experienced comrades of the calibre of Ram Kishan, Achhar Singh Cheena and myself who had intimate knowledge of the border area and of the social conditions of the people there. Netaji personally knew Achhar Singh Cheena and Ram Kishan and of their party work.

Netaji, as we know, was arrested in the Holwell movement agitation in July 1940 although he was not very happy in having undertaken the struggle because of which he had to put off his plan. So while in jail in Calcutta he was planning to get out as early as possible. With this end in view he started a hungerstrike. The government had to yield as it could not take a chance with the life of such a popular leader. Immediately after his release he contacted Niranjan Singh Talib for further contacts with the communists but Achhar Singh Cheena had already gone to the Soviet Union and many of the top leaders of the party were in jail and hence he could not make any contacts. Netaji then decided to call a meeting of the working committee of the All India Forward Bloc at Calcutta. Mian Akbar Shah of the Frontier province came to attend this meeting. He was an advocate of Nowshera who had gone to Afghanistan at the time of the Hijrat movement. From there he had later on crossed over to the Soviet Union and studied at the 'University of the Toilers of the East' in Moscow. He remained in the Soviet Union for some time and then returned to India. On arrival he was arrested and sentenced to three year's imprisonment in the Peshawar conspiracy case. After his release he joined the independence movement in the North West Frontier Province.

Netaji had a talk with him about his plan of escape. Mian Akbar Shah told him that he did not have any contacts in that area and that he had no knowledge of jobs of that nature but that he knew of such a comrade who was connected with the Communist Party. He also told Netaji that this comrade was the younger brother of the wellknown martyr, Hari Kishan, and came of a great revolutionary family. Mian Akbar Shah also informed Netaji that he had intimate relations with this comrade as they had worked together in many kisan agitations at Ghalla Dher and other places. Netaji agreed to his suggestion and decided upon the secret addresses and code words for exchange of messages in case there was a possibility of help from this comrade.

On return from Calcutta, Mian Akbar Shah came to my village and told me about his talk with Netaji and asked me if I could arrange for his escape. I told him that I already had instructions from my party and that I had made arrangements for

his escape in July 1940. We decided to go to Peshawar the next day where we contacted Abad Khan. After discussion with Abad Khan Akbar Shah sent a word to Netaji that the matter could be arranged.

I started renewing and perfecting my contacts in the area and on the possible routes. We got news from Netaji that he would be arriving by Frontier Mail at Peshawar on 19 January 1941. As revealed to me by Netaji later on he left his house in Calcutta at the dead of night on 16 January by a car driven by his nephew, Sisir Bose (son of Sarat Chandra Bose), reaching Dhanbad early on the 17th morning. Another of his nephews—also a son of Sarat Chandra Bose—was a mining engineer at Dhanbad. As planned in advance he got off the car some distance before the house of this nephew. He was dressed as an upcountry Muslim who had come on a visit. He reached the house alone and was accommodated in a separate guest room as an outsider and not as a relation of the family so that the neighbours and servants might not get suspicious. He spent the day there. In the darkness of the evening he left the house alone and was picked up later by the same car. The two nephews and the wife of Asoke Bose then drove him to Gomo. He got off the car some distance from the railway station and walked up to the station alone in the dark of night. The nephews waited at a distance till their uncle safely boarded the train. From here he reached Delhi on the 18th evening all alone. At Delhi he boarded the Frontier Mail which took him to Peshawar on the evening of 19 January 1941. According to the plans Netaji got off the train at Peshawar cantonment. As planned Mian Akbar Shah also boarded the same train at the city station to check if Netaji had arrived and also to observe if he was being followed and watched. Netaji himself arranged for the coolie at the cantonment station, went out, took a tonga and asked the tongawala to take him to Taj Mahal Hotel. Akbar Shah followed him in another tonga. Netaji booked for himself a room in the Taj Mahal Hotel under the assumed name of Ziauddin. In his journey from Calcutta to Peshawar he was throughout dressed as a Muslim intellectual sporting a beard and wearing a fez cap and sherwani.

Netaji later on at Kabul told me in detail about his journey

from Delhi to Peshawar. He said that in the same first class compartment Nawab Akbar Khan of Hoti (Mardan) was also travelling with him. He kept Netaji busy with an interesting talk about the wealth of various princes like the nizam of Hyderabad and others. On enquiry Netaji told him that he was an insurance agent going to Peshawar in connection with his business.

Mian Akbar Shah passed by the hotel in his tonga but later on sent one Abdul Majid Khan, an advocate and class-fellow of Mian Akbar Shah and younger brother of Abdul Qayyum Khan (who later on became leader of Muslim League), to Netaji. Abdul Majid Khan told him that everything was all right and that he would be taken away from the hotel next morning. Netaji later on told me that it was not an intelligent thing to do as he knew already that he was to be taken from the hotel the next day and therefore it was unnecessary to send this emissary.

I want to introduce here another patriot who was also taken into confidence in all these arrangements. He was Mian Mohd Shah, a landlord of Pabbi, district Peshawar, and a close friend of mine and Mian Akbar Shah. The three of us worked together in many political struggles including the Ghalla Dher kisan agitation. He had some Afghan friends who used to come to him every winter. We wanted to utilise those contacts if necessary in our journey between Jalalabad and Kabul.

Before Netaji arrived at Peshawar we three held long discussions in connection with arrangements for his escape. It was decided that Netaji could neither be sent alone nor entrusted to an ordinary guide, no matter how reliable the guide might be. The opinion was that one of us three must go with him. Since I had built up good contacts in that area and had experience of work of this nature, it was decided that I was the only suitable person to accompany Netaji to ensure his safe conduct to Kabul and beyond.

Since I was given this onerous responsibility of safely escorting Netaji, I started racking my brains about the various possible routes. Originally in discussion with Ram Kishan and Abad Khan we had decided on Peshawar-Shab Kadar, Gandab valley-Lalpura-Jalalabad-Adda Sharif—back to Jalalabad and Kabul route. During the months since the route was decided upon an incident occurred which discouraged us from adopting

this route. I got news that the British police had arrested a stranger said to to be an enemy spy on that route. I therefore felt that the route would be under strict watch by the British CID agents and must not therefore be adopted. It was a difficult and even critical stage when we had Netaji already with us, while we had yet to finalise our new route and contacts en route. I had to take quick decisions, at the same time ensuring safety. Since Mian Akbar Shah and Mian Mohd Shah had no knowledge of that area I could not discuss the matter with them or take their help and guidance. Abad Khan was the only man who could render me some help in finalising an alternative route. After some discussion with him I decided upon the following route: from Peshawar-Jamrod-Khajuri Maidan British military camp-Afridi and Shinwari tribal area, then in Afghan territory-Garhadi on Kabul-Peshawar road, Bhati Kot-Jalalabad-Adda Sharif, back to Jalalabad and then to Kabul. This was an unfrequented track, never used by any of our comrades earlier and therefore we considered it safe for our purpose. Moreover it was the shortest of all the different routes so far used by various revolutionaries crossing over the borders, although it was rather steep. It was about 13 miles south of the Khyber pass.

We had rented two houses inside Bajauri gate at Peshawar to lodge Netaji. These houses belonged to Mian Feroze Shah. On 20 morning Abdul Khan shifted Netaji to one of the houses rented for this purpose. All of us avoided visits to him lest we arouse suspicion. During this period we arranged for his dresses, Afghan currency, medicines (this we obtained from Dr Charu Chandra Ghose, the president of NWFP Congress committee though he did not know whom they were meant for) and other articles of use during the journey. I had asked for a guide in our trek through the tribal area and was awaiting his arrival.

# The Great Escape

I met Netaji for the first time in the evening of 21 January 1941 and after introducing myself explained to him the arrangements made for his escape. He wanted to leave Peshawar as early as possible because after the news of his escape leaked out the police and the CID would be alerted and the escape would become more difficult. I told him that we would be leaving early in the morning the next day.

Later while at Kabul he told me that he was somewhat disappointed at the first meeting with me. He said that he had heard big stories of my work and experience in revolutionary movements and about the sacrifice of our family in course of our freedom struggle. He had thus built up an image in his mind of a robust Pathan, tall and big, and very imposing. He said that my thin and slim body and rather short stature therefore caused him some disappointment.

At my first meeting with Netaji, it was decided that he would impersonate as a deaf and dumb Muslim gentleman going to Adda Sharif on a pilgrimage. He would continue to using Ziauddin as his name. He was dressed like a Pathan wearing Malaysia cloth salwar, kamiz, Pathan leather jacket, khaki kulla and lungi as head gear and Peshawari chappals as footwear. He also carried a Kabuli blanket. By this time he had about an inch long beard. Because of good build, sharp features and fair complexion, he looked like a real Pathan. This made me very happy because it was not possible to identify him in this dress. I only hoped that he would not speak in public as he did not know Pashtu. I must say he played his role superbly. He was all smiles after wearing his new dress. I also assumed the name of Rahmat Khan. As arranged by Abad Khan, a guide arrived on the evening of 21 January 1941. Early next morning a car arranged by Abad Khan was parked some distance from the house where Netaji was lodged. At about

6-30 a.m. Netaji and I walked up to the place where the car was parked. The driver Abad Khan and the guide were awaiting us. We took with us some parathas, fried eggs and our blankets. We carried no luggage with us.

We started for Jamrod road in the car where it was checked at the barrier. Abad Khan signed in the register and we proceeded further to Khajuri Maidan British military camp which is nearly 11 miles from Peshawar. We got off the car about a furlong before the border with the Shinwari tribe. From this border point we took a hilly foot track about a furlong from the military camp. There is a Muslim shrine just across the border and many pilgrims visit it now and then. We too posed as pilgrims. The military sentry could see us but taking us for genuine pilgrims had no suspicions. According to our instructions the car waited for sufficient time until we entered deep into the tribal area.

We were now three—Netaji, the guide and myself. We had gone nearly a mile from the shrine when Netaji said that he felt tired and wanted to sit down for rest. We had not yet had any strenuous journey but the excitement of the mission and fear of arrest must have caused a certain feeling of exhaustion in him. This is not unusual in such cases and I recalled similar occasions when on such missions I had felt I could hardly walk. We sat down for a brief respite and it occurred to me that maybe Netaji did not know that now we were beyond British jurisdiction and deep into the tribal area. When I told him this he was very happy and felt relaxed, breathing the air of an independent territory not under the domination of a foreign power. He now almost felt gay. I felt sorry that I had not told him all this earlier. We collected some dry wood, made a bonfire, heated our parathas and had a quick lunch and again started on our journey.

After this Netaji was very cheerful and full of energy and vigour. The journey was uphill for some time when we had to cross through a small pass on to a hill. After reaching the top our downhill journey started. We soon reached the village Pishkan Maina at the foot of the hill. We were in the village by about midnight. According to the customs of the tribes the strangers and visitors stayed in the mosques or in a common sitting place called Hujra where unmarried young men, strangers and guests spent the night. This was a sort of community resting place

where men get together in their spare time for a chat. Our guide took us to the mosque in the village. The mosque comprised of a hall with only one small entrance but no windows or ventilators. There were nearly 25 men inside—some of them sleeping for the night, others exchanging notes and telling stories before dispersing to their houses. As it was a cold night, they had prepared a fire inside.

As we knocked at the door, it was opened and we made our way in. There was no furniture or cots. The floor was covered with thick layer of dry grass which provided a comfortable cushion. The people inside were either sitting in groups talking or lying on the floor. We also seated ourselves on the floor and told a group of people inside that we were strangers from Peshawar and wanted something to eat. Two of the men immediately went out. One brought two pots of ready mixed tea and the other brought a few cakes of salted maize bread. By the time we reached this mosque we had already travelled a distance of nearly ten miles and were therefore somewhat tired and hungry as well. We were very happy that we could get something to eat in the middle of the night in this small village of free tribal Pathans of about 60 houses built of stones and timber plastered with mud from within. Although it was a simple meal we enjoyed it very much. Netaji felt relaxed and, as he told me afterwards, he was astonished to see such prompt response from the people to our request for food. They did not make any inquiries as to who we were and where we were headed for. Nor did we pay anything for this food. It is a custom with the Pathans to provide meals and resting place to strangers without charge and even our mention of payment for food would have caused embarrassment and would have indicated that we did not know their customs and were in fact not Pathans. After taking our food we slept on the floor. The room was quite warm and we did not require any covering.

We had hardly slept for an hour when I felt somebody shaking me. When I woke up Netaji asked me to come outside with him. Coming out he told me that he felt uneasy because inside it was too stuffy and full of smoke and he needed some fresh air. I gave him some fresh water and put nasal drops to clear up his nose and throat. It was not, of course, correct for us to stay out too long for that might cause suspicion. We went in after some time

and tried to get some sleep though we could not get any as Netaji all the time felt suffocated because of the stuffiness of the room. He kept waking up for fresh air and had to move out a couple of times. We were happy when the night was over.

In the morning we were again given tea and parathas by the men there. They now asked us where we were going. As already planned beforehand we told them that we were masons from Peshawar and were now going to the next village for constructing the house of Malik Latif Khan. It is necessary on such missions to anticipate such questions well ahead of time and have replies ready. We thanked our hosts in the customary manner and made a start for our onward journey by about 9 in the morning of 23 January 1941. Since Netaji had learnt that he was no longer in the Indian territory he was relaxed and was taking it easy. He never displayed impatience or undue haste and hurry and behaved in a very natural manner. Before the start he asked me if we could arrange for a mule ride for him because he felt that we could thus make more progress in our journey. Since we had already told our hosts that we were going only to the next village we decided not to ask for a ride to that village and left it till our next stop. The next village on our way was nearly three miles away. We reached there at about noon. Netaji was not used to walking long distances on foot, particularly in a rugged terrain. The journey the day before had been fairly tiresome. Moreover for lack of good and sound sleep the night before he had to take rest every now and then and three miles took us nearly three hours to cover.

This village was slightly bigger than the last one. There were some stationery shops also. Here I looked for a mule for Netaji. We went to an Afridi Sikh shopkeeper and inquired if we could hire a mule. He told us that he had mules of his own and that we could hire them. After some bargaining he agreed to let us have his mule for a ride up to the first village inside the Afghan border for Rs 8 only. He told us that it would take him some time to provide proper cushions for a good and comfortable seat on muleback. In the meantime we could take some rest and our meals also. While he was getting the mule ready he had us served good hot tea and parathas. This was indeed very welcome. When the mule with dry grass packed in sacks for cushions on the back

was ready, we bade farewell to the Sikh shopkeeper and started on our journey to the next village nearly 10 miles away and within the Afghan borders. We had to negotiate a mountain range which separated the Afghan territory from the tribal area. There is a pass at a considerable height through this range which provided a foot track. There is free movement from the tribal area to Afghan territory and vice versa. On mule back Netaji had a comfortable journey. According to our previous understanding Netaji was not to speak on the way, particularly when a third person was around. The people inhabiting the border area generally carry on small trade and smuggling and such other business of rather dubious nature. They therefore neither want to interfere in others' affairs nor want others to interfere in theirs. This helped us in our smooth and safe journey towards our destination. By about 9 in the evening we were at the pass. It was quite dark but the mule man and our guide were of great help to us here. They were well acquainted with the difficulties of the track. Our ascent to the top of the pass was from the eastern side which is the sunny side. On the western side there was no sun and we encountered dense forest and snow on the track during our descent which we had not bargained for. To Netaji it was totally unexpected and his mule slipped over the snow. He fell off the mule but the guide and the mule-man immediately picked him up. Fortunately, he was not hurt except for a few bruises. Mule ride during descent particularly on such a track is neither safe nor comfortable. Netaji, therefore, decided to walk down the hill beyond the pass. We reached the first Afghan village at about 1 a.m. on 24 January. This was a small one at the foothills inhabited by the Shinwari tribe. Our guide and the mule-man knew this village. They were told that we would need a mule from this village for Netaji till we reached the asphalt Peshawar-Kabul road near the village Garhdi. We had planned to stay overnight here and start the next morning.

The guide and the mule-man took us to the house of one of the villagers they knew very well. It was past midnight and cold. We knocked at the door of this one-room house. A man opened the door and after some preliminaries we told him that we were strangers on our way to the next village Garhdi and wanted to spend the night there in this village. He was very hospitable and

very casually asked us to come in and make ourselves comfortable. There were two cots in the room which also housed a few goats at one corner. We perched ourselves on one of the cots. On our arrival the man lit a kerosene lamp. It so happened that this man had been married that very day and it was his first night with his bride in his home. However he woke her up and she seemed to be pleasantly surprised to see us and offered to cook for us. We were hungry and therefore we readily agreed. We certainly did need something to eat.

After we had made ourselves at home, we started discussing about our journey. Our host had some mules and we asked for one for Netaji. He readily agreed charging Rs 13 for this service and suggested that we leave after taking our food and not wait till daybreak, stating very casually that it would be safer for us to do so. He probably thought that like many other people in the border area we were also in some sort of a business of dubious nature. We agreed to his suggestion and decided to start on the next lap of our journey after taking our meals.

We were amazed at the promptness with which the newly-wed bride cooked and served us food. She gave us scrambled eggs and salted parathas. I could tell from his expressions that Netaji really relished the dinner and was grateful that the bride was taking so much pains to make us comfortable and serve us really delicious food at that unearthly hour. Though she was modest, she never displayed any undue shyness and behaved as if we were her own kith and kin. We probably would not have relished our food more in a posh hotel anywhere in the world. She was still in her bridal dress and wearing ornaments of a newly-wed.

After we had our food we sent back the guide who was to accompany us only up to this point. I wanted to give him a written message in code for Abad Khan and searched for a piece of paper and a pen but we had none. When this bride guessed my problem she took out a ball of thread, removed its wrappings and handed it over to me for writing my message. She poured a few drops of water in her palm and, added some indigo to serve as ink and gave me a small stick to be used as a pen. I scribbled the message on the piece of paper and handed it over to the guide who left along with the mule-man.

We had told our host that we were going to Adda Sharif on a pilgrimage but he was still not sure of the purpose of our journey and insisted that in the interest of our own safety we should undertake the next leg of our journey in the darkness of the night. After our dinner we set out at about 5 in the morning on 24 January 1974. The host also accompanied us along with one of his men and a mule. Netaji was once again on mule-back. The track was on level ground through a nonperennial river bed. We did not encounter any trouble on the way. Netaji was also in good spirits and felt like a free man in a free territory. We reached Garhdi at about 9 a.m. This place is about 11 miles from our previous stop. The mule-man told us that there was a sacred shrine called Garhdi Baba (Garhdi Ghaus) on the road in the outskirts of the village Garhdi and inside the graveyard of the village. He suggested that we first go for pilgrimage to this shrine. We took his advice, went to the shrine and paid our respects according to the Muslim custom of the area. Immediately after the the mule-man told us that in case anything happened to us we should not disclose that we stayed with him for the night and hired his mule for our use. He also told us that we could call on him in case of need in future also. He probably meant that on return journey also we could depend upon him for help. We were very glad that we completed our first objective of reaching the Peshawar-Kabul road, about 13 miles inside Afghanistan without any untoward incident.

# To Jalalabad Adda Sharif

From Garhdi we wanted to go to Jalalabad which was about 40 miles away. We wanted to take a ride in a truck from this point for our journey to Jalalabad. We however did not want to travel by a bus. Even previously we had not considered it safe and advisable to travel by bus from Peshawar. There might be CID-men or acquaintances from Peshawar in the bus. We also did not want to sit and wait for a ride on the roadside for anybody to start asking questions. We therefore started treking along the road hoping for any truck to stop at our request and pick us up for Jalalabad. The trucks do pick up passengers for ride on payment. It is a common practice because there is no regular bus service between villages on the road.

We were just two of us now. Netaji felt very happy and elated. We had walked only a small distance when I saw Netaji almost dancing with joy. He was saying: "Kaisa sunder desh hai"? I asked what was so beautiful about these barren hills and parched land except that it was free? He answered, "Yehi to bahut bari sunderta hai". Thereafter we started worrying about what would happen if he were arrested in Afghan territory. Netaji said that the present regime had come to power with the help of the British and therefore it was very likely that they would hand us over to the British. My reaction was however different. I felt that the Afghan government would take an independent action on this issue as they themselves had fought against Bachha-i-Sakko who was an ally of the British. That struggle was more against the British than against Bachha-i-Sakko. The Indian people had sympathised with the struggle and helped the present leadership to come to power. Culturally and socially the Afghan people and the Indians, particularly those of the Frontier province, are very close to each another. In similar cases, earlier, the Afghan government had taken an independent stand. For example important revolutionaries like Baba Gurmukh Singh and Baba Prithvi Singh had been arrested in Afghanistan but not handed

over to the British. On the other hand they had been asked to go to the country of their choice which in their case had been the Soviet Union and that country also had accepted them without any hesitation. I said that particularly in Netaji's case there was a still better chance of the Afghan government taking an independent stand because of his national and international standing. If the Afghan government handed him over to the British, their own people would resent it because of their sympathy with the cause of Indian independence. Lastly Afghan tradition also would not allow such a course. He agreed with me but said that the time being somewhat abnormal, anything might happen. Thus walking along the road and discussing various problems we reached another village, Arzanao. By now we had walked two miles very leisurely. We then sat down by the road side for a little rest.

The road cut through a hill taking a sharp turn immediately beyond the place we were sitting. We could not therefore see anybody approaching us from that side of the road. All of a sudden a huge Pathan, having a big moustache, came upon us from that side. He stopped by us and started asking questions. He wanted to know where we came from and what we were doing there. I told him that we were from Lalpura. Now Lalpura is a village across the river Kabul about 6 miles from our place. I mentioned Lalpura to convince him that we belonged to Afghanistan. Moreover I had some sentimental attachment to that village as I had some close and intimate revolutionary friends from that village who were with us in the Peshawar jail. These friends were our contacts and were of great help to our revolutionary comrades in Afghanistan. But now the new-comer immediately said that we could not be from that village as he himself belonged to it. I told him that actually we were from across the border. I had now my uncle with me who was not well and was deaf and dumb. And so I was taking him to Adda Sharif for curing him of his ailment. He appeared to be satisfied. He said he had some knowledge of medical science and wanted to see my uncle's tongue. I made signs to Netaji explaining the gist of our talk. He therefore put his tongue out and the new-comer immediately wiped his hand with his shirt and felt Netaji's tongue by pressing it. He said that the tongue was really stiff and suggested a cure. He advised us to go to Adda Sharif but also try the treat-

ment suggested by him. He said that Netaji should mix some alum in hot water and keep it in his mouth for some time, three or four times a day. As we got up and made a move to go, he also got up and said that he belonged to Lalpura and in case we needed any help we could call on him. I told him that now we were going straight to Adda Sharif but on our return we might pass through Lalpura and then we would certainly look him up. However we did not ask him his name or his address and felt rather relieved after parting company with him.

But no truck was coming our way. We therefore resumed our journey on foot. We had walked for about an hour when we reached village Basol. We were in this village when I saw a truck coming from Peshawar side. I signalled the driver who pulled up his truck. He however refused to pick us up because he said he was not going to Jalalabad. He told us that another truck was following his and that I should make a request to the driver of that truck. It was now about three in the afternoon and we were feeling hungry but we did not find any tea-shop nearby. We did not however want to search for it either, for it would not be wise to go into the village for food. Moreover, we were very keen on getting a lift and did not want to miss any such opportunity. A little later the second truck arrived from Peshawar side. This truck was loaded with boxes of tea. I waved the driver who stopped the truck and took us on. We sat on the tea boxes. When the truck reached Bhati Kot, a village on the roadside the driver parked the truck and told us that we could have tea before we proceeded further. We got off and went to a tea-shop. We had some boiled eggs and tea. Netaji had told me that he did not want to have lunch. He said that he would rather have a good dinner at Jalalabad. After tea we again got on the truck. Netaji was slightly on the heavier side in build and therefore needed help in getting into the truck. But he was taking this arduous journey in the proper spirit, with confidence and even joy. He never complained of lack of proper food or conveyance. He suffered all inconveniences of the journey cheerfuly which was a great inspiration to me.

The truck took off after nearly half an hour stoppage. We had gone a few miles when the truck was stopped by two constables in official uniform. They told the driver to wait for the ilaqadar

(a district official) who was coming from village Char-Deh for Jalalabad. The driver obeyed. And so we kept waiting for him for over two hours and then finally the official arrived. A seat was vacated for him at the front. Anyway we reached Jalalabad about 8 in the evening on 24 January 1941 and immediately went in search of accommodation in a suitable hotel.

Jalalabad is the capital of the eastern province of Jalalabad in Afghanistan. It is one of the largest cities of the country. The British had their consular office in this city situated on the bank of the river Kabul. It is also fairly important commercially dealing in the agricultural products of Laghman valley—dry fruit, particularly chalghoza, rice and timber. New modern buildings and roads were coming up at that time. The new part of the town was built on modern lines with broad roads and alleys. At the time of Amir Habibullah Khan, father of king Amanullah Khan, this was in fact the winter capital of Afghanistan. Mr Duad Khan who later on became the prime minister of Afghanistan (and now the president) was the governor of this province at that time. There is a busy and crowded bazar on the roadside displaying merchandise of all sorts. There are also many hotels in the town. In these hotels generally there are no separate rooms for guests. There is a big hall furnished with beautiful thick rugs. The hall used to be kept warm by what is known as Bukhari system of heating which consists of a drum-shaped steel hearth with water drum on top. An exhaust pipe passes through the water drum and outside the room to take away the smoke. Fuel wood is burnt in the steel hearth. The visitors could stay in the hotel as long as they liked and generally took food and tea in turn at their leisure. They are fond of taking tea ever so often because of the cold. For rest and sleep they could lie down on the soft rug in the hall which is made cosy and comfortable by the heating system. The visitors took their food while squatting on the floor of the hall.

We wanted a separate room to ourselves so that we could be sure of good sleep. He advised us to sleep in the main room as it was warm and comfortable. A separate room, he said, would not be suitable. On our insistence however he agreed to arrange for a separate room for us and also agreed to provide us with cots and beds when I told him that my uncle was ill and needed

a separate room. I told him that other guests would be put to inconvenience if my uncle were to spend the night in the hall. The hotel-keeper also provided us with charcoal and angithi for heating up our room.

We had here a really good dinner. Netaji ate to his heart's content. Preparations of chicken curry and kababs were really delicious. Netaji was also served with pulao. After the hard day the dinner and the comfortable bed were, indeed, very welcome. We were fast asleep by 10 p.m. and woke up near about 7 in the morning. We had told the hotel-keeper that we were going to Adda Sharif early in the morning and wanted tea and eggs and dry naan to be served in time. We left the hotel by nearly 8 in the morning. Netaji had a good sound sleep and felt cheerful.

Adda Sharif is about 4½ miles from Jalalabad. We took a tonga and reached it on the morning of 25 January. We went straight to the shrine, offered our prayers in the traditional manner and made some offerings in cash according to the prevailing custom. Thereafter we made some discreet and casual inquiry about Haji Mohd Amin. Meeting him was the main object of our visit to Adda Sharif. Before making inquiries we looked around on our own to see if we could trace Haji Saheb ourselves. We were told that he had taken his abode in the village, Lalman, where he had his special prayer place. This place was about 1½ miles from Adda Sharif. We started for Lalman and reached it by about 11.

Lalman is a small and prosperous village with good agricultural land around. The houses were made of stone and mud. Haji Saheb had a big and spacious house of his own with a masjid attached to it. We learnt that at that time he was in the masjid. We went there into his private room in the masjid where he was sitting on the floor along with two of his companions. In the room a thick layer of dry grass served as a soft cushion. There were no furniture or fixtures in the room except for a few religious books. This was a sort of study-room of Haji Saheb.

The door was opened after we had knocked. I recognised Haji Saheb but he did not recognise me because of my disguise and the long interval of nearly 11 years that had passed since we had met last. He enquired who we were and where we were from. We had already anticipated such a situation and had prepared our-

selves for such queries to be answered in such a way that he himself would ask for privacy. I told him we were coming from Bajaur Swal Killa. This was the place where our common friends and Sanobar Hussain and Sayyed Ghulam Murtaza lived with Malik Mohd Ummar Khan. He immediately took the hint and asked others to leave. He closed the door. I told him who I was. He immediately got up and embraced me. I then introduced Netaji to him as a comrade and close friend but did not reveal his identity. He embraced Netaji also. He made us take our seats and went home to arrange for our meals and brought with him some kabli pomegranates. It was evident that he was very happy and excited to see us and told me it was better late than never. He meant that world was in turmoil on account of the world war and in situations like that countries changed their political structure overnight. Some go under domination, others shake off their shackles and become independent. He meant that it was a period when we should get our freedom from the British. We made ourselves comfortable and had a hearty talk. For the benefit of Netaji we had our talk in Urdu. I told that the main purpose of our visit was to reestablish our contacts and arrange to send this comrade to the Soviet Union as he was a very important figure in Indian political life. We should now reassess and regroup all our forces for a determined struggle and final onslaught on the enemy. I told him that I would come back to him after my mission and let him know what had transpired and what was required to be done. I told him that at present I wanted to discuss with him the details of our onward journey and wanted to know about the hazards on the way and possible precautions that we should take to avoid being apprehended.

Haji Saheb told us that from there we should turn back to Jalalabad from where we should look for a truck for a ride to Kabul. Several trucks go to Kabul from Peshawar side but in case we did not get any we could hire a tonga. Jalalabad is a place where all sorts of people live. We should not therefore stay there more than it was necessary. He further advised us that in case somebody made enquiries we should say we were men of Naqeeb Saheb. He was a religious leader with wide influence among the masses and was also in the administration. He was generally considered pro-British and therefore nobody would probe deeper.

We did not consider it advisable or even necessary to get a guide from Haji Mohd Amin.

I told Haji Saheb that I would be returning in a month, maybe a little more depending on how the situation developed. I wanted to know what and how much help he could give us in our struggle against the British. Haji Saheb said that he always considered the British the enemy of his people. He was once in the thick of the struggle and would not hesitate to be in it once again. He said that he cherished the friendship he had with me in jail at Peshawar in 1930. He said that in jail he had heard of the sacrifices of our family and later on also from Sanobar Hussain and would consider my word as a command for him in the struggle against the British. One of our comrades at Peshawar, Mohammad Shah, knew some people in this area as they visited his place every year in winter for seasonal jobs. We were not sure that we would succeed in meeting Haji Saheb and therefore had arranged for independent contact for a guide from Jalalabad to Kabul before we left Peshawar. According to our assessment we were to reach Adda Sharif on 25 January. We had arranged with Mohammad Shah that the guide Mohkam Din should contact us here on that day at Adda Sharif. We asked Haji Saheb to give us a man who could trace for us this guide as it would not be correct for us to make enquiries about him there.

Haji Saheb's man who accompanied us to Adda Sharif looked for and located Mohkam Din. Netaji, myself and Mohkam Din then went on foot to Jalalabad along a shorter foot track as we could not get any tonga for our return journey to Jalalabad. It was evening when we reached Jalalabad once again. We gave Mohkam Din some money and told him to have his food and stay the night somewhere in a chai-khana. We told him that we would be leaving by truck the next morning, i.e. on the morning of 26 January and therefore he should look for a truck and if possible make arrangements with the driver for a lift. We went to our room in the hotel where we had spent the previous night. Mohkam Din came to us in the evening, but did not turn up in the morning. We kept waiting for him but later learnt that he was scared away by the hotel man who had taken him for a thief.

# To Kabul—the Last Lap

Since we had no hope of getting a lift on a truck immediately and did not want to stay at Jalalabad too long, we took a tonga and reached the next village Sultanpur about 9 miles away. We did not want to show undue haste and therefore waited a little and kept a watch on the tonga which had brought us to that place. When we saw it starting on its return journey we hired a tonga for our next stop at Fatehabad nearly 14 miles from Sultanpur. It is a fairly good-sized town with a respectable market place. Here we stopped for lunch. Eating places here are known as hotels while tea-shops are called chai-khana. We went to a hotel and asked for pulao, chicken and naan-i-khushk. Netaji relished his lunch very much. He was happy and confident. We were going according to schedule and hoped to reach our destination Kabul on 27 January. It was past noon and we did not notice any truck coming from Peshawar side. We started moving on foot along the road and continued till we noticed Mimla Hotel. We were tempted to get in but we avoided for reasons of safety as it looked like a rather posh government hotel for tourists, officials, foreigners and state guests. Mimla is a beautiful area, with many orchards, green fields and running water all around. It was a beauty spot. There were several hotels on the roadside. We had meanwhile trekked nearly 10 miles from Fatehabad and needed some rest and also something to eat. We got into one of these hotels. We intended to stay there till we got conveyance as it was already evening and we could not possibly continue our journey on foot.

We asked for some soup, dry naan and rice as Netaji wanted something light for dinner. Before they could serve us our dinner, we noticed a truck coming. I immediately signalled with my hand and the driver stopped. I told the hotelman that we could not now have our food as we did not want to miss this rare chance of getting a truck ride. I offered a rupee

or two as compensation for the food prepared by him but he did not accept the money and said that it was all right and we need not bother—they would sell the food to some other customers.

By a coincidence this truck was also loaded with tea boxes. We climbed into the truck. At about 9 p.m. we reached a place called Gandamak. The truck stopped here for dinner. This is more or less the mid-point between Kabul and Peshawar. The trucks from both sides halt here for a considerable time. This is an important place of the Khugiani tribe. There are a number of shops and hotels on the roadside. Drivers, passengers and visitors frequent these hotels. We also went in for our food and asked for a good dinner of chicken and pulao and naan-i-khushk. We again took off in the truck at about 10 p.m. The next leg of the journey up to Budkhak (5 hours by truck) was very difficult and strenuous. It is a mountainous road at considerable altitude through the famous Lataband Pass. We therefore found it extremely cold. The snow was already there and we were sitting on tea boxes in an open truck. After a long journey during the night we reached Budkhak at about 4 in the morning.

Budkhak is an important point where checking is done by customs and excise officials. The foreigners travelling with passports have also to get their papers checked here. All other passengers get their names and addresses recorded at this point according to instructions of the Afghan government. We were aware of all this and were therefore prepared for it. Netaji was requested by me to follow the drivers because they do not have to record their names in the register. After I saw Netaji following the drivers and getting into the hotel I joined other passengers to get my name recorded in the register. I noticed that the official concerned was fast asleep and there was nobody to record names of the passengers. I heard somebody saying that since nobody was recording names we should cross over and everybody started moving across the gate. I joined Netaji in the hotel. Other passengers of our truck also came into the same hotel. We had our tea and lay down on the floor for some sleep along with other passengers. We were very happy and relieved to get across Budkhak because we were afraid of a very strict check at this point. This time of the night was perhaps most suitable for crossing over this barrier. Netaji was laughing with joy. He was

happy to realise that we had crossed the last check-point without any mishap.

Budkhak is very wellknown for its fruits. This is perhaps the only place in the world where real good quality sarda is grown. Afghanistan is wellknown for this sarda which is their favourite fruit. We were now only 13 miles from Kabul. At about 8 in the morning the driver announced that the truck was leaving. The passengers got on but we did not want to continue our journey by truck. The truck was still to pass through the customs barrier. Moreover passengers on truck would be taken for people coming from a long distance, maybe from Peshawar. We wanted to avoid a further checkup about which we had no detailed information. We wanted to pose as local people in order to avoid inquiry. We therefore took a tonga for Kabul city at about 9 a.m. It was quite normal and usual for local people to go to Kabul on tonga. We reached the boundaries of Kabul at about 11 in the morning of 27 January without any checking on the way. We finally got off the tonga at Lahori Gate of Kabul.

The city of Kabul is situated in a valley surrounded by hills. The river Kabul cuts through the city. There are bazars along both the banks. The city at the foothill is protected from enemy attack from outside by a huge wall constructed many years ago. It is an old wall constructed on top of the hill on three sides of the city. The wall is used as a protection for the army defending the city from invaders. There are a number of gates in the wall around the city, but no such gates have been provided in the wall along and on top of the hill.

We had now to look for a place to stay. There are a few good hotels frequented by visitors, tourists and foreigners but it was not considered advisable for us to go to such hotels. We looked for ordinary sarais (inns) where commonfolk stay. A little inside the Lahori Gate there was a sarai frequented by camel-owners. They used to stay there along with their camels. In the sarai there were a few single rooms and dormitories. It was an old double-storey building made of katcha bricks. No food was supplied by the sarai. We rented a room in the upper storey for 5 Afghani rupees (i.e. nearly Re 1) a day. We used to get our tea from the shop opposite the sarai.

After taking the room we went to the bazar to purchase some

bedding for us as the sarai provided only two cots for us in the room. The sarai-man purchased fuel wood for us. We also purchased charcoal for heating the room. We purchased also some second-hand cheap woollen garments for Netaji, the kind which is generally used by common people in the city.

After having made our lodging arrangements we went out to eat something. It was about 1.30 p.m. when we noticed a fairly neat eating place displaying steaming hot halwa in huge round trays and katlamas, i.e. huge sized white and round parathas of many layers fried in ghee. These were very tempting. We went to the shop and asked for half a pao of halwa and half a pao of these katlamas for each one of us. We were surprised when we saw the bulk of the food we had ordered. Each plate seemed almost 4 times the quantity we thought we had ordered for. It occurred to me immediately that a seer in Kabul was almost 8 times the seer in India. Working on charak (1/4 of Afghan seer) basis the half pao of each item given to us was more than one full Indian pao. We acted promptly to cover up our mistake because we did not want to be considered strangers. We told the waiter to pack for us one of the plates of halwa and katlama and to distribute in two throther plates for us to eat there. We decided that we should try and promptly pick up the various systems and customs there which we did not know to avoid such mistakes in future. We took our purchases to our room in the hotel. Our purchases included candles also because there was no electric light in the sarai.

While we were doing our shopping in the afternoon a news broadcast on the radio caught our ears. Subhas Chandra Bose had disappeared, it said, from his place in Calcutta and a big search was being made about his whereabouts. Later in the evening in the privacy of our room Netaji narrated to me the whole plan of his escape as made by him in Calcutta. He said that on receipt of the message that necessary arrangements had been made to take him across the borders, he decided to grow a beard so that he could disguise himself. But it was not possible for him to grow a beard in public as that would give rise to suspicion. He announced that he had started meditation and maunabrat (observation of total silence) behind closed doors and none could visit him. Netaji had very great faith, regard and confidence in

his sister-in-law, Mrs Sarat Chandra Bose. He considered her as his second mother. He said that in times of difficulty he always turned to her for advice and guidance. He took her into confidence as also Sarat Chandra Bose and their son Sisir Bose. With their help he succeeded in dodging the police. For nearly eight days he stayed in selfconfinement in a separate room when he grew a beard to help him to disguise himself. Thereafter he left Calcutta on the night of 16 January 1941, but the impression was allowed to continue that he was still in his room. He had left instructions that the food be taken to his room every day in the same manner as when he was in the room. On 27 January he had to appear at a court in Calcutta for a case. The day before and ten days after he had left Calcutta on this secret mission his disappearance was publicly announced. Netaji remarked that evening that the entire thing worked according to the plan. He had planned for these ten days to reach across the borders without the police and CID looking for him all over the place.

On the afternoon of the day we arrived at Kabul and the day after we surveyed the city to acquaint ourselves with the bazars, the various embassies and such other places so that we might not be handicapped on account of lack of familiarity with these details. We made the sarai our starting point from where we moved to different directions. From here we went towards Bazar Pull-i-Khishti, then Bazar Labe Darya, Bazar-i-Shahi, and Babar where there is mausoleum of the Mughal emperor Babar with a beautiful garden all round it, and, Ali Abbed and then New Kabul, Russian embassy, Gumrak (customs office), Shor Bazar and so many other places.

It was on one of these visits that Netaji noticed a wayside photographer at a point where Bazar-i-Shahi meets Bazar Labe Darya. He told me we should get ourselves photographed in this dress. I very politely said that we should not go in for such a venture just at that time. We should have many such opportunities in the future when there would be no harm in getting ourselves photographed.

I tried to explain that by now many thousands of his photographs must have been published in the papers. Even the common people could now recognise him and were acquainted with his

photograph. His photograph would most likely be published in even in the press of Afghanistan. Whenever a photographer took a photograph and developed it he would naturally look at it minutely and the negative would be retained by him. There was therefore every chance that he might recognise Subhas Bose. The photographer could at any time refer back to his photograph and compare it with the one seen by him in the press. I therefore stressed that it would be taking unnecessary risk to have our photographs taken. Besides we could not be sure of the photographer as a man. He might have connections with the police, British CID or have associations with Indians which was very likely.

I was sorry that I was dissuading such a great leader from fulfilling this small wish. I now recall how this great man from Bengal suffered all these hardships with me on this trip in which he did not know the terrain, the language, the customs and way of living of the country he was visiting. A man used to good and clean living had to live in shacks, sometimes even without food. But because of his burning patriotism he took all this in his stride.

I was very glad to see that Netaji took my words very gracefully. He said that he had very little experience of underground life and was not aware of its technical aspects. He said he was happy that he had the guidance of a man so well experienced in the work of such a nature.

# In Kabul—the First Stage

We continued our rounds in Kabul on 27-28 January 1941 to get an idea of the city.

Our object in coming to Kabul was to arrange Netaji's escape to the Soviet Union with the help of the Soviet embassy there. For this the first thing was to establish contact with the embassy for negotiations. During those days there was a strict watch on the Soviet embassy and it was not easy to contact the embassy officials without arousing suspicion of the government of Afghanistan and of other countries also who kept vigilant watch over one another's activities and diplomatic missions. At one time we even decided to force an entry though the embassy gates without any prior engagement or appointment but we found it very risky because in addition to the Afghan police guarding the gates there were also Russian guards inside. Moreover we found a number of suspicious-looking individuals in the vicinity who appeared to be the agents of other embassies for keeping watch on all entering or leaving the embassy. We therefore considered it unwise to do anything rash to ensure that we do not get apprehended before we could even establish our first contacts with the Soviet diplomatic mission. We were dressed as ordinary Afghans to avoid suspicion as we had to stay in Kabul for some time. Unfortunately that dress was not suitable for entry into the embassy and for establishing contact with the mission.

Eventually we dropped the idea of entry into the embassy without contacts. Netaji was of the opinion that the Afghan government was under the influence of the British and therefore it might hand us over to the British if things got known. Although I held a different view and felt that the government of Afghanistan in that case would give us an option and allow us to go to the country of our choice, I had to submit to his views on this issue. From 28 January we started observing the Soviet officials moving in and out of the embassy to recognise them by face. We

decided to talk to some of these officials when they were moving about in the city and thus establish contact. On 29 January we noticed one of them coming out of the mission on foot. We followed him for some distance and made an effort to talk to him when he was passing through a street leading to Bazar Labe Darya. I talked to him in Persian and told him that we wanted to give him a letter for the ambassador and requested him to pass this on to the latter. In this letter Netaji had introduced himself stating that he wanted to contact the ambassador in person as he intended to go to the Soviet Union. Unfortunately we did not get any response. The Soviet official said something in Russian which we could not follow and went away.

On 30 January we again arrived in the vicinity of the Soviet embassy. The building on Kabul Bazar road on the right bank of the river Kabul is surrounded by high boundary walls enclosing a big open area. The two-storey building of the embassy is spacious and of rather old architectural design.

At this time of the year, the city was covered with a blanket of snow. It was cold. We stationed ourselves in the sun on the river bank opposite the embassy from where we could see the gates and all those who went in and came out of the embassy. It was not unusual for people to sit at that place in the sun. After some time we saw two Russian ladies coming out of the embassy. We watched and followed them to the Bazar Labe Darya. When we saw them slow down probably for getting into a store we saw our chance and tried to attract their attention. I addressed them in Persian and told them quietly that we had been trying to contact the Russian ambassador but had not met with success. I further told them that we wanted them to take a message from us to the ambassador. I tried to pass on the written message to them but they only shook their heads, said nothing and moved on. It was the same message that we had wanted to pass on to the Russian official the day before. This kind of attitude on both occasions from the embassy staff confirmed our view that they had instructions not to get involved in discussions or to have contact with the local people.

We came back to our sarai very much disappointed. It was evening and very cold. We lighted the fire in our small room.

I took my seat on the same cot with Netaji so that we could talk without anybody overhearing us. We reviewed the whole situation and talked about our next step. I knew that the Soviet mission had a trade agency in Bazar-i-Shahi about half a mile from the embassy. I had this information before leaving India. We decided that it was less risky to contact the trade agency as Afghan nationals frequently visited that office in connection with business. By now we were hungry. I went out and brought some fried fish, Afghan naan and meat stew from the hotel in the bazar. Our food was different from the usual food of ordinary Afghan nationals and so we did not go to the restaurants closeby to avoid suspicion. We took our dinner and had a chat for some time before we went to bed. We were handicapped in many ways. It was not possible for us to let Netaji go alone to these officials for two reasons. Firstly, the language problem. The Soviet staff generally did not know English although they could converse in Persian. Secondly, it would not be good to take the risk of having him apprehended. Although it was left for me to make efforts and contact these people, Netaji also wanted to make sure that no serious and incalculable risk was taken by me because if I was arrested he would be left alone which would create a desperate situation. Things were very difficult for us but we had no other option but to try hard and establish contact as early as possible because we could not continue our stay in that sarai in Kabul for too long without getting caught. And Netaji wanted to avoid such a situation at all costs because he was of the firm opinion that the Afghan government might hand us over to the British and thus frustrate all his plans.

Next day, i.e. 31 January 1941, we took a stroll in the city and located the office of the Soviet trade agency. During the day we kept watch over the office and observed those going in and coming out of the office to find out if it would be considered usual and normal procedure for Afghan nationals (as we were dressed like Afghans) to visit the office. The office consisted of an ordinary two-storey building in Bazar-i-Shahi. We decided that it would not be unusual if we made efforts to contact the Soviet trade agent there.

Next day on 1 February we went back to the office of the trade agency. There was a fruit shop nearby. I enquired of the shop-

keeper as to how I could see the Soviet trade agent. It so happened that at that very moment the agent was coming out of his office into the bazar. The shop-keeper pointed towards him and told me that he was the trade agent. We followed him for some distance and at an opportune moment approached him and told him that we were from India and wanted to go to the Soviet Union. I requested him to take our message to the ambassador. He told us that for this purpose we should go directly to the Soviet embassy secretariat. This at first disappointed us very much but we thought it over and felt that there could be several reasons for such a reply. First, it may be because of the same reasons which rendered fruitless our earlier efforts to approach the Soviet embassy official and again the two Soviet ladies a couple of days earlier. The other reason could be that maybe the trade agent took us for just ordinary applicants for visa for a visit to the Soviet Union which was the business of the embassy staff. Anyway it was of small consolation to us as this time also our effort failed.

Our position was now getting precarious. At times Netaji felt very dejected but he never lost his sense of humour. He would ask with a smile: "Rahmat Khan, ab kcya hoga?" I was optimistic as ever because I was convinced that even if we were arrested the Afghan government true to Pathan tradition and conscious of Indian sympathy for their cause as well as of the importance of Subhas Chandra Bose would not hand us over to the British but would give us an option to go to the country of our choice.

During our strolls and again in the sarai we gave considerable thought to the question of our next step. By now we came to the conclusion that it would be almost impossible to establish some kind of contact with the Soviet embassy. At one time we even considered gate-crashing into the Soviet embassy, both of us together, but on second thoughts decided it would be taking too great a risk, particularly in view of the experience we already had during our past efforts in contacting the embassy officials. Therefore we started thinking of alternative possibilities, including an effort to establish contacts with missions of other countries which might lend us support in helping Netaji cross over to the Soviet Union.

At that time Germany was at war with the British against

whom Netaji also was struggling for the independence of his country. This naturally would suit the interest of Germany in so far as a common purpose of battling against the same imperialist power was concerned. At the same time, the Soviet Union and Germany had a nonaggression pact with each other. We therefore concluded that Germany would definitely help us as it was in their own interest to do so. And so we decided to try and establish contact with the German mission. We thought out a detailed plan before the actual visit to the German legation. Both of us would go there; Netaji alone would enter it and I would come back to our sarai after making sure of his successful entry. If I did not hear from him or about him during the day it would be assumed that everything had gone all right and that the German mission had taken him under its protection and agreed to provide him safe escort. Since in that case it would be my last stroll with him for I would then return to India, he gave me before going into the German legation necessary instructions and messages for contacts back in India. He wrote out an article in English and a letter in Bengali and passed them on to me to be delivered to Sarat Chandra Bose, his elder brother, at Calcutta. He gave me detailed instructions as to how I was to go to Calcutta and contact the latter. He told me that I was not to go direct to Calcutta but to get down at Burdwan and take a local train for Calcutta. I was to stay in a hotel in Calcutta. Clients usually visited Sarat Chandra Bose, who was a great barrister, in the evening. I was therefore to drive in a taxi to 1 Woodburn Park in the evening dressed like one of the clients and ask for Sisir Babu (Dr Sisir Kumar Bose), his nephew. In case he was not there I was to ask for Sarat Chandra Bose himself. If even he was not there I was to ask for Mrs Sarat Chandra Bose. I was to deliver the article and the letter and tell the whole story of his escape. He also gave me another letter for Sardar Sardul Singh Kaveeshar.

We were very hopeful of our success of our mission in the German legation. We were fairly confident that Netaji would be given protection by the Germans and therefore made prior arrangements for contacts between the two of us after such protection was afforded to Netaji. It was arranged that I would come to the bridge on the river Kabul near customs office (Gumrak) at 4.45 p.m. same day. Netaji would send his messenger or come him-

self for any message or further instructions that he might like to pass on to me.

Next day on 2 February we left our sarai to locate the German legation. During our various visits and strolls in the city in the days we had been there we had noticed many other missions but we had never come across the German legation. We did not think there was any risk in asking somebody about the location and therefore we enquired of a shopkeeper about the German safarat. He told us to cross over the bridge by the side of the Soviet embassy and turn right just before a bend in the road and just after passing the Japanese embassy. We knew the way to the Soviet embassy very well and therefore we did not take much time to reach there. Just after we passed the Japanese embassy across the river we noticed a car flying a flag and coming from the New Kabul side. We found that it was the car of the Soviet ambassador which had stalled in the snow near the bend in the road just ahead of us. I immediately told Netaji that it was the Soviet ambassador and that we should talk to him. I approached the ambassador who was still in the car and told him that I wanted to talk to him. When he nodded I told him that we were from India and that my companion who was a few paces behind me was Subhas Chandra Bose. I further told him that he might have come to know about the disappearance of Subhas Chandra Bose from India. We had come here with the only object of contacting him for safe escort of Subhas Chandra Bose to the Soviet Union. I talked to him in Persian and he certainly understood the purpose of my talk. For he asked me how I could prove that my companion was Subhas Chandra Bose and none else. I told him that he could take a good look at him who was then disguised as an Afghan national. I also told him that he might have seen his photographs in the papers and journals and could check them with this gentleman. He took a good look at Netaji who was a few feet away. He was quiet for a while and then drove away. New hopes rising in our hearts were thus nipped in the bud.

This day however we had come here for the German and not the Soviet embassy. But after this encounter we did not consider it safe to turn to the German legation immediately after our talk with the Soviet ambassador. We therefore continued our journey

towards the New Kabul side and after some time we came back and went to the German legation located at the back of Japanese mission. This German legation is also surrounded by big boundary walls with a big gate manned by Afghan police guard. When we were only a few feet away from the gate I stopped while Netaji proceeded further towards the gate, made a motion to the guard for entry. I accompanied him up to the gate with an application in my hand just in case the guard made any enquiries. I was to tell the sentry that my companion was ill and deaf and that he had a nephew in the service of the German legation at Teheran. He had not heard from him for a long time and therefore was worried. He had come with an application requesting the legation for inquiries from Teheran about his nephew. The guard however made no enquiries. The gate opened allowing entry to Netaji. I was happy that Netaji got a safe entry and was hopeful that now our mission was nearing success.

As I turned back, I noticed an Afghan national who had been standing there and watching us was moving towards me. I suspected him to be a British spy watching the German legation. He continued to dog my steps but as soon as I took a turn towards the bazar from the Japanese embassy from where he could not see me, I took long and quick strides to enter the bazar and mingled with the crowd. Meanwhile I managed to wear my coat inside out (as the colour inside was different). I then walked some distance through different roads and came back to the bazar. I did not find the man chasing me any more.

I felt greatly relieved. I even felt happy that a very big load and responsibility was off my shoulders. I could almost visualise the success of our mission at an early date. In this happy and relieved mood I went to a good restaurant, I asked for a good meal and ate to my heart's content. After a while I strolled back to our sarai inside Lahori Gate. I was surprised to see Netaji sitting on the floor of the verandah waiting for me as the key of the room was with me. I immediately opened the door and got in. I found Netaji very upset. He said that we might be arrested any time now. I asked him if he was followed by anybody. He said he did not think so but suspected that his entry into the legation and return therefrom might have caused suspicion to the agents of other embassies. I told him of my experience with the man who

had followed me and said that if there had been an agent there, he must have come after me and therefore there would be none to follow him. We therefore felt that his fears were groundless.

Once inside the room he told me about his experience at the legation. He had met there a young German official, had revealed to him his own identity and narrated the object of his visit there. The German official was greatly excited over meeting Netaji in person and showed him a number of his photographs which had appeared in the papers and journals. He also had arranged for his meeting with the German minister to whom Netaji explained the purpose of his visit and asked for his help in going out of Afghanistan. Netaji also told him that it was not very safe for him in the city and therefore asked for protection of the legation till arrangements could be made for his escort out of the country.

The minister said that he was happy that Netaji had come to them for this purpose. He told Netaji that he had known him as he had met him in the German foreign office during his visit to Ribbentrop, the then German foreign minister. He said he would immediately contact Berlin for instructions. He also hoped for a positive response from Berlin and said that it would take nearly three days to get a word back from Berlin. Till then Netaji was to wait. As for the security of Netaji till his safe departure from Kabul, the German minister said that there was a large number of Afghan employees in the embassy and so it would give rise to suspicion among them if he stayed there. The minister advised him to meet after 3 days one Herr Thomas who was a representative of the Siemens at his office near the customs office on the bank of the river Kabul. By then he expected instructions from Berlin which would be passed on to Thomas for the information of Netaji.

Accordingly we were to wait till 5 February before we could expect any response. Unfortunately, our problems kept mounting in the meantime and final success of our mission seemed only a very remote possibility. On 3-4 February we went out to bazars and other places in the city, for we did think it safe to remain in our room all day. It could rouse suspicion among the neighbours. But having nothing to do we had perforce to spend the second half of the day and the evening in our room in the sarai.

Netaji then used to tell me about his experience and work in the Congress and the circumstances which led him to quit that organisation and establish the Forward Bloc. He also narrated his impressions of the various top Congress leaders including Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and Babu Rajendra Prasad.

A difficult and serious situation awaited us in the evening of the 4 February when we were relaxing in our room in the sarai. An Afghan national in ordinary Afghan dress came to our room and started questioning us. He wanted to know who we were, where we had come from and what was the purpose of our visit. He told us that he belonged to the Afghan police. I told him that we belonged to Lalpura. Lalpura is a fair-sized village on the banks of the river Kabul in the province of Jalalabad in Afghanistan. This village is near the border of the tribal areas. I had some contacts who belonged to this village. Pointing to Netaji I told the inturder that he was my uncle who was ill and that I had brought him for medical treatment and further that we were staying in the sarai because we could not get accommodation in the hospital or any other suitable place. He wanted to know what was the problem with him. I told him that my uncle was deaf and had a partially paralysed tongue and as a result he could neither hear nor speak. He did not seem to be convinced and said that he would come again and asked for some chah-pani. I readily agreed and offered to send for tea. He said that I need not bother and that he would take the tea in cha-khana. Thereafter when I tipped him two Afghan rupees (equivalent to 44 paise) he left saying that he would come again.

We did not like the officious tone of talk of this new visitor and, in fact, it gave us the creeps. It also worried Netaji a good deal.

Next day, on 5 February, we were to see Herr Thomas of the Siemens as fixed with the minister of the German legation. We had our breakfast and then left our sarai to find out the office in the Gumrak area. After a search we finally located the office but it was a little too early. We therefore strolled in the bazar till 11a.m. when the office would open. When we went inside we noticed a young German who, as we learnt later, was a radio

engineer and a few Afghan employees. We went to this engineer and enquired of him about Herr Thomas. He did not seem to understand Persian language as he said something in German. Thereafter Netaji also talked to him in an undertone in German. The German engineer told Netaji that Herr Thomas would be coming in about half an hour and that we could take our seats and wait for him in the office. We however considered it better to go and come back after some time. We did this and on our return were taken to Herr Thomas who was waiting for us. Netaji disclosed his identity to Herr Thomas and thereafter introduced me also. He asked the latter in English if there was any message for us. Herr Thomas said that they had received a message from Berlin saying that they were very glad to hear about the escape of Netaji. It also said that they were making arrangements for his escort and that all possible help would be given to Netaji. Herr Thomas told Netaji to see him again after three days for a further message and instructions from Berlin.

We were glad to learn that Berlin had offered safe escort but we wanted quick action because Netaji was worried about our safety in the city. He expressed his feelings to Herr Thomas and told him that our prolonged stay in the city was dangerous and that we were afraid of being apprehended. He therefore made a request for necessary protection to us till his escort could be arranged. Herr Thomas however said that it would not be possible for him to make any such arrangement but that he would convey our feelings to the German legation. He however offered us financial help but we told him that we did not need any money. Herr Thomas repeated that Berlin was very happy over the escape of Netaji and assured us of speedy arrangements for the escort of Netaji. We fixed our next visit with him on 8 February. Netaji told Herr Thomas that he might not come to him personally but Rahmat Khan would come for further messages.

After this we came out into the bazar and took a stroll. It was time for lunch. We took a hearty lunch in a restaurant in the bazar and returned to our room in the sarai. While in the bazar I noticed that Netaji's dress was not quite the same as those of other ordinary Afghan nationals. I decided therefore to purchase an overcoat for him which would cover his dress. We also needed

some other garments to keep us warm and to protect us against the snow and the extremely cold weather. I left Netaji in the room to relax and went to a Hindu-Afghan shop for the garments. I purchased a secondhand overcoat for Netaji and socks, pajamas, used goloshes for the both of us.

# With Uttam Chand—Our New Host

After the visit of that Afghan spy and apprehending further visits from him I thought of shifting to a safer place but I could not think of any such place. It occurred to me then that Uttam Chand Malhotra, a Hindu relation of some of my village folk who, at one time, was also an active member of Naujawan Bharat Sabha and was in jail with us in 1930 at Peshawar, had shifted to Kabul. There he had set up his business and had later settled down. As a matter of fact, during our many visits to the bazars I had looked for his shop and once had noticed a sign-board on a shop in the name of M. C. Uttam Chand, but I was not sure if the owner was the same person. Since we were in a tight corner now I wanted to contact him for some help. I therefore enquired from the Hindu garment-dealer if he knew Uttam Chand Malhotra. He told me that he was a crockery and radio dealer in Bazar Labe Darya with a signboard in the name of M. C. Uttam Chand. I collected my purchases and went towards the shop of Uttam Chand. After glancing at it for a while I came back to the sarai but I had been back in our room for hardly an hour when the Afghan spy made his second appearance. He asked us peremptorily to come with him to the kotwali. I told him that there was no point in our doing so and repeated my old story of our problem in getting a bed in the hospital for my uncle. I also requested him not to harass us unnecessarily. This time however he was adamant. He said that he had informed the kotwali about us. I told him that he was creating problem just to annoy us without any reason and it did not behove him to embarras strangers who had already so many problems to deal with. I offered him his sharbat of 8 afghanis (2 rupees) and requested him to leave us alone. He left saying that we should get admission in the hospital as soon as possible, otherwise some one also might be after us. From his talk we gathered that he genuinely suspected us of being some kind of smugglers or fishy people indulging in some illicit trade.

After the second visit we were convinced that we must leave the sarai as soon as possible. Netaji was very keen that we immediately make some alternative arrangements. I racked my brains but could not think of any place in Kabul where we could shift and be safe. Netaji and I had long talks about it but could not decide on our next step. It was at this time that Uttam Chand's name came to my mind but I did not mention this to Netaji because I was not sure of his views now. It was nearly 11 years since we had met and since then there could be many changes in his thinking, loyalties and preferences. I first wanted to make some discreet inquiries about him to make sure before I mentioned his name to Netaji. The alternative of shifting to some villages and staying in some mosques for two to three days in each village also came under discussion but we decided it did not suit us as it would become very difficult in that case to keep in touch with our German contacts in Kabul. Although the alternative of shifting to another sarai was not considered as a very safe proposition yet we finally decided on this arrangement. We then had our dinner and went to bed.

On 6 February 1941 we decided to go out and look for a suitable place in the city which could be safer. I did not think it was necessary for Netaji also to come along. I therefore asked him to rest in our room for the day while I went out in search for accommodation. To avoid any suspicion I locked the room from outside and went out on my rounds of the city. In Kabul there are a very large number of sarais patronised by the small traders and villagers from neighbouring area. I visited most of them but did not find any to my liking. Except once for our lunch I roamed about in search of a place till the evening. In the evening I came back and gave Netaji my impressions of my visits to various places. I told him that we would not be better-off after shifting to any of those places visited by me. I further told Netaji we need not be afraid of the spy too much because it was obvious that he was after extracting bribe or blackmail money from us and his ends would not be served if he handed us over to the police. Only we had to continue bribing him every time he called, maybe with bigger amount every time. When Netaji heard this he felt happy and relieved.

The spy said that he was not interested in money and wanted

something of a permanent nature that would remind him of our friendship. I noticed that spy was looking at the wrist-watch I was wearing. He pointed at the watch and asked for it. Now this watch actually belonged to Netaji who had given it to me during our journey through the tribal area. It was a rolled gold watch with thick glass with the number 12 in red. It was a costly one. Moreover Netaji had told me that it was a present to him from his father. I knew he had therefore a sentimental attachment to this watch and so I was very much perturbed when the spy asked for this watch. I was not prepared to part with it at any cost and told the spy that we needed it till at least the treatment of my uncle was over. The spy however continued insisting very firmly. But Netaji judged the situation and indicated to me that I should hand over the watch. After he got the watch, the spy left us stating that now we were friends and offered to help us in time of need.

I was very much upset over the loss of this watch. But Netaji tried to pacify and console me saying that such things happen in the kind of position we were in. He further told me that as already pointed out by me the man was after bribe and that he would not harm us by reporting on us. I was silent for quite a long time and then told Netaji that we should now decide on our future course of action. Next day we were to meet Herr Thomas for any possible message from Berlin but in case we did not get any tangible reply or help from them we decided to choose one of the following courses of action:

1) To contact Uttam Chand for help. This was the first occasion I mentioned Uttam Chand to Netaji and told him how I knew him. I also told him about his work in 1930 at Peshawar when he was arrested because of his active work in Naujawan Bharat Sabha. I did not know about his work since then but now we were in such a difficult position that we had perforce to take recourse to some alternative arrangements.

2) To shift to the other sarai where I had already rented a room.

3) To try to proceed further and cross over the Russian border on our own in the same manner as we had passed through the tribal area during our journey from India to Kabul.

After considerable discussion we arrived at a decision that in case we found that there was further delay in arranging the escort by the German legation we should contact Uttam Chand for help.

On 8 February according to prior arrangements I alone proceeded to the office of Siemens and Co to contact Herr Thomas for any message from Berlin. He told me that he had a talk with the minister that morning who said that no message was received by him from Berlin, that he would help us in any manner he could. I told him of our predicament and narrated to him how the Afghan spy was chasing us. I also told him that our stay in the city was not safe and that it was necessary that very prompt arrangements were made for safe journey of Netaji from Afghanistan. Herr Thomas told me that he would convey all this to the minister and asked me to see him again after three days. I came back and apprised Netaji of my talk with Herr Thomas. We went for lunch thereafter and came back to our room and decided that I should now contact Uttam Chand.

I therefore went straight to his shop. I found him there reading a newspaper. There was also a young boy with him and so I started speaking in Pushto. I recognised him immediately but even then to make sure I asked him if he was from Peshawar. He said "yes" and asked me the purpose of my visit. I told him that I had a message for him from Peshawar and then glanced at the boy. He took the hint and sent the boy out to bring tea. After the boy left I told him that he had not recognised me and revealed my identity to him as the younger brother of the martyr, Hari Kishan of the village Ghalla Dher, where his uncle had got married. I also told him that we were together in jail at Peshawar in 1930. Then recognising me he gave me a vigorous handshake and embraced me. He was now quite excited and asked me how I was in Kabul. I told him that I had come on a very important political mission together with a very important person from India. I explained to him the difficulties we were facing in our stay in Kabul and asked him if he could help us tide over them. When he asked me what help we needed I told him the whole story and also told him the person accompanying me was none other than Subhas Chandra

Bose himself. He was overwhelmed by this information and wanted to know more about our mission. I told him that our immediate problem was of a safe shelter in Kabul. About the details of our mission he would come to know in due course. He suggested that we might take help of some old revolutionaries in Kabul but when I told him that we had no time and that our problem needed immediate attention, he offered to give us shelter in his own house. When I asked him about the location of his house and if it would provide safe shelter and if his views were known in the area, he assured me that his house was in a safe locality and nothing was known about his political views in the area. I told him that we would shift to his house the next day and for that go to his shop at 4.45 in the afternoon. From the shop he was to escort us to his house.

I came back to the sarai and reported the details of my talk with Uttam Chand to Netaji. He was very happy that such arrangements had been made and even said that we should have taken this step earlier to avoid harassment caused to us by the visits of the spy. I explained that Uttam Chand's political activities had taken place a decade earlier and I was not sure about his views at present. We made plans for shifting from the sarai and decided that we would leave our luggage behind at the first instance. I paid the balance of the rent to the chowkidar and left the place at 4.15 in the afternoon of 9 February 1941. Netaji went first. I kept observing from the terrace to see if he was followed. I did not find anybody following Netaji. Thereafter I left the sarai and caught up with him. It was arranged that Netaji would not come to the shop on the other side of the river. I was to walk in the company of Uttam Chand in the direction of the bridge Pule-Khisti and Netaji was to approach in the same direction from the other side of the river. I was to join Netaji at the bridge and both of us were to follow Uttam Chand. Netaji was not to be introduced on the way. When I reached Uttam Chand's shop he was alone, he had sent the boy for meat and vegetables with instructions for dinner for two guests. Everything went according to the plan and it was dark when we reached Uttam Chand's house.

On arrival we were taken upstairs straight into the room furnished for us. I introduced Uttam Chand to Netaji. Uttam

Chand made a bow to him and then embraced him. After some time his wife was also introduced to Netaji.

The residence of Uttam Chand was in the upper storey of a two-storeyed building in Mohalla Hindu Guzar. The floor was occupied by one Roshanlal, a Hindu from Peshawar. The house consisted of three rooms in addition to the kitchen and the bath-room. The two of us were given a separate room furnished after the Central-Asian fashion. The floor was covered with durries and carpets. There was a sandli* in the middle of the room and three thick and low mattresses with cushions around the sandli which were used for sitting and also as beds at night. Netaji and I used two of these mattresses while the third would be taken by others coming into our room.

Immediately after arrival we were served tea. Uttam Chand turned on the radio and it so happened that just at that time some Bengali music was being broadcast. It is a tradition in this country that neighbours and friends also call on the guests and sit with them. In accordance with this tradition, the neighbour, Roshanlal, came upstairs and into our room. He greeted us but kept standing although Uttam Chand offered him a seat. After a while he went downstairs.

During our stay in Kabul and even before on the journey to Kabul Netaji generally could not get the kind of food he was used to. On occasions therefore he complained of heaviness and pain in the stomach. Because of our circumstances we could not go to a physician for treatment. Netaji was glad for having shifted to this house where he could get the required treatment also.

The morning after we had shifted to this house we noticed that Roshanlal's family had vacated their flat. We came to know that they had left suddenly to the house of one of their friends, Radha Kishan. It was the tenth of February 1941. This sudden development caused us a scare. We discussed this among ourselves and asked Uttam Chand to somehow try and find why Roshanlal had left the house so suddenly. Uttam Chand also sensed a danger to himself and also for us. He in fact was so

* Sandli is a sort of small wooden table under which there is an angithi which keeps the huge quilts in the room warm.

upset that he took a close friend of his, Haji Abdul Sobhan, into confidence and told him the whole story.

Haji Abdul Sobhan was originally an Indian citizen from district of Mardan in NWFP. He left India before the first world war and went to the USA where he came in contact with many Indian patriots including the renowned leader of Ghadar Party, Lala Hardayal, at San Francisco. When the war broke out he along with some other colleagues went to Afghanistan to work against the British in that country. After the war came to an end he went to Manchuria and from there to Germany where he married a German lady. Since he had close contacts with the circle close to the royal family, he came back to Afghanistan and settled there as an Afghan national. He had set up a woollen hosiery factory. He had been arrested a number of times and remained in jail for fairly long periods during his political career.

When Uttam Chand came from his shop for lunch at about 2 in the afternoon, he had Haji Abdul Sobhan with him. He introduced Haji Saheb to Netaji and myself. The old patriot warmly embraced both of us in turn and had tears of affection in his eyes. He said he was very fortunate to meet Netaji under such circumstances. This step taken by Netaji, he said, would bring the day of Indian independence closer and that it was a step which had no precedence in the history of Indian independence. After these preliminary greetings we started discussion on the Roshanlal episode over a cup of tea. Both of them were very upset about this development. Netaji was quiet for a considerable time and when at last he asked for my opinion I told him that in all probability Roshanlal deserted his house on account of fear only. If he wanted to hand us over and harm us, something would have certainly happened by now. I stated that Roshanlal was after all an Indian and every Indian felt passionately for Indian independence and had the highest regard for Netaji. There was no doubt that he had recognised Netaji but nobody in his right senses would bring upon himself the eternal shame by handing over a person like Netaji and betraying the cause of Indian independence. I was very firm in my opinion that there was no reason for any fear. But to Uttam Chand, I said, that we did not want to be selfish and if they were still apprehensive of any danger we would be prepared to shift

immediately to some other place. Later on what we learnt confirmed my view. For Roshanlal had told his friend, Radha Kishan, before shifting to his place that he had the feeling that this house was under some spell and influence of evil spirits and that he and his family just could not live there any more. He made up this story as reason for his shifting to the house of his friend. We also learnt that he had never talked about this affair to Uttam Chand or to anybody else.

Although Netaji agreed with me, we found that Uttam Chand and Haji Saheb were still nervous. We therefore decided to shift to a new place the following day. It was decided that Uttam Chand would go to his shop in the morning in the usual manner and I would go out and arrange for accommodation and thereafter shift to our new place on our own.

It would be recalled that we had left our luggage behind in our room in the sarai inside Lahori Gate when we had shifted from that place a day earlier. It was not correct to continue to keep the luggage there and the room locked for too long as it could give cause for suspicion. We decided that we would fetch the luggage immediately. I took Amarnath, the boy servant of Uttam Chand, with me to the sarai in the darkness of the evening. I handed over all the luggage to him to be carried back to Uttam Chand's residence. I left the room unlocked and settled our accounts with the saraiwala and returned to Uttam Chand's place by a circuitous route. We spent the night at Uttam Chand's place and had a good night's sleep.

On the morning of 11 February Uttam Chand left for his shop at the usual time after making arrangement for two days medicine for Netaji and I also left in search for a place. We did not want to go to the sarai in the fruit market where we had arranged the room and had paid two days rent in advance because we had never been there during those two days and our going there now might cause suspicion. By now I knew almost all the roads and sarais of the city. I selected a sarai run by and frequented by Pathans who were generally truck-owners, truck-drivers and passengers belonging to different Pathan tribes of Afghanistan. This sarai called Sarai-Zazian (Zazi is an Afghan tribe) was situated in the chowk of Bazar Labe-Darya. This

was also a double-storeyed building but a better sarai than the one inside the Lahori Gate. I rented a room in the upper storey and got it furnished with two cots. I also arranged for charcoal for heating the room. In the afternoon Netaji and I shifted to the sarai along with our luggage.

The next day on 12 February we were to meet Herr Thomas in his office for any message from Berlin. Since Netaji was not keeping fit I wanted to keep close to him as much as possible. It was also necessary in view of our previous experience of the visits of the Afghan spy in our Lahori Gate sarai. We therefore decided that Uttam Chand would act as a courier between us and Herr Thomas. He came back from his visit to Siemen's office and told us that no message had been received from Berlin. By now we had lost all hope from this source and after some discussion with Netaji we decided that we should try and make our own independent arrangements. Netaji told me to discuss with Uttam Chand and Haji Saheb to see if they had any contacts who could be of some help to us in our journey across the border to the Soviet Union.

On 12 February 1941 I took up this question of arrangements for crossing over the Russian border on our own with Uttam Chand and Haji Saheb. To be able to successfully cross over the border into the Soviet Union and for further journey, it was essential that we had contacts in the border area who were reliable and also knew the various routes and could render effective help. Uttam Chand mentioned one Yakub who was at that time residing in Kabul. Originally he belonged to Peshawar city. About 20 years back he had escaped and settled in Kabul after committing a murder. Now he was an Afghan citizen and was married in a family in a village in the district of Khanabad which is an industrial city on the border of the Soviet Union. His brother-in-law lived near the borders and carried on dacoities and smuggling across the border. Uttam Chand had good relations with Yakub who knew the area very well and said that this contact could be of great help to us in our mission. Uttam Chand felt that it would be possible to cross the river Amu (or Oxus) on the border between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union and continue further journey into Soviet Union with his help.

I reported the result of my talk to Netaji. He generally ap-

proved of the plan but asked us to move with caution to make sure that Yakub did not become a source of trouble for us. We decided that Uttam Chand should have a talk with Yakub and tell him that he had received a message from one of his friends in India who wanted to cross over the border and go to the Soviet Union and that if Yakub could render such help he would inform his friend accordingly. His friend would come over only after assurance of help in this mission. Uttam Chand was not to mention anything about Netaji or our presence in Kabul. I conveyed this to Uttam Chand who contacted Yakub. Yakub told him about his brother-in-law and assured him of all help in such a mission. He further told him that it would be no problem for his brother-in-law who had to cross the border frequently in connection with his trade.

We wanted to explore all possibilities and different proposals because response from our contacts with the German legation was not forthcoming. We had however not lost complete hope from this source because in one of my meetings with Herr Thomas he had conveyed to me a message from his government that all the three axis powers—Germany, Italy and Japan—had made a joint request to the Soviet Union for granting Netaji a transit visa for journey through that country. At this meeting I delivered a letter of Subhas Chandra Bose to the German minister in which Subhas Bose had requested the German minister to deliver a letter to the Soviet ambassador in Kabul. Herr Thomas promised to deliver both to the German minister. But till the last day Subhas Chandra's stay in Kabul, we never came to know the fate of the letter addressed to the Soviet ambassador.

Netaji's stomach trouble meanwhile took a turn for the worse. He developed serious dysentery and continued to have pain in his stomach. He was not in a position to undertake further journey till he recovered from this illness.

I therefore went to Uttam Chand's shop and apprised him of Netaji's illness and asked him to describe his condition to a physician and get some medicine for him. I also asked him to get proper food for Netaji. Uttam Chand arranged for medicine after consultation with the doctor and also for khichri and curds for Netaji from his house every day till Netaji had fully recover-

ed. I used to collect this food from his shop which was brought there along with the lunch for Uttam Chand in the normal way.

Our stay was getting prolonged and therefore we had time to explore and try different sources for the success of our mission. I took Uttam Chand with me to the residence of Haji Saheb and there told them both that they were old patriots and revolutionaries of long standing and with many years' experience of stay in Kabul. Therefore it would not be too much to expect of them to have good reliable contacts who would help us in establishing a link with Soviet embassy in Kabul. Haji Saheb said that he had no such contacts and could not think of any way out of the situation except that some Russian staff of the embassy in Kabul came to his factory for purchasing woollen garments and he could talk to them or pass on a message to them for delivery to the Soviet ambassador. When I conveyed the result of our talk to Netaji he approved of the proposal and wrote out a letter addressed to the ambassador. Haji Saheb soon after delivered this letter to two Russian ladies who came to his factory and requested them to pass on the message to the Soviet ambassador. These ladies however never came to the factory again nor did we ever hear from the ambassador as long as we were in Kabul. I have a feeling that these were the same ladies we had met in Bazar Labe-Darya during the earlier days of our arrival in Kabul.

From 13 February we only marked time for improvement in the condition of Netaji and awaited further development. Netaji of course did show some improvement in health.

We were to contact Herr Thomas again on 14 February. I asked Uttam Chand to go and meet him and tell him that so far we had not been able to get any positive reply from them and we found ourselves in a difficult position as a result. Netaji's health was improving and in case Herr Thomas did not get an encouraging response from Berlin we might have to continue our journey onwards to the Soviet Union in the same manner in which we had come from India. Besides we wanted Herr Thomas to convey our feelings to the minister also. On return Uttam Chand told us that no message had been received by the minister although Herr Thomas told him that they were trying very

hard to get a reply as early as possible but delay in response from Soviet Union was holding up arrangements.

On 15 February I had a talk with Netaji about hte Roshanlal episode and told him that this incident scared us without any cause because if that man wanted to report on us, he would have done so by now. We kept on observing and found that there was no watch on the house or the shop of Uttam Chand. Netaji was not well and he could not be taken care of properly in the sarai. While on the other hand in the residence of Uttam Chand he could be provided with proper food, medicine and nursing which were not possible in the sarai. Moreover, I had to stay near Netaji in the sarai and could not move about to explore new avenues for the success of our mission. And so it was most essential that Netaji should be shifted to the residence of Uttam Chand. I therefore asked Netaji that if he approved I would have a talk with Uttam Chand on this issue and see if they agreed with our proposal. Netaji gave his consent stating that now that he was recovering from his illness though feeling weak, it would be better if he went there, for in the house of Uttam Chand he could, perhaps, get proper care and rest. This was essential in order to enable him to undertake the strain of the impending journey to the Soviet Union.

From the sarai I went straight to the shop of Uttam Chand and conveyed to him our feelings stating very emphatically that there was absolutely no fear in keeping Netaji in the house. As a matter of fact there had been no need to shift him from his house at the first instance even but we had not wanted to be selfish that for our own safety we wanted to expose his family to danger. I further told him that even if Netaji got arrested in a sarai and not in his house, Uttam Chand would not anyway escape being implicated. I told him that we were both Pathans from the same area and comrades-in-arms in many a struggle for the Indian independence. It was a matter of shame for us that a personality of the stature of Netaji should continue to suffer in poor living conditions of a sarai in a state of illness and we should deny him ordinary comforts of a house and proper food on account of imaginary fears.

Uttam Chand agreed instantly and said that he was also of the

opinion that there was no danger now from Roshanlal and that Netaji might shift to his residence the same day. He suggested that we go and discuss the matter with Haji Saheb. We went to his residence which was just behind his shop. It was a good modern building housing his factory also. We met Haji Saheb there and he also agreed that there was no risk in taking Netaji back and that perhaps their fears even at the time when Roshanlal moved out of his house might not have been well founded. It was therefore decided that we should shift in the evening. I told Uttam Chand that I would pack up and clear the accounts on reaching the sarai and that he would have to send Amarnath with a coolie for fetching the luggage. Netaji and I left the sarai and took a tonga in the evening at about 5 of 15 February and took a round of the bazar in the tonga up to Mazang and left the tonga there. After some time we hired another tonga and came up to Pul-i-Khishti. We then walked up to Uttam Chand's house at nearly 6 p.m. By then Amarnath also had collected the luggage and reached his place.

On the morning of 16 February it was decided that Uttam Chand should arrange a meeting between me and Yakub so that I could discuss with him and find out his resources and how much, if at all, he could help us in our mission. I wanted this meeting to get a proper assessment of the man, whether he was really in a position to render effective help or not. It was decided that Uttam Chand would first contact him and ask him to come to his shop at about noon where I would be introduced to him as the friend of the person who wanted to go to the Soviet Union. According to this plan I went to the shop of Uttam Chand at the fixed time but as I entered I noticed a man in Peshawari dress sitting there with Uttam Chand. Uttam Chand got up immediately and winked at me making a sign towards the other man. I took the hint and like an usual customer asked Uttam Chand for a particular brand of teapot. He said "no" and I left the shop without delay. Later when I was taking a stroll in the bazar Uttam Chand came up to me and told me that the man with him was his close friend, Jiwanlal. He was a commission agent in resin and came to Kabul from Peshawar every year in connection with his seasonal business. He told me that I should wait across the river and that he would come to

me with Yakub as soon as he arrived. I was pacing up and down the road along the river when I noticed Uttam Chand with another person coming towards the bridge. I also started towards the bridge where Uttam Chand introduced Yakub to me and left after a short while telling him that I was a good and old friend and that Yakub should render me all help he could.

I explained to Yakub that my friend who was still in India wanted to go to the Soviet Union and I knew that it was not possible to do so without the help of a friend who knew well the area and the border. I also told him that he should commit himself only if he was sure of himself and of his arrangements. He said that he had no doubt in his mind that he was in a position to help in such cases as his brother-in-law who lived at the border was very well acquainted with that area. I had a long talk with him and after I fixed up another appointment with him for the next day I returned to Uttam Chand's house in the evening. We told Netaji about our experience of the day and also told him about Jiwanlal. Uttam Chand said that Jiwanlal was his close friend and he came to his shop quite frequently and that there was no way of keeping him out of the picture. He also stated that he was a good and reliable person and there would be no harm in taking him into confidence. I said that it should be avoided and it was possible to do so as I did not need to go to his shop but go directly to Herr Thomas. Moreover Jiwanlal normally used to come to the shop and not to Uttam Chand's house. At a later stage, if and when it became absolutely essential we might confide in him. This question was thereafter dropped.

On 17 February I had an appointment with Yakub. I met him in the bazar at a fixed place and went together for lunch in a restaurant. I stressed the point that he should not undertake this responsibility if he had even the slightest doubt about its success. He reassured me. It was decided that we would go in a few days. I also offered him money to provide rations for his family before we left. He said he did not want any money but I gave him 300 afghanis. As a matter of fact, I told him that since he had his in-laws there, he might as well take his family along. He said that he would talk that over with his wife. He showed me his house also so that I could contact him any time

I wanted. I also offered him some money for buying a present for his brother-in-law.

On 18 February I went to Herr Thomas with a letter from Netaji addressed to German ambassador in which Netaji wrote about his plan of undertaking a journey across the border on his own. He said in this letter that we had not been able to get a satisfactory reply in connection with arrangements by the German government for taking him away and it was not safe to continue our stay here any longer. We had thus been compelled to take this step. Netaji also asked him if Herr Thomas would be able to give us some help in connection with this journey to the border. Netaji said that although we had some money still we might need more and enquired if we could be given some help for unforeseen expenditure in this long and arduous trek. I delivered this letter to Mr Thomas and also explained to him the difficult conditions we were in, which had forced us to think of this step. Mr Thomas promised to deliver the letter to the minister. He asked me to come to him on 22 February for a reply.

I kept in touch with Yakub and confirmed our arrangements with him. He had decided to leave by bus on the morning of 23 February 1941. We purchased three tickets for Khanabad for the two of us and Yakub. He avoided taking his family with him so that they might not become a problem for us during the journey.

On 22 February I went to Yakub in the morning and gave him some more money so that he could purchase necessary materials and provisions for his family for the month that he would be away. I also purchased a lungi and some other presents for Yakub's brother-in-law. We had a road map with us all along our journey from India which was very useful in guiding us on our way to Kabul. This map also showed all the details, roads, etc. and photographs of Afghanistan right up to the Soviet border. We studied it thoroughly and planned our journey. Uttam Chand also had purchased a guidebook of Afghanistan written by a professor of Habibya College, Kabul. This book also contained a useful road map. The same day I went to Herr Thomas about noon for reply from the German

minister to the letter from Netaji but he was away. I went to him again about 3 in the afternoon when he told me that they had a talk about us with the Italian minister and that I should see him. I told him I did not know how to go to him and it might not be possible for me to reach him at all. Herr Thomas assured me that I would get an interview with him as soon as I went to the Italian legation. When he found me a little reluctant he told me that I would surely get satisfactory reply from him. Because of our experience in dealing with these embassies and legations I was a little sceptical at first but on his persuasion I decided to try to go to the Italians.

During our various rounds of the city in company of Netaji I remembered having seen a small signboard of the Italian legation in a blind alley in New Kabul. That was the back door of the legation and as I entered through it I saw a number of Afghan employees. They asked me who I was. I told them that I was a cook sent by Herr Thomas and wanted an interview with the minister. Thereupon one of the servants took me to the minister's office. He was engaged in some discussions with one of his Afghan employees. When he asked me who I was, I told him that I had been sent here by Herr Thomas. I thought he would understand and ask others to leave. But I was astonished when he again burst out "What for?" I however replied confidently "I don't know. I had just been asked to see you", in a firm and determined tone. My emphatic reply seemed to have given him the feeling that I was probably more than an ordinary Afghan though I was dressed as one. He immediately picked up the phone and talked to Herr Thomas. Thereafter he asked his Afghan assistant to leave. The servant who had come with me also left.

The minister closed the door, asked me to be seated and introduced himself as Pietro Quaroni, minister of the legation of Italy. I introduced myself as "Rahmat Khan" and told him that I had escorted Subhas Chandra Bose to Kabul and that we had been here since 27 January 1941. We had been trying through the German legation here at Kabul for arrangements for safe conduct of Subhas Chandra Bose. But up to now we had not met with success although they had been promising us early arrangements in this connection. We felt that our pro-

longed stay in that city was not free from danger and, therefore, we had decided to start moving towards Soviet Union on our own. I also told him that Subhas Chandra Bose had sent a message in this connection to the German minister and had informed him of our intention and asked him if they would be in a position to help us in our plans. We had not yet received any reply to that communication yet.

The Italian minister said that the German minister had told him about our plan to make a move on our own. He said that such a step was full of risks. Journey through Afghanistan as well as in Soviet territory would be full of hazards and it would be taking serious risks to undertake such a venture. He said that the three axis governments had made a joint request to the Soviet government to issue a transit visa to Subhas Chandra Bose and as they had friendly relations with that country they expected favourable reply very soon. I told him that we had been given this information many days back but nothing seemed to have come out of it. Besides there was no certainty that such a visa would become available. The Italian minister again laid stress on the good relations they had with Soviet Union which, he said, made them very hopeful. He also stated that they were expecting their diplomatic couriers very shortly and they might make arrangements for safe passage of Netaji that way. They were also considering the possibility of making arrangements through Iran and Syria and that they had already contacted their diplomatic missions in those countries on this issue. From these countries it would be easy to take Netaji to Rome or Berlin.

I argued with the minister that materialisation of these plans might take considerable time while we could not prolong our stay in Kabul any further because we were exposed to the risk of being apprehended any day. The only course left open for us was to undertake the onward journey into the Soviet Union on our own. I requested him to consider giving us some help for our journey as Netaji had already done in his letter addressed to the German minister. I laid stress on the fact that we had already made arrangements for this journey which seemed quite satisfactory. Secondly, I was not very sure that any of the proposals of the Italian minister could take practical shape within a reasonable time. I therefore insisted on pursuing our plan of journey

on our own. Finally he asked me to arrange for a meeting between him and Subhas Chandra Bose. I told him that I had come to him direct from the office of Herr Thomas without the knowledge of Mr Bose and therefore I was not sure that he would be able to come but I would convey to him the minister's request. I also told the minister that we had already purchased our bus tickets and we were planning to leave for the border the next morning.

The minister repeated his desire to have a talk with Subhas Chandra Bose and wanted me to arrange a meeting. It was decided that if Subhas Bose could come it would have to be some time between 7 and 8 in the same evening on 22 February. The minister introduced me to his secretary, Anzolotti, who would wait at the entrance during this hour. We would knock and Mr Anzolotti would come forward to receive us without giving a chance to the gateman to ask questions.

I went back to Uttam Chand's house by about 6 p.m. when it was already dark. Uttam Chand had already come back from his shop and had told Netaji that Jiwanlal had become more and more suspicious and that it would be advisable to take him also into confidence before he did any harm to us in his ignorance. Netaji had agreed to this suggestion and Jiwanlal was to come and meet Netaji that evening.

I narrated in detail my experience of the day and all that passed between Herr Thomas and me and again between the Italian minister and me and finally about the appointment between the minister and Netaji. I said that I had made it clear to the minister that the appointment was not binding on us. First Netaji was a little perturbed and told me that I should not have gone to the Italian embassy particularly when we had already made pucca arrangements for making a move on our own. I tried to explain to him that Herr Thomas asked me to see the Italian minister for the reply to Netaji's letter addressed to the German minister. He thought over the issue for a while and thereafter said that we would go and keep the appointment. He touched up his appearance a little, clipped his beard and moustache and got dressed up in one of Uttam Chand's European suits and a Karakuli cap. We started for the Italian legation on

foot at about 6.30 in the evening. As planned earlier we knocked at the front door of the embassy which was opened by an Afghan. Before the Afghan guard could ask any questions Mr Anzolotti who was waiting for us took us in and asked the Afghan to leave. We went to the minister's room where he introduced Netaji to the Italian minister. The minister told Netaji that he was very glad over his successful escape from India and congratulated him for this achievement. Netaji said in reply that his escape from India to Kabul did not in any way fulfil the purpose of his mission. A great deal remained to be achieved for which we needed the help of all who were fighting against our enslavers. Then started an exchange of views on the political situation in India and the bearing of the war on it. The possibility of building a strong resistance movement in India and in the tribal area against the British also came up for discussion. When I realised that we were getting lost in political discussions forgetting the immediate practical issue at hand I raised this question of Netaji's safe passage out of Kabul. Lastly, I told them that we had to take a decision immediately as to whether we were going back or staying the night at the legation because it was dangerous to move about in Kabul late at night.

The minister suggested that we remain at the legation for the night as there was so many things to discuss. He wanted an exhaustive discussion on world affairs. I said that it would not be correct for both of us to stay there overnight. Jiwanlal was to come to meet Netaji that night and the absence of both of us might lead him to draw undesirable and harmful conclusions. It was, therefore, decided that I would return to Uttam Chand's house. The minister thereafter asked his secretary, Mr Anzolotti, to drop me by car wherever I wanted. I suggested that to avoid any suspicion both Netaji and I should go out together on foot and the car pick us up from the road at an appointed place, drop me and bring Netaji back. This was agreed upon. We also fixed up as to where and at what time Netaji would be left next day. The place fixed was Darul Aman and time 2 in the afternoon on 23 February 1941. This place was nearly four miles from New Kabul. We had purchased bus tickets and had planned to go to Khanabad by bus the next morning. When I asked Netaji what we were to do about these plans, he was silent. It

was obvious, however, that we had to put off at least temporarily our plans of going on our own by bus.

When I reached Uttam Chand's house I found both Uttam Chand and Jiwanlal at his place. Jiwanlal was astonished to see me there because he said he had taken me for a bad character when he saw me on various occasions particularly in the company of Yakub. I told them that Netaji would be back the next day when Jiwanlal could meet him. I had a feeling that Uttam Chand insisted on introducing Jiwanlal because he must have himself in his exuberence divulged to him that he had been giving shelter to a person of the stature of Netaji and that he would introduce Jiwanlal to him. I did not see any reason why it was so essential to do so. Jiwanlal who had come with sweets and fruit for Netaji was rather disappointed to find that he would not be able to meet Netaji that evening.

On 23 February I went to Yakub's house earlier than arranged and told him that we had to put off our journey for the time being and had to return the tickets because the gentleman concerned had failed to arrive on account of some trouble at his end. I told him that he could use the money he would get by returning the bus tickets. I had my midday meal in a restaurant and walked four miles to Darul Aman (now called Darul Fanoon) to meet Netaji at the appointed time as fixed earlier. It was constructed during the reign of Amanullah, the then king of Afghanistan. It is a huge beautiful building surrounded by beautiful lawns and gardens. It is fairly well maintained and is a grand architectural achievement of that period. The road leading to this building is a most beautiful drive and has tall poplar trees on both sides.

Netaji arrived a few minutes earlier than the fixed time. He was driven by the Italian second secretary of the legation Mr Crishnini. He took photographs of Netaji in the suit he had borrowed from Uttam Chand. Mr Crishnini who was a very trusted man of his government and belonged to Mussolini's party was a little hard of hearing. He had played an active role under the leadership of Mussolini in the struggles which brought Mussolini to power in Italy. He told Netaji about his past political work which he conveyed it to me. After Mr Crishnini left, we came back to Kabul on foot. By the time we reached Uttam

Chand's house it was dark. Uttam Chand and Jiwanlal also came in shortly after we had reached the house. Jiwanlal who was introduced to Netaji left after dinner. Netaji thereafter narrated to me the details of his talk at the legation. In their discussion the minister had made the same three proposals he had previously made to me on 22 February. The minister had said that two of their diplomatic couriers were expected any day now. One of them would stay back and his diplomatic passport with visa would be utilised by Netaji, only the photograph on the passport would be replaced by one of Netaji. The minister told him that they were working on all the three plans and that Netaji would be escorted out through whichever of these plans matured earlier. The minister had in fact convinced Netaji that it would not be correct to go on our own. In the first place there were a number of hurdles in crossing the Soviet border and even if it could be successfully negotiated there were very great risks on the other side of the border. Soviet guards might not understand us and considering us outlaws, robbers or smugglers might even cause us harm. Netaji finally dropped the proposal of going on our own although we continued to keep contact with Yakub who was told that for some reasons our man could not come now though he might turn up later.

From now onwards we had no need to contact Herr Thomas or the German legation. Our direct contact with Italian legation was fully established. We did not need to have prior appointment before our visit. They could also contact us by coming to Uttam Chand's shop as his customers. When we had to convey some message I would go to Crishnini's residence in New Kabul. From their side the wife of the minister, Mrs Alberto Pietro Quaroni, would come to Uttam Chand at his shop and convey to him any message they might have had. Even if there was no message we should make contact every three or four days to keep in touch with the latest developments. Now there was nothing to do for us except to await the final message from them that arrangements were complete and that Netaji should be ready for the journey.

# Final Preparations before Leaving Afghanistan

Now that our activities in connection with the arrangements for safe passage of Netaji from Afghanistan slackened considerably, we started going out on long walks. Netaji went to the Italian legation. He kept his beard well-trimmed after the modern Afghan fashion and used European dress and Karakuli cap. Netaji and I used to go for frequent walks to different places in the city. We were now fairly confident that our mission would meet with success though it might take some time. Since we had now plenty of leisure we asked Haji Saheb if he could introduce us to some anti-British elements with revolutionary background. He readily agreed. Among them there was a group from Bannu in NWFP who had migrated to Kabul because of British terror. One of them, Sher Afzal Khan, was introduced to Netaji also. He was later arrested by Afghan police while he was on his way back along with his colleagues for anti-British work in the tribal area. Two of his brothers who were in the Afghan army were also arrested. This group of Bannu in Kabul had many relations who were in the thick of struggle for independence in India. One of them was Yakub Khan who was a commander in the Red Shirt movement and was in jail with us in Haripur in 1931.

During this period of waiting Netaji used to go out frequently for walks in the European dress and shoes borrowed from Uttam Chand. As these shoes were somewhat tight and pinched a little, he decided to get a new pair for himself. One day we went to a shoe-store when Netaji himself asked for his shoes. This was probably a slip on our part but by now we had gained considerable confidence as we noticed many Indians who were residents of Kabul. It so happened that the shopkeeper was also an Indian and he guessed from the talk of Netaji that we were also from India. He got interested and started asking questions. Netaji

told him that he was from eastern UP in India and had taken up a job as a professor in Habibya College at Kabul. The shopkeeper said that he knew all the Indian professors but had never seen him. Netaji said that because of language problem he did not move about much. Moreover, he had been here only for a short time. The shopkeeper who was more interested in getting acquainted than selling his shoes invited him to tea. We however put him off and told him that we were in a hurry and might talk to him some other time. We got the shoes and left the shop in a hurry.

About a week before Netaji's departure from Kabul Mrs Quaroni arrived with a message at Uttam Chand's shop for arrangements for taking photographs of Netaji to be used in his passport and for garments for his use during the journey and thereafter.

For photographs, we were asked to be at Darul-Aman at about 1 p.m. the following day. Crishnini drove to that place at the fixed time and took three snaps of Netaji. Thereafter we came back with Crishnini in his car who dropped us at Mazang. We had talked to Uttam Chand before leaving to make arrangements with Haji Saheb for clothing for Netaji. On our return, Netaji and I went to Haji Saheb's residence who sent a man to fetch a few suit lengths and shirtings for Netaji to make his selection. Towels, night suits, toilet and shaving articles and other such essentials were also purchased and packed in a suitcase for Netaji. Selected suit lengths were given to a tailor who worked with Haji Saheb and he promised to complete stitching in 3 to 4 days. All these were delivered in time except for the vest which was sent to Netaji later on by Haji's wife through her sister in Berlin.

On 1 February 1941 before leaving for the German legation Netaji had passed on to me an article and two letters which I was asked to deliver to his elder brother, Sarat Chandra Bose. After his return from the legation these documents were destroyed under his instruction. Netaji had then written them in a hurry as we did not have much time at our disposal. Now when we had plenty of time, Netaji took his time and wrote out a lengthy thesis "Forward Bloc—Its Justification", and "A Message to My Countrymen". The former was in pencil and the latter in ink.

He took a long time and great pains in writing and went over the thesis and the message again and again. He also wrote two letters, one addressed to Sarat Chandra Bose in Bengali and the second to Sardar Sardul Singh Kaveeshar, the then acting president of the Forward Bloc, in English. During this period he gave considerable thought to the design of a national flag of independent India which would be the flag of the struggle for the independence of our country. He made a number of designs and ultimately concluded that plain tricolour would be the most suitable one.

Netaji delivered these articles and letters to me on 16 March 1941, to be delivered by hand in Calcutta with the same instructions as he had given to me earlier. This time he gave me some further instructions and told me that Sardul Singh Kaveeshar had promised to him at the time of his escape that he would put his heart and soul into the struggle at the appropriate time. Netaji told me that I should also convey to Kaveeshar verbally his views and instructions in connection with the work of the Forward Bloc and the struggle to be waged. From Netaji I also learnt that after his brother Sarat Chandra Bose and his nephew Sisir Bose, his most trusted men were Satya Ranjan Bakshi, Leela Roy and Anil Roy, all living in Calcutta and he asked me to see them after my return to India.

On 14 March we received an invitation from Mr and Mrs Haji for lunch and tea with them at their residence next day. After our breakfast on 15 March we left Uttam Chand's house in the morning and roamed about in the suburbs of Kabul and came to Haji's residence by lunch time. We also spent the afternoon there. As we were taking our tea Uttam Chand came at about 4 in the afternoon with the final message we had been waiting for so eagerly for the last many weeks. The message from the Italian legation said that Netaji's luggage should be at the shop wherefrom it would be picked up on 16 March by the legation personnel at 2 in the afternoon. The message further said that we were to go to Crishnini's residence in the evening of 17 March. Netaji's departure from Kabul was fixed for the morning of 18 March 1941.

On 16 March Netaji's luggage was taken to the shop. Uttam Chand purchased a good felt hat also for Netaji the same day.

Netaji and I kept roaming about in the various streets and bazars of the city.

According to our arrangements, 17 March 1941 was to be our last day in Kabul. Our hostess prepared a special breakfast for us on that day. Netaji had a hearty breakfast, played and joked with the children, thanked the hostess for the wonderful treatment given to us during our stay in the house. We took leave of her and the children with whom we had developed great affection during our stay in their house.

We spent part of the day sight-seeing and then went to Haji's place. Netaji took leave of them. Sher Afzal Khan was also there. We went to Crishnini's place at about 7 in the evening along with Uttam Chand who came back after dinner. Netaji and I stayed overnight in the guest-room and had a long talk about our future work. Netaji told Crishnini and another Italian gentleman there that I would be the link between India and Kabul and they would have to provide the link of communication between him and Kabul. He further told them that I had very useful contacts in the tribal territories and that my work would be principally in the tribal areas. Netaji and I slept in the guest room at Crishnini's place.

On the morning of 18 March 1941, a big car arrived at Crishnini's residence when it was still dark. In it were Dr Wenger of Germany, another gentleman from German legation, an Italian courier and a European driver. It was still dark when it drove out with Netaji. Before that Netaji gave me a vigorous handshake, embraced me very affectionately and told me in the presence of Crishnini, "You have to put some other comrade to establish contact with the Soviet embassy." He almost became sentimental and could not say anything more while parting. After seeing off Netaji I took leave of Crishnini and came back to Uttam Chand's house where I told him about Netaji's departure. I had a good bath after several days and felt greatly relieved having successfully seen through this difficult task assigned to me.

In his features and bearing Netaji very much resembled Sicilians and so he was given a Sicilian name *Orlando Mazotta* on an Italian passport and travelled through the Soviet Union with their visa.

I must say that despite our initial apprehensions and difficulties with Jiwanlal (which were natural under the circumstances) once he knew what it was all about, he did his best to help in whatever way he could.

Uttam Chand's wife Ramo Devi played a great and noble role in affording us protection in our difficult days during our stay in Kabul. She displayed wonderful tact and presence of mind in handling the situation. Credit goes to her for the fact that during our stay for such a long period the neighbours or visitors never got suspicious about us. She spared no pains to make Netaji's stay in her house as comfortable as possible. She always provided goor food for Netaji and looked after him with great care, particularly during the days Netaji was unwell. She managed the children so well that we never had a reason to suspect that they were ever talking. Under her control even the servant proved to be useful and reliable. I think she gave very valuable support to her husband in this difficult task of sheltering a personality so well known and so much sought after by the police. As for Uttam Chand, his role was highly commendable. An ordinary man would have hesitated and faltered but after he got convinced that Netaji needed his help and shelter, both were given in abundant measure. But for his cooperation and help I do not know what would have happened to us.

# After Netaji's Departure

I was now leaving Kabul after successfully dodging the police for nearly 52 days which is a long period as Kabul is a small city with scope for very limited movement. It would not have been difficult for the British police to locate and put us into trouble in that city if they had wind of our movement up the north-west of India. Our arrangements of escorting Netaji to Kabul were so reliable that no word leaked out and even the strong force of the British CID could not get a smell of our movements and activities. As a matter of fact, they were all the time tracking sadhus down in the south and in Pondicherry on the basis of rumours that Netaji had turned into a sadhu! Police also chased ships and aeroplanes to Japan, Burma and even China on the basis of similar rumours. About me the police never suspected even up to the time of my return to India that I had escorted Netaji to Kabul. Some of these rumours were given out by our own contacts who knew about Netaji's escape to put the police on wrong track to divert their attention from the north.

On 19 March 1941 I left Kabul in the morning for Jalalabad after saying farewell and expressing my thanks and gratitude to Uttam Chand and his family. I took a tonga up to Budkhak and started looking for a ride in the truck as a passenger. About 5 in the afternoon a truck-driver agreed to take me as a passenger up to Jalalabad which I reached early morning at about 7 on 20 March. I had my breakfast and went on foot to Lalman to meet Haji Mohammad Amin. I found him at his residence. He told me that I had taken a very long time in this mission. I told him that we had no previous contacts of any kind and therefore under such circumstances we had to encounter numerous difficulties. When I told him that my companion was Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, he was overwhelmed and said jocularly that I was a mischievous person as I had not disclosed this

to him during our previous visit. We had a talk about our future course of action and I told him that time had come when we should rearrange our forces and get set for a final assault on the British for the independence of our country. I told him that he should start organising his contacts and forces in any way he considered proper for a last-ditch struggle. He said that we should get going with our work and promised that he would use all his influence on the Shinwari and Mohamand tribes to organise an anti-British movement. He also stated that if necessary he would himself shift to these areas to build up the movement. I fixed up means of communications between him and myself and between Haji Saheb and Sanobar Hussain who was in those days living among the Bajaur tribe in the village of Bandagai in Swal Qilla. Before leaving I asked him to arrange for me a reliable guide who could help me crossing the river Kabul via Deh up to village Arkhi because the route I now selected for me was through Arkhi, Kudakhel, Gandab valley, Shabkadar and from there to Peshawar. It was not possible for me to go by bus on the direct route as I had no passport. Moreover, people of Peshawar area who frequently travelled by these buses might know me and I could get apprehended, for the police were looking for me in those days. I also asked him to arrange for a companion for me beyond Arkhi. He deputed an Afghan who was a reliable person and who knew the area well.

Leaving Lalman on 21 morning, we reached Arkhi in the evening by foot and stayed overnight in a mosque. In the morning we were told that a couple of donkeywalas (small traders) were going to Shabkadar. My guide told me that I should accompany them up to Gandab. On the way we stayed overnight at Kudakhel with a Mohamand. In the early morning on 23 March we resumed our journey and reached Gandab in the morning after a trek of nearly 5 hours. The traders continued their journey to Shabkadar while I took a bus from Gandab to Shabkadar on the same day and reached this town just before noon. Shabkadar was in Indian territory in the district of Peshawar. Many people knew me here. Several of them were in jail with me during the Indian independence movement. It was therefore necessary that I leave Shabkadar as early as

possible. I could not afford to wait for a bus for onward journey to Peshawar. I did not want to reach Peshawar before dark. Moreover I was afraid somebody might recognise me in the bus. I therefore got on a tonga and reached the outskirts of Peshawar at about 3 in the afternoon of 23 March. I left the tonga near Balasar. As I was very keen on getting some shelter till it was dark, I quietly slipped into the house of one Arjan Das, a tailor who was related to me in the bazar Andar Shohar area. I went inside the shop and slept in a corner. When I woke up Arjan Das, he told me that a notorious CID subinspector Kucha, who was an expert in tracking down political workers, had come to him and asked for me while I was asleep. He also told me that the subinspector had asked for me several times during the last few days as he knew I was related to him. I said in a very casual manner that whenever the police did not see me for a few days they became uneasy for no reason and started asking for me from all my friends and relations.

From Peshawar I was to go to Lahore and onward to Calcutta to convey Netaji's message and it was absolutely unsafe for me to be in Peshawar for a longer period than necessary, as I was widely known in this city. So far I was in Afghan dress although I knew I should have changed into my usual dress immediately after entering Peshawar. Unfortunately I had no such clothes with me. In Kabul I was wearing a beard which I started clipping during the return journey from Jalalabad. At Peshawar I got myself clean shaved.

For my onward journey I needed proper clothings immediately as I had to leave for Lahore. I went straight to Abad Khan's place in the dark of the night on 23 March through a circuitous route. I found him at his place. We went to Peshawar cantonment where I arranged for readymade European garments for myself. From here we took a car and drove straight to Badrashi near Nowshehra to meet Mian Abkar Shah. Akbar Shah was at his place when we reached there at about 9 in the evening. While I was waiting outside, Akbar Shah came out and took me to a side-room. We then sent Abad Khan back. During the night I apprised Akbar Shah of the developments after Netaji and I had left for Kabul on 22 January 1941. I told him that it was risky for me to visit to him and since we

must keep contact, proper arrangements of communication between us must be made. He promised that he would make necessary arrangements and inform me accordingly at Lahore.

Next day on 24 March a nephew of Akbar Shah came with a tonga early in the morning. I went in it towards the direction of Akora on the main road and got off at a small place where I left the tonga. From here I took a bus coming from Peshawar for Cambelpur. From there I again took a bus for Rawalpindi from where I got into the train at night and at last reached Lahore on the morning of 25 March. I had always dreaded the journey from Peshawar to Rawalpindi as many people and the police in this area might recognise me. I had to take special care to escape their attention.

I stayed in a hotel at Lahore and went to Pandit Balbhadar in Krishna Nagar and told him that I wanted to see Gurcharan Singh Sainsra alias Hidayat Khan. Balbhadar was attached to Hindi *Milap* and was our contact with other comrades and Sainsra who was an active member of the Communist Party of India and one of the few very important comrades who were outside the jail at that time. He was working underground on the literary front. Balbhadar told me that he would inform Sainsra about me and that I should come to a small park nearby on the following morning. Next morning, i.e. on 26 March, I reached the place at 6.30 in the morning and found Sainsra already there. He told me that it would be safer for me to stay with him where we could talk and discuss our work. We came to the hotel where I was putting up, settled our accounts and went to Sainsra's place which was a big house owned by a vaid who happened to be a party sympathiser. Part of that house was given on rent to the party which had its underground headquarters there in those days. A few other comrades were also staying there who were sorry to learn that we had to face so many difficulties in Kabul and that we could not establish a link with the Soviet embassy. They said that we should make some arrangements for permanent contacts there so that in future our comrades would not have to face such a situation again. I also asked them to send a comrade with me to Calcutta where I had to deliver Netaji's message. They agreed and deputed one of the trusted comrades for this purpose.

I told Sainsra that I had to see Sardul Singh Kaveeshar to pass on Netaji's letter and his message to him. Sainsra and Kaveeshar knew each other very well. In the evening the same day the two of us went to his residence in Lahore. Kaveeshar was at that time the acting president of the Forward Bloc and as far as I remember the chairman of some insurance company. Sainsra introduced me to him and told him that I escorted Netaji to Kabul and that I had a message for him from Netaji. I passed on the letter to him and tried to convey to him verbally also what Netaji had asked me to do. I was however very much disappointed to see that he was greatly upset and even scared and kept on peeping out of the window of the room. After I had passed on Netaji's letter to him he went to another room. He came back soon after and told me that he had compared the handwriting of the letter with Netaji's other handwritten document and had found that the letter I delivered to him was not genuine. Looking at his jittery state I was convinced that he was scared out of his wits and wanted to avoid involvement in such affairs. He did not even mention Netaji once. It was a great shock for me to discover that some of our leaders should be so panicky about their personal safety. When he repeated again that the letter was fake, hinting thereby that we could now leave, I told him that what he thought of the letter was his concern, so far as I was concerned it was genuine. However, I requested him at least not to disclose to anybody that Netaji's letter had been brought to him. Of course when we left we were convinced that he would be too scared to mention it to anybody. But we thought Netaji had taken the plunge after consulting people like Kaveeshar and they had sent him out in the wilderness to face immense hardships in the cause of struggle for Indian independence while they had been playing safe at home. It reminded me of the proverb: "Char ja beta sooli, ram bhali karega" (Go son, place your head on the executioner's block, god will do you good.)

In the evening of 28 March, I along with Sodhi Harmindar Singh took a train for Calcutta from Mian Mir cantonment which is a small station a few miles from Lahore. In the morning of 30 March, we got off at Burdwan. We had a wash at the station and took a local train for Calcutta after breakfast. In Cal-

cutta we went to the Central Hotel on Chittaranjan Avenue in a taxi as during his earlier visits Sodhi Harmindar Singh used to stay there. In the evening we went to 1, Woodburn Park and sent a chit for interview with Sarat Babu. The servant took the slip and very soon his son Sisir Babu came down and took us to a room on the ground floor. Netaji had instructed me that in case Sarat Babu was not at home I should see Sisir Babu as he had full knowledge of everything concerning Netaji's escape. I gave him the two articles and Netaji's letter and all the news up to Netaji's safe departure from Kabul. After a short while he went away asking us to wait a little as he wanted us to meet his father Sarat Chandra Bose. After a while he was back along with Sarat Babu. I reported to him also our experiences leading up to Netaji's departure from Kabul. Both of them took keen interest in all this and asked me many anxious questions about Netaji's health. Sarat Babu cautioned us against police surveillance around his house and said that it would be injudicious to meet at his place any further. He told me that normally he took his morning stroll at the Victoria Memorial garden and asked us to meet him there next morning.

Early next morning on 31 March, I met him at the said garden. He wanted to know the details of our journey and stay in Kabul and of our arrangements for his escape beyond. I told him the whole story of Netaji's journey from Peshawar to Kabul and further therefrom—more or less—as I have narrated earlier. Our next appointment was fixed for the next morning at Princep's Ghat. On that day on 1 April, we had to first meet Sarat Babu at the ghat and thereafter wait for Satya Ranjan Bakshi, for that was the arrangement made by Sarat Babu. Unfortunately our meeting with Satya Babu did not take place that day as we could not spot each other, though both of us were given some clues for ready recognition. During our second meeting Sarat Babu asked me if I needed some financial assistance. He further said that he had not seen any hint to that effect in the letter from Netaji but his wife thought that somewhere in the letter written in Bengali Netaji had meant to convey that very idea. This reminded me of Netaji's talk with me about Mrs Sarat Chandra Bose—how he had spoken to me of her capacity to judge a particular situation and understand things and of her tact to

adapt and prepare herself to meet a certain situation and thus how she was of tremendous help to him all his life. I told Sarat Babu frankly that I might need two hundred rupees for my return journey.

As arranged with him I went to his chambers near the high court at about 10.30 in the morning after returning from the Princep's Ghat. Meanwhile he had also informed Satya Ranjan Bakshi about this new appointment at his chambers and asked Satya Babu to meet me there since otherwise we would not recognise each other. It was essential for us to meet as I had conveyed to Sarat Babu that we would need the services of two comrades to be taken to Kabul for training in sabotage work by the Italians and the Germans. One of them would be from the Punjab. The other one had to be sent from Bengal. Sarat Babu had told me that he would have a talk in this regard with Satya Ranjan Bakshi who was in charge of such things and that he would arrange my meeting with him.

Sarat Babu was not to come personally to the chambers but we met there a middle-aged person who wore a moustache. As soon as I mentioned Sarat Babu's name he gave me two hundred rupees in cash. Satya Ranjan who was also in the chambers then introduced himself to us. We had a brief talk with him and told him about our talk with Sarat Babu about the arrangements with the Italians for training of one or two of our comrades. That arrangement had been made by the Italians and Netaji in my presence. Satya Babu agreed to depute a comrade for this work. We gave him the contact address at Lahore and explained how he would have to reach there and locate the place. I also told him that he must be there before 15 April and ask for Hidayat Khan, the assumed name of Sainsra.

During my second meeting with Sarat Babu in the garden he had told me that his first impression about me was not very favourable because of my short stature and lean body. I told him that Netaji also had similar impression during our first meeting at Peshawar and had wondered if I would be able to carry out this very onerous and difficult task of escorting him to Kabul. I had told him that he had no reason for any apprehension on that score as my past political record and the

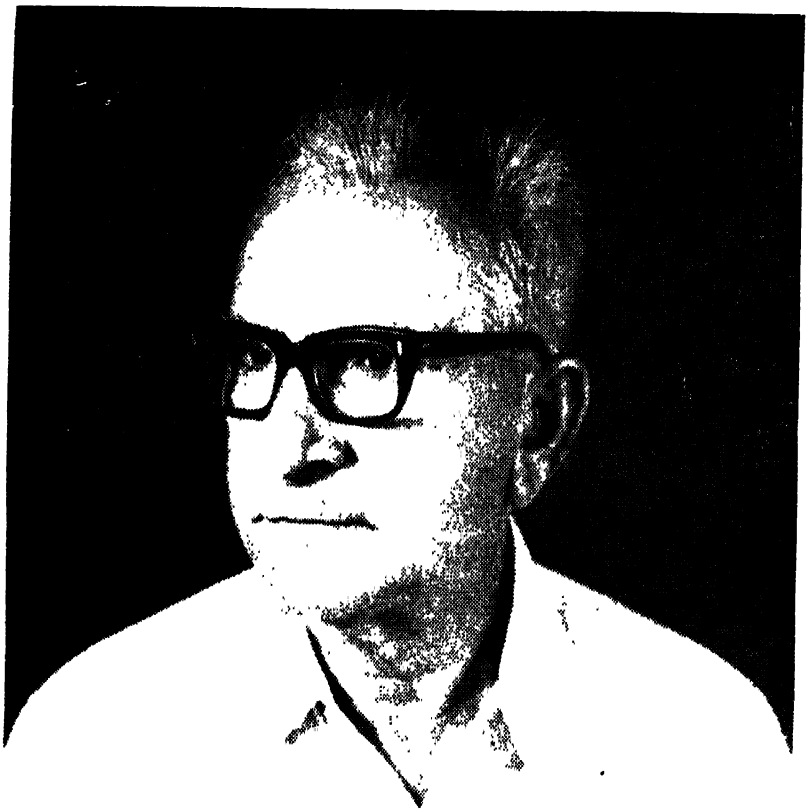


*Gurudasmal, father of martyr Hari Kishan and of the author.*



*Mathura Devi, mother of martyr Hari Kishan and of the author.*





*Jamuna Das Talwar, eldest brother of martyr Hari Kishan*



*Martyr Hari Kishan, second elder brother of the author.*



*The author, Bhagat Ram Talwar, with his wife, Shrimati Ram Kaur.*



*Ishwar Das Talwar, younger brother of the author.*



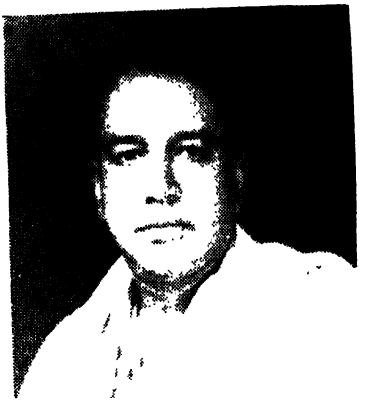
*Anant Ram Talwar, another brother of the author.*



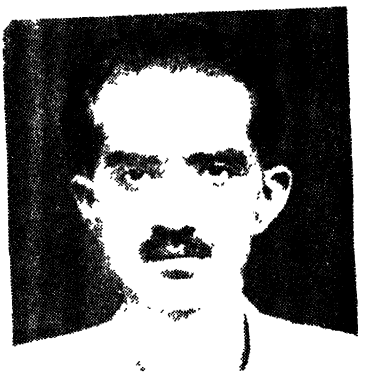
*Seven Talwar brothers along with their mother and one sister.*



*Harminder Singh, who helped Subhas Bose.*



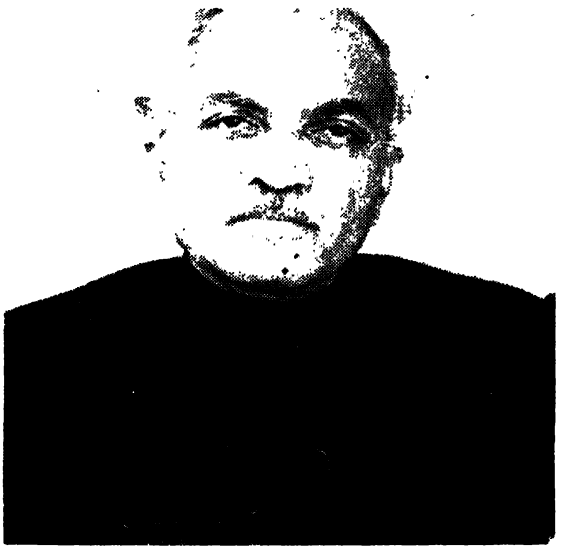
*Chamanlal Kapoor, who was involved in the university shooting case along with martyr Hari Kishan.*



*Ram Kishan, Kirti Party worker, was drowned while crossing Amu river while going to the USSR.*



*Dharmantri was entrusted with the job of smuggling arms.*



*Durga Dass Khanna was also implicated in the university shooting case.*



*Ranbir Singh, editor of* Milap, *was also implicated in the university shooting case.*



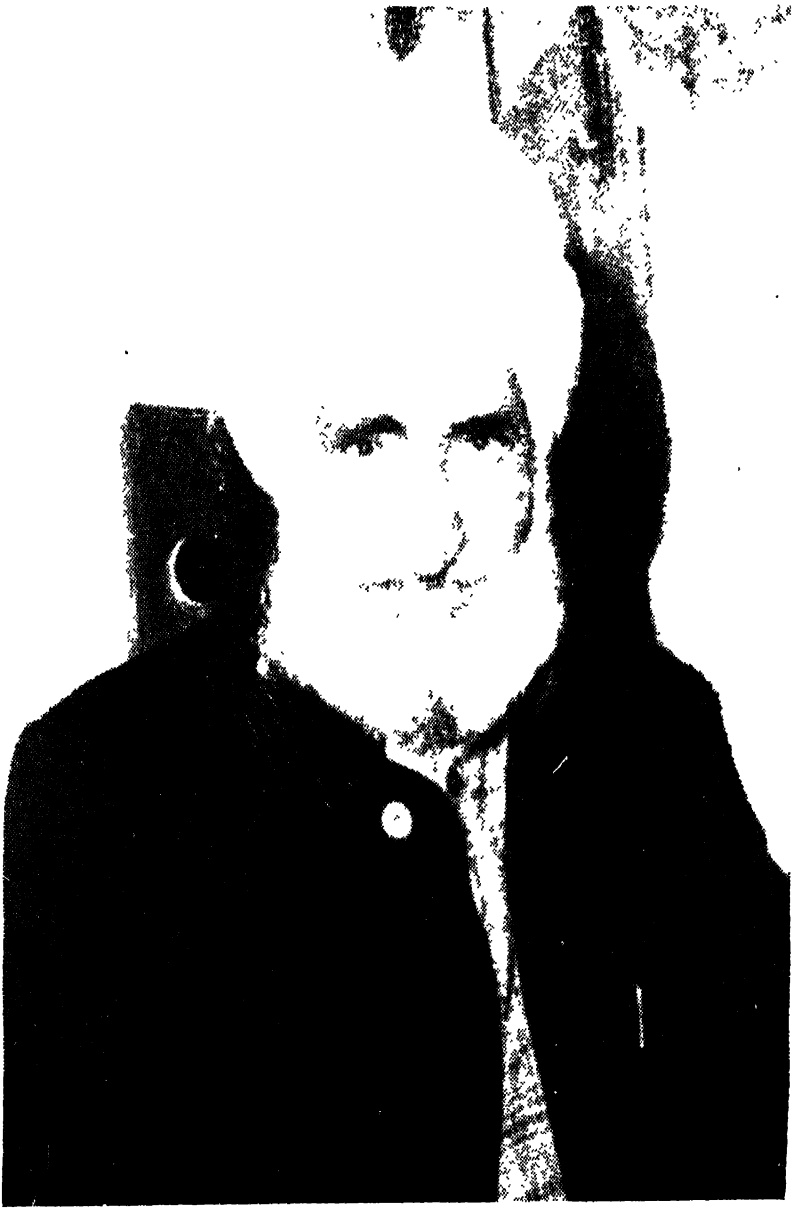
*Bhagat Ram Talwar in tribal dress with which he moved in the tribal areas.*



***Bhagat Ram Talwar in Afghan dress with which he used to move in Kabul along with Subhas Bose.***



*Teja Singh Swatantra, communist leader, who used to advise Bhagat Ram Talwar during the period of Great Escape of Subhas Bose and after.*



*Achhar Singh Cheena, communist worker, crossed Amu river and went to the USSR to help arrange Subhas Bose's escape.*



*Niranjan Singh Talib with whom Subhas Bose first discussed his plan to go to the USSR.*



*Uttam Chand Malhotra who hosted Subhas Bose and Bhagat Ram Talwar in Kabul.*



***Abad Khan who worked as a courier between the revolutionaries in Afghanistan and India, especially communists in India.***



***Sarla Sharma who served as courier between Bhagat Ram Talwar and Kirti Party.***



*Miran Jan carried on political activities in the tribal areas.*



*Mohd Umar Khan was also very active in the tribal areas.*



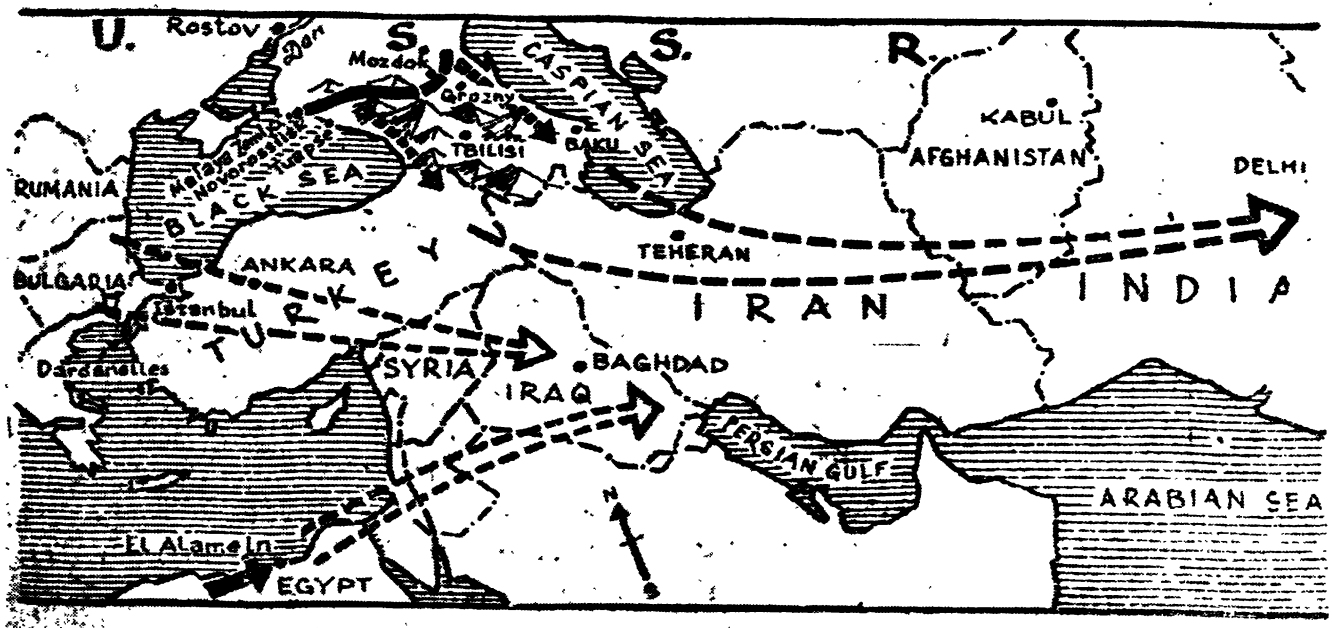
*Sarat Chandra Bose, elder brother of Subhas Chandra Bose, who knew the entire plan of Subhas Chandra Bose's escape.*



*Sisir K. Bose, son of Sarat Chandra Bose, who escorted Subhas Chandra Bose from his Elgin Road residence up to Gomoh railway station.*



*First meeting of Subhas Chandra Bose with Hitler after his arrival in Berlin via Moscow. They could not agree politically after this discussion.*




Hitler's plan for the invasion of India

revolutionary tradition of my family should be sufficient guarantee. I mentioned to Sarat Babu, in this connection, the execution of my brother Hari Kishan. Sarat Babu immediately said that he had read about my experience and valuable work and also about the tremendous help rendered to Netaji in the letter to him and he had no misgivings now about my worth though my stature was rather unfortunate. I said such a stature was an asset in my work as it did not invite attention.

I also told Sarat Babu about my experience with Sardul Singh Kaveeshar. He regretted very much Kaveeshar's attitude and made some uncomplimentary remarks about him. He said that people like him were irresponsible and unreliable and that it was sad indeed that he should act in that manner particularly in view of his close relations with Netaji for so many years. He advised me not to go to him again and that I should avoid meeting such people and not to take undue risks.

I felt a little exhausted by now and wanted to relax for a day or two in Calcutta. We also did a little sight-seeing as it was my first visit to that city. We left Calcutta on 4 April 1941 reaching Lahore on the sixth. I stayed there with Gurcharan Singh Sainsra, Harbans Singh Karnana and Chain Singh Chain. There I used to hold prolonged discussion on our future course of action. It was decided that Sodhi Harminder Singh would be the comrade from Punjab for training in Kabul. He was also assigned the additional job of establishing contacts with the Soviet Union. All our comrades were very much perturbed over the lack of our communication with the Soviet embassy in Kabul. Before leaving Lahore I explained to Sodhi Harmindar Singh the place and the name of the contact at Peshawar—Abad Khan. I had also left instructions for the comrade from Bengal to come to Akbar Shah's place. Leaving Lahore in the evening of 12 April I went to Akbar Shah's place at Bedrashi early in the morning of the next day. Since I had to await the arrival of the comrade from Calcutta and had to plan for setting up of an elaborate apparatus with contacts at crucial places, I wanted a safe place where I could work in peace. I therefore decided to shift to my own home at Ghalla Dher the same day. Akbar Shah agreed and contacted my younger brother Kishorilal at Mardan who came and escorted me to my village by car at night. We covered the

last two miles on foot and reached our village on 13 April at about 9 in the evening.

Before leaving Akbar Shah I had explained to him the course of action we had decided upon and had told him to prepare and keep in readiness a number of our comrades to execute our plan of anti-British activities as we were heading for a final assault on the citadel of British imperialism. I told Akbar Shah that it was not safe for me to come to his place or to go to my village and that he should arrange for a place which would be quite safe and where I could work without fear.

Next day my elder brother Jamuna Das arrived and told me that it was not safe for me to go to Akbar Shah or to stay at my own house in the village. He told me that although the police was not aware of my having escorted Netaji, they were looking for me, making frequent visits to the village and inquiring about me from friends and relations and that I should plan and ensure my safety. I told him that I had made a request to Akbar Shah to arrange for me a safe place. I had come home because of lack of a safer alternative for my stay. My brother went to Akbar Shah and had a talk with him for arrangements for me and also fixed the time, date and place from where I would be picked up. Akbar Shah contacted Abad Khan who arranged for a house behind Qissa Khwani Bazar at Peshawar and owned by Mian Ferozeshah, a big landlord and contractor of Ziarat Kaka Khel.

Under cover of darkness, on 16 April I walked up two miles from my village along with my elder brother reaching the pucca road at the place where Abad Khan had already arrived to take me to Peshawar by car.

At Peshawar I had to wait for the arrival of Sodhi Harmindar Singh and the comrade from Calcutta. Sodhi arrived on 17 April. We organised centres at Peshawar Bandagai (Swal Qilla), Barang (Bajaur), Safi and Kuda Khel to build and develop a number of centres between Peshawar and Kabul. A number of trusted comrades who had creditable record of years of militant service in the anti-British struggles were taken into confidence. These comrades through their sacrifice and selfless work had established their reputation and were widely known in the NWFP and in the tribal areas. Some of them were Akbar Shah, Sanobar

Hussain, Mohammad Shah, Khushal Khan Khattak, Abdul Razak, Sayyed Murtaza, Ummar Khan, Mohammad Kamil, Abdul Latif Affandi and Miran Jan. Every one of these comrades was put in charge of a centre in his respective area and was made responsible for building up the centre for our future work.

The comrade from Calcutta Santimoy Ganguli at last arrived in Peshawar on 18 April 1941. As we were in the process of organising and extending our secret apparatus for future struggle we wanted to utilise more comrades. One of these new comrades was Mir Ghazan Khan of village Maneri, tehsil Sawabi, district Mardan. This time we intended to go along a longer route to cover many more tribes and thereby extend our influence and create a basis for a widespread struggle in future. The route we decided upon was along Peshawar, Mardan, Lalajan Koruna, Barang, Swal Qilla (Bandagai), Safi, Mohamand, Kudakhel, Arkhi and so on.

We started on our journey from Peshawar on 20 April 1941. Before leaving we had decided that in case any of us was arrested we were not to say anything about Subhas Bose or that we were concerned in any way with his work. This was one of the many decisions we had taken. By the evening we reached a village, Lalajan Koruna near Malakand pass where we met Samunder Khan and Ziarat Gul. This contact was arranged for us by Mir Ghazan. Samundar Khan was a congressman and very close associate of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. His nephew Ziarat Gul was a left extremist and anti-Congress. With Ziarat Gul there, we felt we were in safe hands. We stayed the night with them. Mir Ghazan who was to accompany us up to Bandagai in Bajaur tribe area.

Next morning on 21 April we left in a tonga driven by Ziarat Gul. They also gave us a guide for our journey. At about 7.30 in the morning we reached a point near the tribal border. From here Ziarat Gul returned with the tonga while we continued our journey on foot through rocky terrain and reached Dir river by about 1 in the afternoon. For crossing the river there was a rope and a basket. We crossed one by one. Santi Babu who had been feeling rather uncomfortable in the heat took a plunge into the ice cold water. He almost froze. We continued our trek on foot

for Barang in the territory of the Bajaur tribe but had to make a halt on the way. We stayed the night in a hut with some mountain people who gave us tea and food. Next morning on 22nd April we continued our journey on foot and reached Barang by noon. There we spent the night with Abdul Latif Affandi with whom we had a very fruitful discussion. We informed him of our plans and spoke of our expectation from him in this struggle. He expressed his eagerness to do his utmost in such a struggle. Affandi who had visited Turkey and other countries was one of the stalwarts who had been at the helm of the Red Shirt movement for Indian independence. He was for all-out militant action and was very happy to meet us all. He took very great pains to make our stay there comfortable.

On 23 April early in the morning we left for Chingai, had our tea and rest with Ghulamul Rehman who was a lieutenant of Sanobar Hussain and also known to Affandi. Thereafter we resumed our journey and reached Swal Qilla in the afternoon where we met Sanobar Hussain, Ghulam Murtaza and Ummar Khan. Abdul Latif Affandi and Maulana Ghulamul Rehman had also accompanied us to this place. We stayed here till 25 noon. Here all the comrades again had a very useful discussion and confirmed our future plans. All of us were of the view that it was a good chance to strike when the British were engaged in a war and that we should not now allow the opportunity to slip from our hands. Mir Ghazan who had accompanied us so far was introduced to all the comrades and sent back to his place via Dir state. Sanobar Hussain was entrusted with the responsibility of providing some good workers in Kabul at the time of need. Another very important task entrusted to him was organisational work relating to the centres among the different tribal people. He promised that he would work to the best of his capacity to lend active support to the movement. Sanobar Hussain was at one time the president of the Frontier Province Naujawan Bharat Sabha and very senior, useful and important link in our organisation. I confided to him the details of the safe escape of Netaji.

Affandi and Ghulamul Rehman accompanied us to the next village and Chingai where we stayed overnight with a friend of Sanobar Hussain. On 26 April we resumed our journey in the morning and at dusk reached the area of the Safi tribe. We stayed

at the house of Mohammad Kamil, a supporter of Sanobar Hussain and Affandi and one who enjoyed their confidence. On 27 April we went to Abdul Razak of the same tribe who owned an arms factory. On 28 April we reached Kudakhel at 11 in the morning along with Abdul Razak. Here we met Miran Jan who was a very resourceful, anti-British tribal chief. He had a good education and wielded wide influence in his area. He had inherited his strong anti-British views from his forefathers and had lost many of his relatives and friends in different struggles against the British. He received us very warmly and entertained us during the day we stayed there. Affandi, Abdul Razak and Ghulam Martaza stayed back for return to their respective places while the three of us resumed our journey. Miran Jan also supplied us a guide. We left Kudakhel about 9 in the evening on 30 April, travelled the whole night reaching Arkhi on the banks of river Kabul on 1 May 1941 at about noon. We did not enter the village. It took us some time to make arrangements for crossing the river Kabul. We had to send the guide to the village for help in crossing the river with the use of inflated animal skins called 'jalla'. It was nearly 5 in the afternoon before we could cross the river.

We had meanwhile adopted the following code names for us at Peshawar: Santimoy Ganguli: Abdul Rehman, Sodhi Harminder Singh: Shah Zaman. My code name continued to be Rahmat Khan.

One thing has to be noted here that on this second visit to Kabul I was now taking with me two persons—Santimoy Ganguli and Sodhi Harmindar Singh—who could not understand the languages of that area and Afghanistan. And that meant that this time I had two deaf mute persons with me. I succeeded with that story in this mission also though technically it was very wrong. But I had no choice in the matter.

We continued our journey along the river and told our guide to take us to a place where we could take some rest and food for we had trekked a very long distance without either. Santi Babu particularly felt very tired. Our guide took us to a village and introduced us to a young man who knew Miran Jan and told him that we were his guests. After dinner we had hardly slept a few hours when he woke us up for our onward journey. We did not

have time for complete rest. We hired from our host a donkey for Santi Babu but we had gone only a few hours along a good path along the foot of the hills when Santi Babu's donkey saw some other donkeys at a camp pitched by a caravan, and all of a sudden took off at a tremendous speed with Santi Babu on its back. We really got worried and all of us ran after the donkey to save Santi Babu. When at last we caught up with it we found Santi Babu with his arms around the donkey's neck and very much alarmed. Actually I was rather more terrified than him because the track was such that on one side was the river Kabul and on the other side a wall of mountain range and the track also was rough and rocky. So anything could have happened to Santi Babu. We dispensed with the donkey. The donkey-man told us that a little further ahead there was a pucca road and that he would guide us up to that road. When we reached the road it was still dark and we were very tired although Jalalabad was hardly four miles from there now. We went under a bridge on the road crossing a nullah, cleared a space for us and slept soundly. When we got up it was already 8 in the morning. We washed in the nullah and started on our journey to Jalalabad where we reached at about 10 a.m. Since I had already visited Haji Mohammad Amin on my return journey from Kabul, we decided it was not necessary to see him once again. As we were still very tired we rented a room at Jalalabad and slept the whole day. In the evening we went around the city. I showed my comrades the hotel where Netaji and I had spent two nights during his escape to Kabul. After a good breakfast on 3 May we reached Sultanpur by tonga as we did not want to take the truck ride from Jalalabad. This time I had two comrades with me who did not know the language but I felt a little lighter than on the previous occasion when I had to escort Netaji. From Sultanpur we walked up to Fatehbad where we went to a chah khana and asked for tea. People there generally take green tea without milk. They take sugar in the first cup but in subsequent cups even sugar is not added. Sodhi Mohinder Singh (Shah Zaman) insisted on asking for more sugar. I told him that to avoid suspicion we should not do anything different from the usual Afghan customs. He somehow did not quite relish my advice and felt that I was keeping him from taking food and drink of his own choice. Similarly when we

were taking our meals at Swal Qilla, I noticed that Santi Babu (Abdul Rehman) made balls of rice after the custom in Bengal and threw them into his mouth. I later told him to watch the Afghans and try and follow them so that we did not arouse suspicion. I discussed the issue threadbare with Shah Zaman but he had his own views on this issue and said that everybody could not be expected to behave in the same manner in respect of taking food.

About noon we got a truck ride from Fatehbad and reached Budkhak about midnight. This was a very opportune time for crossing this barrier where all sorts of inquiries are made. Every one has to record his name and address in a register maintained for this purpose. On this occasion also we could manage to slip across the barrier without getting our names recorded as most of the staff posted there were asleep. Like other passengers we also slept in a chah khana. In the morning of 4 May 1941 we reached Kabul at about 10 in the morning by tonga and went straight to Sarai Zazian where Netaji and I had stayed. This time we selected the last room in the row on the upper storey. About 1 p.m. I went to Uttam Chand at his shop and told him about my two comrades. He asked me jocularly if they were also "deaf and dumb". The same evening I met Crishnini at his place and told him that as decided between him and Netaji I had escorted two of our comrades for training purposes. He told me that he would chalk out a programme with his minister the day after and that I should see him in the evening on 5 May.

Next evening he told me that we should reach Paghman on 6 May at about 2 in the afternoon. He described to me the house where we were to go. He also told me that a party from the legation would also arrive there at the same time. On 6 May therefore three of us took a bus and reached Paghman at a distance of nearly 25 miles at the appointed time and located the place. The party also arrived at the same time and we followed them into the residence. In the party there were the Italian minister, Mr Quaroni, his wife, Anzalotti and a German introduced to us as Rusmus, a newcomer to Kabul. He told us that he had been in India and Calcutta for a long time on business and could also speak broken Bengali. He said that he had come

from Germany to deal with us. I introduced to them my comrades Sodhi and Santi Babu and told them that according to the previous plan these comrades came here for training to be arranged by them. They promised to start the training soon but, as it came out later, it never materialised. I briefly described our journey through the tribal areas on our way to Kabul and asked him to convey to Subhas Babu the account of our work. He told us that Netaji's journey was quite comfortable. He travelled by train from Soviet border and stayed in Moscow for two days. From there he had gone to Berlin and had met the German leaders there. We spent about two hours with them and returned to our sarai in Kabul by bus after fixing the time and place for the next meeting with them.

Paghman is a very beautiful hill resort near Kabul. Embassy officials, high Afghan government officers and people belonging to the aristocracy used to come here on weekends and on vacations, particularly during the summer.

Our second meeting with the same party was held on 7 May 1941. This time they picked us up and drove us to Paghman and back as we had told them that we had difficulties in reaching Paghman. Nothing new came up of this meeting also. It was more or less a repetition of our discussion at the first meeting. Since we were to be in Kabul for a longer period now and it was neither comfortable nor safe to continue our stay in the sarai indefinitely, I asked them if they could help in providing us with some suitable place for our stay. They said that they could not. In the meantime, however, Uttam Chand had rented a flat for switching over to wholesale business. When he proposed that we could use it for the time being we shifted to a room in the flat where we stayed for nearly a month.

During our stay in Kabul I made frequent visits to Haji Saheb and Sher Afzal Khan and had discussion with them on the current political situation and our role. The Italians asked about the nature of help we expected of them. We told them that that would depend on our relationship worked out by Netaji in Europe. They were conscious of their being physically cut off from Europe and of their inability to offer much practical or material help in the shape of arms etc. They said that they could

give us financial help on a limited scale but we told them that we could not get involved with them in any arrangement of any kind without having received instructions from Netaji. We told them therefore that they should arrive at some settlement with Netaji through their governments and get for us instructions from him for our future relationship with them. They agreed and told us that they would let us know after consultations with their governments.

We stayed in Kabul for some time more but did not get any instructions from Netaji. We therefore decided to go back to the tribal area and to India which actually was our field of political work. Now there was no work for us in Kabul. We talked to the Italians about it who told us to see them some time later—maybe a month or more—when they expected to get some instructions from Netaji. The Italians never started the work of training our comrades for which they had come all the way to Kabul. We therefore decided that Sodhi would stay back in Kabul for establishing contacts with the Soviet embassy which was one of the major duties assigned to him by the party (and this was in accordance with the wishes of Netaji also). I along with Santi Babu would come back to India and make a report to the party and Sarat Chandra Bose.

On 1 June 1941, I along with Santi Babu left Kabul in the afternoon reaching Budkhak by the evening. From here we got a truck ride reaching Jalalabad in the morning of 2 June and went to Haji Saheb at Lalman. He had meanwhile gone on a long tour. I asked his son-in-law to lend us the services of a guide to escort us up to Arkhi. We went on foot to Arkhi reaching there by the evening. We crossed the river Kabul and continued our journey till it was evening. We noticed a few huts, a small mosque and a well. Here we washed, had our meals and stayed the night. Very early in the morning on 3 June we left this place reaching Kudakhel about noon. We had sent back the guide from Arkhi. Miran Jan was very happy to see us return safely. At 2 in the morning we resumed our journey, reached Gandab but did not take a bus there. We continued our journey reaching Shabkadar about 5 p.m. on foot. There we took a tonga reaching Charsadda. From here we took another tonga which took us to Mardan on 4 June at about 9 p.m. It was for

the purpose of arrival in Mardan under the cover of darkness that we had to make foot journey of nearly 18 miles from Gandab to Shabkadar. There is always some risk in journey by bus. One could by chance come across some old acquaintances.

We slipped into my house at Mardan and stayed overnight there. On 5 June Santi Babu shaved and changed into his usual dress and left for Calcutta. I stayed there a few days more and thereafter left for Lahore reaching there on 13 June. Here I made a detailed report to the party comrades and stayed there for a couple of days.

Soon after the Soviet-German war broke out and all our thinking and planning came up for a drastic change. Very long and serious discussions took place among us and we had to revise our line of action in view of the changed circumstances in world affairs. After a few days I left for Calcutta where I met Sarat Chandra Bose in his office in the evening and narrated to him our experiences. He said that it would be essential for me to visit Kabul again for messages from Netaji. I had taken a room in a hotel as before but on the advice from Sarat Babu I shifted to a contact in Calcutta fixed by Santi Babu. He came to the Central Hotel on Chittaranjan Road along with another comrade to shift me to the new place. Santi Babu too was staying there. I stayed there for 2 to 3 days and returned to Lahore where I was with the comrades for a week or so and ascertained their views of the world situation and the role of the party under the changed circumstances. I was of the view that I should continue as before with our anti-British activities, for my area of work was only suited for such work. Most of our comrades also agreed with this point of view at that time. Then I went to Peshawar, stayed there for two days and left for Kabul for my third visit reaching there on 7 July 1941.

I stayed one night at the sarai and then shifted to the same room where Sodhi was putting up in the flat rented by Uttam Chand. I enquired from Sodhi Harmindar Singh about his progress in contacting the Soviet embassy people. He told me that he had just gate-crashed into the Soviet embassy and now contacts had been established. He arranged my meeting with them. By then the Soviet-German war was well on its way. It therefore

became a very complicated problem, as to how to inform Subhas Chandra Bose about all this. It was obvious we could not do this through the Germans or the Italians. I contacted Crishnini who told me that he would talk to the minister about my arrival and asked me to see him the next day. The minister had conveyed to him that he had received a message from Netaji and that I should contact him in Paghman any day in the afternoon. I and Sodhi Harmindar Singh therefore went to the minister who showed us a written message from Netaji, congratulating me for my successful return to India and back to Kabul again under very difficult and trying circumstances. The message stated to have been received by wireless further mentioned that he had reached an understanding in Berlin that under the present conditions they would render help to one another as equals and whatever help in any shape we get from them would be on reciprocal basis and whatever step we took would be entirely with a view to help achieve independence of our country. The message further stated that I should continue concentrating on the work in tribal areas for building up a strong anti-British movement.

Sodhi Harmindar Singh and I came back to Kabul after some further talks with the minister and finalising with him the arrangement for contacting us in tribal area whenever necessity arose. The minister told me that I could go to him directly or through Mr Crishnini as before. Sodhi Harmindar Singh and I started planning for our return journey but we found ourselves in a tight corner on account of an incident that had occurred meanwhile.

The German legation wanted to send some of their own men to Faqir of Ippi in the tribal area of Waziristan. The Germans and the Italians both discussed with me this problem of sending their own men to area adjoining the districts of Kohat and Bannu in NWFP, now in Pakistan. I agreed to establish contacts with the Faqir of Ippi and also explore the possibility of sending their men to Waziristan from Kohat and Bannu. Khushal Khan Khattak, a great anti-British revolutionary, was already in touch with the Faqir of Ippi and also in contact with me. He had full knowledge of our activities. This proposal was straightforward and simple. They agreed with my proposal and asked me to work on

this basis. But behind my back and behind the back of Italians, the Germans had arranged their own plan with Sher Afzal Khan who was our man. Also behind my back most probably the Germans told him that they had discussed this matter with Rahmat Khan (i.e. myself). But how could the Afghan government know about this? The Germans blamed the Italians for this betrayal. Afterward I came to know this from the Germans. Afzal Khan was escorting a couple of Germans when on the way an encounter took place between this party and the Afghan police. One German was killed and one injured in this encounter and because of this incident the police got alerted and enforced heavy restrictions on the movement in and out of the capital city of Kabul. These checks were exercised at Budkhak. We found ourselves in a predicament and decided to lie low for some days and watch the situation. After a few days of waiting we decided to dodge the police by undertaking a part of the journey on foot and bypassing the Budkhak police checkpost. This plan proved successful and we took a truck about 7 to 8 miles beyond Budkhak which took us to Jalalabad. From there we went straight to Mohamand tribal area where Miran Jan stayed. While Sodhi Harmindar Singh who was to convey the message to Calcutta returned to India, I remained here for my work in the tribal area.

# Aftermath (1941-42)

Meanwhile I had developed quite a number of new contacts in different tribal areas. We had established our subcentres there and allotted specific jobs to every comrade. Our main centres were Kudakhel in the Mohamand tribe in the north under the leadership of Miran Jan Syal and his brother. This family which was traditionally anti-British was the leader of the tribe. Most of the members of this family were killed while fighting against the British. Even after independence and partition of India, Miran Jan Syal's younger brother Mulla Jan was killed while fighting Pakistani forces. He was perhaps the first casualty in the struggle for independence of Pakhtoonistan.*

Another centre was fixed at Swal Qilla in village Bandagai under the leadership of Sanobar Hussain. Comrades used to come to Swal Qilla to meet Sanobar Hussain for different reasons. Even earlier people wanting to go to Afghanistan or the Soviet Union used to come to this place first. Swal Qilla was not only our second big headquarters, but a good political base under the political guidance of Sonabar Hussain. The presence of Sonabar Hussain was a great asset to us and of immense help to me personally. With little efforts our propaganda campaigns could now be carried on from here with full coordination among the centres.

After this I started for India and reached Lahore by the end of July. Sodhi Harmindar Singh had meanwhile given a full report to our comrades. He had also been to Calcutta but could not meet anybody of importance nor could he give a clear picture of the position in Calcutta. In the circumstances I was advised to drop my plan of going to Calcutta. Instead I was to return to the tribal area and move between there and Kabul till it was safe for me to go back to India.

* Tribal area between Pakistan & Afghanistan.

On 4 August 1941 I left for Peshawar. I had already asked Abad Khan to arrange my meeting with Mir Ghazan on my arrival there. I reached by train and bus via Kohat on 5 August evening and went to our place of hiding. Mir Ghazan was waiting for me there. I told him that on the next trip I wanted to take Sultan Mohd of village Maneri with me. The latter was with me in jail twice and was a good conscious comrade. Incidentally it may be mentioned that Haji Abdul Subhan also used to belong to this village. His wife in fact is still living in Maneri.

On 10 August 1941, I with Sultan Mohd reached Kabul at about 10 in the morning. We took a room in the same Sarai Zazian. After a change I contacted Uttam Chand to get myself acquainted with the situation there. He said everything seemed to be all right. Then I went to Haji Abdul Subhan's house and told him that I had come with a person belonging to his village Maneri. He was very happy to hear this and requested me to let him stay at his place.

On 11 August 1941, I met both the ministers, Italian as well as German, at Paghman, a health resort. The talk started on the impact of Russo-German war on the Indian people and the attitude of different political parties. I told them very frankly that this new situation has made our work very difficult. Earlier all the political parties used to work in their own way against the common enemy. But Germany's attack on the Soviet Union had somewhat disrupted the forces working for the cause of socialism, because most Indians had great admiration for socialism and the Soviet Union. To them the attack was preposterous.*

* Subhas Chandra had no hesitation in seeking German help guided as he was by the traditional maxim followed by almost all national revolutionaries particularly during war time of 'our enemy's enemy is our friend'. This however was not in accordance with our party's understanding of the war crisis particularly so after the advent of fascism on the world scene. The situation became even more complicated after the sudden nazi attack on the Soviet Union. For the CPI now took a clearcut stand of joining the world antifascist front unconditionally as it felt that the cause of Indian independence could now be advanced only through the defeat of fascism on a world plane.

In this context the question of continuing to help Subhas was a very complex one for the party. Ultimately it was decided to continue the contact with him on the ground that, if handled cautiously, the step

And Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru were strongly against fascism. They felt however that they could fight fascism effectively only if they had a national government of their own. But this the British government would never concede. And so I told them: "A struggle between the Congress and the British on this issue, it seems, is inevitable and when that comes that may help you to a very great extent."

I then explained to them the nature of our work and the organisation in the tribal area. And I also complained about the debacle caused by sending their men on their own to Faqir of Ippi in Waziristan tribal area and its effect on our work. Tribal areas were of course nobody's closed preserve and if the anti-British revolutionaries could go there, so could the British agents and spies. And so a little mistake there was likely to create a lot of complications.

They accepted my views as practical and admitted that it was wrong of them to try to contact the Faqir of Ippi on their own.

In that very meeting Mr Rusmus quietly told me that he wanted to have a separate meeting with me the following day. I agreed. The meeting took place at a flat rented by a German business firm. Mr Rusmus at once came to the point and firmly told me that I must break my relations with the Italians, and in case I did not want to do so, then the Germans will have nothing to do with me. He knew my weak point. Subhas was already in Germany and would not be able to leave Germany without their consent. I was agreeably surprised to find that though the Germans, Italians and the Japanese had banded together as axis powers to fight the allied forces in the bloodiest war in human history, they were, at the same time, extremely suspicious of one another. However after that meeting I never met the Italians again.

Mr Rusmus also informed me in that meeting that an agreement has been reached between Subhas Bose and his govern-

would help strengthen us politically, organisationally and technically when the time came for our inevitable postwar uprising against the British masters.

Thus Bhagat Ram had a delicate and extremely hazardous role to play which he did successfully till the end as the unfolding narrative here will amply bear out—EDITOR.

ment for mutual help, and the same was true about the Italians also.

I told him that now the stage was set for them to help us in a big and concrete way such as collecting and storing of arms etc. Our resources were very meagre, not at all sufficient to carry out our work in India. If they could supply us with arms etc. it would be very good; otherwise they would have to provide us with funds to buy them elsewhere. Besides funds for arms and ammunition, provision would have to be made for the maintenance of about hundred persons permanently and storing of food stuff and other necessities for an emergency arising out of a call given for an armed struggle by Subhas Bose.

He agreed that all the points raised by me were important and of a basic nature. He however pleaded his inability to say anything on these points at that very moment and so another meeting was fixed for 16 August 1941.

On the 16th of August we discussed all the points I had raised in my first meeting with him on the 12th. He told me that they could supply us arms only on a very limited scale though they would try to get us some arms through Turkey and Iran. But that too would be on a very small scale. Major part of arms we would have to purchase ourselves for which they would make funds available to us in British and American currencies.

We were not however satisfied with this as the work we had undertaken needed much more help. But we were facing a dilemma and that was:

1) Subhas Chandra Bose was in Germany and contact with him was only possible through the German legation. Our comrades doubted the bona fides of the communication received through such channels as it was suspected that the Germans might not be playing fair.

2) The Germans pleaded their inability to provide us with arms and also the finances for purchasing arms and ammunition, though purchasing of arms was a difficult problem in any case.

3) A talk had taken place in presence of Subhas Chandra Bose in which the Germans as well as Italians had suggested that I should take two persons to Kabul for special training in sabotage work, use of arms and wireless, etc. It is now known how extremely difficult it was to take two persons from India to

Kabul. But I had managed to take Santimoy Ganguli and Sodi Harmindar Singh with me to Kabul. Both of them stayed there for quite a long time waiting for their training. But nothing ultimately came of it and they had to come away disappointed. It was quite clear that they were not serious about the whole thing and had not made proper arrangements for such training.

I expressed my sentiments to Mr Rusmus who showed his concern over the matter and assured me that in future he would arrange matters in such a way that it would give no room for complaint.

On 18 August 1941 we left for tribal area and reached Kudakhel (Miran Jan's place) via Lalpura on the 20th.

I used to take Miran Jan's into confidence on all important matters. I now discussed all current problems with him and told him that I would be going to India to consult my comrades who were still out of jail. I asked him to arrange a meeting of half a dozen comrades with me in consultation with Sanobar Hussain. I told him I would return from India to attend this meeting.

I asked our comrades about the situation in Calcutta and whether I could get any contact there. I was told that a large number of people had got arrested and it was not safe for me to go there. They would try to get contact through other sources to acquaint them with the situation in Kabul and the tribal area. They advised me not to visit even Lahore as police were very vigilant. They promjsed to keep contact with me through Meerghzam Khan.

The meeting was fixed for the 10th of September in a small hamlet near Kudakhel. All the comrades—about 5 or 6—reached Kudakhel on the 9th.

Before the meeting I placed all the facts before Sanobar Hussain so that he could understand the situation. He said the work we had undertaken required much more help than was offered by the Germans. Anyway we had to work in the given situation and tighten our resources and use our revolutionary zeal to further our revolutionary cause. He understood my point and suggested that we take our senior comrades into confidence to go ahead with our work.

We started our meeting on the 10th morning and put the whole situation before them very clearly. It was decided to build our

striking force with whatever resources and means we had at our command. It may be that help might come from the party from India but we must not harbour false hopes. There was unanimity on these views.

I left for Kabul on 11 September via Lalpura. I reached Lalma (Haji Mohd Amin's village) on the 12th morning. Haji Saheb was there anxiously waiting for me. On the 13th morning I placed full facts of the situation before him. He was very much pleased with the developments. He promised to tour the tribal area.

I left for Jalalabad in the afternoon on foot. Soon after I reached Jalalabad I got a truck which took me to Kabul at 8 in the morning of 14 September. I rented a room in a sarai and then contacted Uttam Chand at his new premises in New Kabul. I had a brief talk with him. The same evening I met Mr Rusmus and gave him the report of our work in India and especially in the tribal belt.

We discussed general political developments in India and also the military situation. He told me about the German successes on the eastern front. I told him that this was already known through the radio and the press but as the German advanced eastwards they would be meeting stiffer resistance from the Russians. Besides with the advance of the army the supply line would also be lengthened which might become more vulnerable.

As far as I could gather, the Germans were unable to develop any anti-Soviet movement in the central part of Russia. It seemed also that the legation in Afghanistan also could not develop such movement on the Russian border side or inside the Russian part of central Asia dominated by the Muslims.

In one of the subsequent meetings the discussion was again focused on the report I had submitted earlier. Though they were pleased with our activities in the tribal area they were not satisfied with our work in India. I then referred to the point raised by me in one of our previous meetings as to the exact understanding between the German government and Subhas Chandra Bose. They promised to clarify the position as early as possible. Obviously they were manoeuvring and I was not satisfied with what they said in reply.

I left Kabul alone on 18 October 1941 in the evening by tonga and reached Budkhak when it was quite dark. Immedia-

tely I got a truck there. Though there was strict checking, being alone in the truck I managed to get through. I got at Jalalabad on 19 October. From there I went to meet Haji Mohd Amin at his village Lalma on the same day. I remained there for the night and explained the whole situation to him. I reached Kudakhel in the early morning when Miran Jan and his brother were still asleep.

I stayed there for two days and talked to him about all aspects of our great mission, with emphasis on our work in tribal area. He was glad that the Germans appreciated our political and organisational work in that area. After further discussion we thought of expanding our work south of Khaibar Pass. I also suggested that we should go to Shinvari area taking Haji Mohd Amin with us as he himself was a Shinwari. With some other important persons we could cover a much wider area and reach further on to Afridi tribe and if possible still onwards to southern side. With Khushal Khan Khattak's help and active participation we could cover the area of Waziristan. We had complete agreement on the total plan of organising the tribal area. He gave me a report of political and organisational activities in his area which was very satisfactory. I planned to meet Sanobar Hussain and other comrades in Swal Qilla which is in Shamozai tribe in the Bajaur area and requested Mirajan to accompany me. But because of some complications it was decided that these comrades should come to Kudakhel. I left alone for Swal Qilla on 24 October 1941 and reached there on the 26th evening.

About half a dozen comrades were collected there to whom I gave a brief talk and heard reports from them. Plans were made for further expansion of their work and discussed the possibilities of developing strong contacts in the Dir and Swat states.

It was decided that I should go to Lahore and then to Calcutta to report on our activities and then come back. In the meantime arrangements should be made for tribal leaders' meeting to take place at the end of November at a place suitable to Mirajan.

I left Swal Qilla for India on 29 October 1941 along with Ghullam Ulrehman via Tamalgarah in the Dir state. I had already

sent a message through Mohd Umar Khan to my younger brother Anand Ram to remain present in the evening at Takhat Bhai along with a tonga ready for drive to Mardan or to my village. I reached Takhat Bhai in the evening of 30 October 1941 on foot, and then by bus and tonga. I searched and found them—one of my trusted and resourceful comrade, Waris Khan, and Anant Ram. Waris was a lame man but he could do any job and even drive a tonga. He belonged to my village.

They took me to a groove to get my clothes changed. They had brought a lady's clothes, including a burkha for me. I changed my clothes and started for my village. We reached our house at about 9.30 p.m. My mother was anxiously waiting for me.

My plan was to stay at my place till the 3rd evening and so I had asked Waris Khan to come to my place in the early morning on that day to discuss further plans.

Waris Khan came early morning while my another brother Kishori Lal Talwar had arrived the previous evening. I and the three discussed together the plan of my going to Lahore.

It was decided that I should catch the Bombay Express at Akora Khattuck station. Kishorilal was to take the train at Nowshera and get down at Akora Khattuck. He was to bring clothes for me which I could change and then go into a good hotel at Lahore. Provisional arrangement was also fixed for my coming back and going to Kabul via the tribal area. Contact addresses were also fixed.

I reached Lahore the next morning, i.e. on 4 November 1941. As everything looked normal I went straight to a hotel and remained there for the day. Next day I shifted to the party hiding place with the help of Gurcharan Singh Sansra.

I made a detailed report of my trip to Kabul to my comrades. I expressed my doubts about the real intentions of the Germans. Whatever they might say outwardly they wanted to use us as their agents and I doubted very much the bona fides of the messages said to have been received from Subhas Chandra. However I was of the opinion that we should maintain our relations with the Germans and receive whatever help we might get. We could utilise this help to build a strong anti-imperialist base in the tribal areas and increase our activities to mobilise the

people also for antilandlord movement. The vast majority of the population of the Frontier province was landless, though a very small percentage had very small holdings. Most of the land was owned by the big landlords who were Muslim Leaguers. The population in tribal territory is hundred per cent Muslim and in NWFP about 97 per cent. Therefore the main struggle there had to be against the landlords and the British.

I had an intention to go to Calcutta to acquaint the comrades there with full facts. But we had no comrade who could safely establish contact with our comrades in Calcutta. So the idea was dropped for the time being.

It was decided that I should curtail my visits to India from security point of view and instead concentrate my energies on the work in tribal areas and in keeping contact with the Germans.

I told the comrades that I had to attend a meeting of comrades working in tribal area and after the meeting I would go to Kabul. It was thereafter necessary to prepare a report on political and military situation in India. It was necessary to have exhaustive reports of political activities in India. After prolonged discussions it was decided that I should go to Lala Jamnadas Talwar's house in Mardan. Gurcharan Singh was entrusted with the task of collecting such reports who would take them to Lala Jamnadas's house. I and my brother were to draft a report from the materials thus collected.

A plan was made for me to leave Lahore on the 18th and reach my brother's place next evening. It was indeed very risky but no alternate plan could be thought of. Two days later Sansra came there with a typewriter and other necessary material to type out a report. It took 5 days for me to prepare the report which was later typed out.

I left for tribal area in a tonga with Anant Ram and Waris Khan on the 27th evening. The road was via Malakand pass and Dir state to Swal Qilla. I left the tonga on the roadside between Malakand and Skhakot and took a bus early next morning for Butkhella and from there to Swal Qilla. The checkpost between Dir state and Malakand was bypassed and having spent the night in a small hamlet I reached Swal Qilla on the 29th evening.

I found Sanobar Hussain, Ghulam Murtaza and Mohd Umar Khan were already there.

In the evening while I narrated my story they in their turn gave me an account of their activities in their area and the surroundings.

They told me that the meeting of our activists was fixed for 5 December at Miran Jan's place. The meeting was to be a secret one and not more than seven or eight persons would attend it. I said it was good that the meeting had been arranged secretly. My identity should not be made known to those who did not know me. The main strategy was to lie low and go on building, from strength to strength, making maximum use of our resources and capacity.

Three of us reached Kudakhel on the 5th morning. Other comrades also reached there in time. Sonabar Hussain and Miran Jan explained the prevailing situation and indicated the line of action and propaganda. I cautioned them saying that propaganda must be carried out orally and nothing must be in writing, excepting in very important cases. Purchase of arms and ammunition must be made in a normal way, i.e. not in a bulk but in small lots at a time from different sources.

I left for Kabul at the midnight of 7 December taking with me one of the trusted men—Miran Jan—for Lalpura where I crossed the river Kabul at 10 in the morning by boat and reached Peshawar-Kabul road by about 11. Fortunately I got a truck soon after and I reached Kabul on the morning of 8 December, 1941.

In the evening I contacted Uttam Chand just before he closed his shop. He told me that the government had stopped him from doing retail business as he was not authorised to do so. He had rented a spacious business place in New Kabul where he was to shift the next day. I went to his new place the very next day and established contact with the Germans the same evening. The following day, i.e. on the 9th, I met Mr Rusmus along with another German whose name was Witzal. At that very first meeting with him I guessed that he must be the chief of the German secret service in Kabul.

I found they were more interested in the tribal territory than in India. Perhaps the idea was that they wanted to take advantage of the anti-British feelings among the tribal population to strengthen their own position and then bring about a situation in

which the British would be compelled to keep a big army there. That would naturally divert their attention from the main theatre of war.

I enquired if there was any message for me from Mazotta (Subbhas Bose). They said there was one and the following is the gist of it as they gave it to me:

1) Do not go in for any sabotage of industry, especially heavy industry.

2) Do not start an armed struggle till you are sure of success at least in some particular areas.

3) Your struggle must be combined with our struggle. Otherwise stabilise the struggle in the tribal areas as best as you can.

4) Our friends will guide you, but you must use your own discretion as to what to do and what not to do as they may be wrong due to their ignorance of the actual situation there.

5) Though they are treating us as equals and we are to co-operate with each other, they might not be in a position to help you to the extent you desire. Therefore you have to find out other avenues for financial help from India or elsewhere.

6) Inform me about the political situation in India and the role of different parties and their attitude towards me, particularly send informmation about the situation in Bengal.

7) Is your apparatus in Kabul safe?

It took three days to cover all these points. They asked me to see them again after a few days at the same place and if necessary to stay with them for a couple of days. So I met them again on the 19 December 1941.

Meanwhile I had met some other friends who were connected with us in our common cause. Through them I wanted to build some more contacts. I was interested in buying some light arms in Kabul and elsewhere. These were then to be smuggled out to the tribal areas from where our comrades would take them to their places.

So when I met Mr Rusmus on the 19th as previously fixed, I informed them about my preoccupation with the purchase of arms. The point was raised by me for financial help either in Afghan or Indian currency, or perhaps in gold. But I would not prefer gold because its conversion was as risky as dollars and

sterling. I suggested to them to have their own arrangements on commercial lines as many people were engaged in this type of enterprises.

They agreed to build such a commercial organisation. Later on I came to know that the apparatus did well. However, they always used to complain that their financial resources were very limited.

It was on 26 December 1941 that I left them hoping to return to the tribal area after a week. During this period they were to provide me with money to the extent they could and were also expected to send a detailed report of our discussions to Subhas Chandra Bose.

I left Kabul on 3 January 1942 and reached Jalalabad in the evening. Next day I went to Lalman to meet Haji Mohd Amin. He had already left his home to meet Sanobar Hussain and Miran Jan as per their express call. I passed the night there with his son-in-law. From Haji Saheb's friends we came to know that two traders were leaving for Peshawar that night after dinner and I decided to accompany them up to Kudakhel which was on the way.

We left Arkhi after taking food and observing nomaz. It was about 11 at night. My companions proved to be jolly good fellows. They took me to Miran Jan's house and told him that "this is a sacred trust for you from Haji Mohd Amin". It was about 1 p.m. They took some food at Mirajan's place and left for Peshawar. Miran Jan also used to know them. He told me that Haji Mohd Amin had completed his tour programme and got good response. Presently he was in his own tribal area, i.e. Shinvari area (Ningrar). He was doing well in his own way but it would not be possible for me to see him.

I told him all about my trip to Kabul and the arrangements for the purchase of arms and the points on the border from where we had to take delivery of them. He was simply amazed at the arrangements I had made and especially the points I had selected for collecting arms which were very convenient for him.

He gave me an account of the situation in the tribal area which seemed quite satisfactory. I wanted some rest and time to discuss matters with Miran Jan. So I stayed with him for 4 days. Then I

left for Swal Qilla and on the way met Abdul Razak (arms manufacturer) with whom I discussed about my arms requirements. He told me that procuring of arms—mostly .303—was not a problem at all.

I reached Swal Qilla on 13 January 1942 meeting some friends on the way. At Swal Qilla I met Sanobar Hussain, Ghulam Murtaza, Mohd Umar Khan and Ghulam Ulrehman. I also sent for Abdul Latiff Affandi who has already been introduced to our readers.

The gathering was good and informative. These were the people, apart from Miran Jan, who had really organised the tribal belt. We exchanged information and discussed matters concerning both the tribal area and Kabul. Some were rather disappointed with the response from our friends in Kabul. I asked them not to draw hasty conclusion nor to feel disappointed. We were to fight the British directly, sooner or later, depending upon the political and military situation. It was therefore in our own interest to gain time to strengthen our organisation politically and also with arms which we lacked.

The following day, i.e. on 18 January 1942, all comrades dispersed. Umar Khan was sent to meet my brothers, Anant Ram and Kishori Lal, with a message that they were to arrange for my going to Lahore. Umar Khan came back on the 21st of January and told me that I must reach Takhat Bhai on the 23rd evening where my brothers would be waiting for me at a fixed place with a tonga.

I reached Takhat Bhai in time and met Anant Ram and Waris Khan. I told them that I was not well for the past few days. They must therefore take me to a place where medical help would be available.

I suggested Lala Jamnadas's house. There a good doctor was available whom we could take into confidence. His name was Dr Ishar Dass Kohli. As he used to come to Lalaji's house very often, he could examine me there and if the treatment had to be a prolonged one, I could be shifted to my village house.

We thus reached Mardan at 9.30 in the evening. I told Lalaji about my problem and he arranged for the doctor to visit me next day. The latter told me that because of my stomach disorder and skin trouble I would have to undergo a long treatment

and for that I would have to stay in Lalaji's house for a week under his observation and then shift to some other place.

There seemed to be no alternative to this course. I had gone far too weak and physically incapacitated. So after a week I shifted to my village and remained there for 7 weeks under the doctor's treatment and 3 more weeks for rest and recoupment.

During this whole period I remained of course in touch with our comrades in the tribal areas through the brothers of Ghulam Ulrehman, who used to till our land as leaseholders.

On recovery I wanted to meet Khushal Khan Khattak and sent Meerghzan to bring him from Kohat. He came after a few days when I gave him an account of the present situation and told him that I was finding it impossible to cope with the increasing workload. He asked me what my demands were on him. I told him that he and his comrades should immediately start work in the tribal areas and in the NWFP and for that take financial help from Sonabar Hussain. I told him also that I needed a most reliable, politically alert and clever comrade who would remain with me and sometimes in my absence would stay at Kabul to maintain contact with the Germans which was, indeed, a very delicate job.

To this Khushal Khan replied that they were already carrying out the first task and were in contact with the Fakir of Ippi but were short of funds. Now they would certainly meet Sonabar Hussain for that. As for my second request he suggested his younger brother Mohd Jinnah alias Mohd Ussaf who he thought would be a suitable person for the job.

I told him that within a week I would go to the Punjab or even to Bombay to discuss policy matters with our comrades there. Political situation in tribal areas, Dir and Swat states and Afghanistan was quite different from that in India and as such the party policy would have to be applied here in a somewhat different manner. For instance, Congress-League unity would be an empty slogan here. Ninety-nine per cent of the population here were Muslims who were mostly anti-League and not anti-Congress. A small number of Muslim League supporters came from the landlord class. The Pathan masses were not communal and the enemies of the Pahan masses, i.e. the landlords, were in the League.

These comrades were in full agreement with me. They stayed in our place for three days. After that I asked Khushal Khan to send his younger brother Mohd Jinnah to me during the first week of August 1942.

By this time I had fully recovered and so I left for Lahore on 1 June 1942 and reached there the next morning. That evening I went to the office of the Communist Party of India at McClead Road to meet Teja Singh Swatantra. Unfortunately he was not there but expected in a couple of days. Failing again to meet him on the 4th of June I left a note for him with an office comrade. The latter came to my hotel to tell me that Teja Singh wanted to see me at the party office on the 5th evening.

So on the 5th evening I met for the first time the legendary revolutionary leader Teja Singh Swatantra about whom I had heard so much. Thereafter we remained in close touch with each other till his death.

Next day he came to me early in the morning and remained with me for an hour when the following decisions were taken:

1) To make safe arrangements for my stay Gurcharan Singh Sansra was to take me to the place where he himself was staying at that time.

2) Some one was to go to my village to bring back my papers and other things. Gurcharan was most suitable for this job, but some one else would have to carry the luggage.

3) Preferably a woman comrade should be entrusted with the job of keeping contact and communication between me and my family.

4) It was absolutely necessary to have political talks with the party leadership at the party headquarters. As stated earlier and as explained in my talk with Khushal Khan Khattak and Swatantra, I had to seek permission from the party to carry on my political work along the line I was doing all this time.

5) To build an underground apparatus to help me carry out my jobs safely at this end. My family would help me at the other end.

6) I wanted very keenly to go to Calcutta and contact the Bengal Volunteer comrades. But Swatantra said that I should go first to Bombay and then only to Calcutta. And going to Cal-

cutta was very risky. Besides we did not know how they would react to our political views. I agreed with him.

Swatantra later succeeded in tracing Gurcharan Singh Sansra, who came to my hotel on 11 June 1942. He told me that Swatantra had suggested that I should shift to his place that day. Then he was to go to my village Ghalla Dher with Sarla Sharma to bring back my papers etc. Sarla is the wife of Parsram Sharma. She is a very resourceful and daring woman with great presence of mind. I told Sansra that I would shift to his place only after he returned from my village.

They came back on the morning of the 15th of June and I shifted to Sansra's place the same evening.

Once there I discussed with Sansra about my programme. He told me that Santimoy Ganguli had been to Lahore a few months back. He said: "We told Santimoy Ganguli that because of change in our line it would not be possible to have any further cooperation between us in future." I told Sansra it was wrong on his part to give such a reply to Santimoy Ganguli, not knowing what was the change in our policy and how that came about. Then I gave him the gist of this policy as I understood it.

I told Sansra that I had a talk with Swatantra also on these lines and would now go to Bombay to have talks with the CPI leadership. After that I would go to Calcutta. Sansra agreed with me.

I left for Bombay on the 21st of June and Swatantra started on the following day. I contacted D. P. Sinha a day after I reached Bombay. Swatantra had meanwhile arrived that day and told Sinha that I would contact him. Sinha fixed an appointment between me, G. Adhikari and Swatantra and took me from my place to the meeting place. The meeting lasted for more than two hours.

I gave Adhikari the whole story from the beginning regarding Subhas Chandra's escape to Kabul and from there to Berlin via Soviet Union. I gave an account of my work in the tribal and the adjoining areas and my political views in relation to my work. He asked me what was my opinion about the party line in India. I said I had no grasp over the political situation in India. But my point was that Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union would not ultimately work in favour of the aims of the axis powers,

as much as it would further the powers of the antifascist alliance.

We had a couple of more sittings and then both of us left Bombay—Swatantra for Lahore and I for Calcutta on 28 June 1942.

I reached Calcutta on 30 June and put up at Central Hotel on Chittaranjan Avenue. This time it was very difficult to make contacts with the people I knew. I did not know about the wholesale arrests of almost everybody I had known before. I wanted to get in touch with a person who used to work in a bank. His name was Sasanka Das Gupta. I used to visit the bank premises thrice a day, in the morning, at lunch hour and at the time of closing and used to wait outside hoping to meet him. I did this for three full days and then concluded that either he had been arrested or transferred. I therefore gave up the idea of contacting him and returned to Lahore.

At Lahore I took rest for two days. I told Sansra that he and Swatantra were to collect materials for preparing a report which I would have to take to Kabul. He told me that plenty of materials had already been collected.

He arranged my meeting with Swatantra at his house. We discussed our Bombay trip. He told me that comrades at Bombay did not want to interfere in my activities nor did he want to do so. I was very happy to hear this.

I told him that it was necessary to build an apparatus to collect uptodate political and military information for me, to keep contact between me and the party centre at Lahore as also my family. The apparatus must function efficiently and must ensure safety of everybody concerned. Sarla could act as a courier between myself and Lahore and Mohd Umar Khan would act as a contact between Mardan, Peshawar and the tribal area.

It was decided that the reports about the political situation in India would be prepared by Swatantra and Sansra together. Reports about the tribal situation would be prepared by me and Sanobar Hussain.

Swatantra and Sansra started working on the report on the basis of the materials they had collected. It took about a week

to complete the report. On 22 July Sansra was sent to Mardan to get clear passage for my going back home. He came back to Lahore on the 27th and told me that I should start for Mardan on 1 August 1942 by Frontier Mail dressed in European clothes.

I took the train and reached Nowshera in the evening where I found Anant Ram waiting for me on the platform. He took me in a roundabout way to the place where Waris Khan was waiting with the tonga. We immediately started for our village and Waris Khan dropped me at some distance away from where I followed Anant Ram to our house. My mother was anxiously waiting for me. She said she was very happy to see me back home. I told her that after a few days she would again be saddened when I would have to leave again for my job. And this cycle of happiness and sorrow would continue till the day we won our freedom.

I had a detailed talk with Waris before my departure for the tribal area. We had meanwhile received the news about the arrest of Uttam Chand. I expressed my fear about the difficulties I would be facing at Kabul this time. One Amir Zada, an Afghan national living in India for a long time, had been associated with us. I asked Waris Khan if Amir Zada could be sent to Kabul before me as a pilot to give a message to a friend of mine who had a woollen hosiery factory in Kabul. Amir Zada used to have an Afghan passport. Waris Khan asked him and he immediately agreed to go to Kabul. I gave him a detailed description of the place situated on Labe-Darya where I wanted him to go. The name of the person I was sending him to was Haji Abdul Subhan. Amir Zada was to tell him that he came from Rahmat Khan who would reach Kabul within a week or two. Amir Zada left on the 5th and reached Kabul on the 6th of August 1942. While Amir Zada was at Haji's house unfortunately for him the police came to arrest Haji Abdul Subhan. They also asked Amir Zada for his identity. Though he had his Afghan passport with him they arrested him also and his relatives in Afghanistan, too, were harassed. We got all this news from his relatives even before we left our village.

I was waiting for Sarla and Jinnah. The latter was to accompany me to Kabul. I was very anxious to go to Kabul as soon as possible. At last Sarla arrived dressed perfectly as a Pathan

lady in burkha. She had gone straight to my elder brother's house in Mardan and from there had come to our village. She had to stay at our place for two days as I wanted to send a report to Swatantra about the new developments at Kabul.

Mohd Jinnah reached my place on the 12th. I contacted Waris Khan and told him that I would be leaving on the 16th night. Abdul Hakim, brother of Gulamul Rehman was to accompany us up to Swal Qilla as a guide. This time I had changed my route, though safe the new one was very stiff. I had used it on my second trip when I had taken Santimoy Ganguli and Sodi Harmindar Singh with me.

On the 16th of August I and Anant Ram left our house in darkness while Jinnah and Abdul Hakim were with Waris Khan. Waris Khan reached the fixed place in time and we all started at about 10 p.m. We reached Durgai situated on Nowshera-Mardan railway line at 2 in the morning and rested for some time. We started again at dawn and reached in tribal border at 6 a.m. We left our tonga there and Waris Khan and Anant Ram went back home.

I, Jinnah and Abdul Hakim started again on foot. At the checkpost on the border we were questioned but the officer at the post was satisfied with our bona fides and allowed us to proceed. He was of the rank of a tehsildar. He told me that he had a revolver, but its cartridges were rather difficult to procure. Possibly it might be available at Chingai. He requested us to get some for him for which he was prepared to pay immediately. I told him not to worry about it and in his presence told Abdul Hakim to procure cartridges and deliver them to the tehsildar saheb on his return journey. We started from the checkpost at 10 a.m. and after crossing the river Swat reached Barrang at 7 in the morning. Abdul Latif Affandi used to stay there and, luckily for us, he was present there at that time. We spent the night at his place.

We reached Swal Qilla at about 6 in the afternoon on 18 August 1942. Soon after we had a long discussion on the situation in Kabul, on my discussions with the party leaders. My report was received very enthusiastically. After reporting I told them that the situation in Kabul being critical Syed Murtaza should also accompany me. Though Jinnah was a trusted young

comrade he was quite new to the job and I could not yet say how he would be able to handle such a delicate situation.

In the afternoon on the next day, I, Ghulam Murtaza, Jinnah and Ghulam Ulrehman left for Kabul. We reached Kudakhel on the 23rd evening. I had a talk with Miran Jan on the political and war situation in general and told him the stand I had taken in the talks with the party leadership. Though he expressed satisfaction on my talks he had his own doubts about the development of the war situation and chances of driving out the British and felt somewhat frustrated. I told him that there was no cause for frustration. The Germans were facing stiff resistance on the Russian front and their plan to overrun Russia, Iran and Afghanistan and invade India would never materialise. He asked me how I could say that the Germans wanted to invade India and not to liberate it since Subhas Chandra Bose was in Germany to look after the interest of our country and we were dealing with the Germans here on his behalf. I told him that the Germans wanted to safeguard their own interests and would not look to our interest. Hitler started this war not to liberate the colonial people from their enslavers but to redivide the colonial world. They were helping us to build an organisation here which they thought would be useful to them to defeat the British when the time came. But that time might not come for them at all. But this organisation of ours would certainly be immensely useful when time came for us to drive away the British. He said, "Yes, that must be our ultimate objective."

We left Kudakhel next day at about 3 in the morning. Luckily we got a truck immediately after reaching Jalalabad and we reached Kabul at about 3 in the morning on 26 August.

Next evening I somehow managed to get an entrance to Haji Abdul Subhan's house and met his German wife. She told me Amir Zada was here when the police came to arrest Haji Saheb and they arrested him also. But she told me that my message to the Germans through Amir Zada had been conveyed by her to Mr Rusmus. She told me that she would inform Mr Rusmus about my arrival.

She further told me that after the arrest of Uttam Chand the situation in Kabul had become complicated and risky and so I and my comrades must be very cautious. Afghan police had

become very active and were making inquiries about me from Haji Abdul Subhan. She said: "Let them do whatever they want, but 'our' (German) troops will reach here within six months at the most. And then we will see how they can escape from the sins they have committed against the Germans by helping the British and the Russian here."

I was to meet Mr Rusmus on the 27th at Dr Detritch's house for a short time because longer meetings were not possible there. Simple exchange of greetings and passing on the two reports which we had brought with us, that was all we wanted. But a longer meeting may be necessary after they had read the reports for discussion and clarification and in case there were any queries from the German side. Next meeting would take place after a week or so and would last perhaps a week or ten days. Meanwhile we had to look for a safe place.

From the next day we went in search of accommodation and succeeded in getting a small house at Char Deh near Mazong where we shifted immediately.

On the evening of 5 September Mr Witzal picked me up from a fixed place and drove to the house where Mr Rusmus, Mr Hans Dow, Mr Zuzumbulla and Miss Gallin, who later on became Mrs Witzal, were waiting.

Mr Rusmus told me, "Because of serious developments in the city we would like to keep you here safe for some days, though it would be somewhat troublesome for you." That means I must remain unnoticed by the Afghan staff of the legation and food also would have to be served to me secretly. I told them that I did not mind the trouble but this arrangement was not safe enough. For if by chance I cough in the room that would betray the presence of a person here and would cause suspicion in the minds of the Afghan staff. They would then keep a watch on the room and notice me while going to the bathroom.

However we began our talk on the political situation in India and other topics concerning our work. As for my reports they said that these had given them very valuable information, especially about the 'Quit India' movement started by Gandhiji. They were very keen on knowing as much as possible about the movement. They said the radio and newspapers did not give full and authentic news. I agreed. But I too was not in a position to give

them a comprehensive picture of the movement as I had no means of collecting the necessary materials while I was in India or in the tribal areas. However I promised them a more detailed report on the 'Quit India' movement on my next visit.

They informed me that the military situation on the Russian as well as the Middle-Eastern front was satisfactory, though the pace of advance has slowed down for many reasons. The Japanese were also consolidating their position in Burma and in the whole of South-East Asia and the Pacific Islands.

They told me that their armed forces on the Russian front were advancing towards Stalingrad which was their main target, but they expected very stiff resistance from the Russians in that area.

Mr Witzal told me that it is quite clear that the Germans were not interested in occupying the whole of the Russian territory. Their strategy was to connect and combine their armed forces in the Middle-East with their forces in Russia after they had captured whatever territory they wanted from Russia. I asked him if it meant that after passing through Russia the German forces would enter Iran and Iraq and even further to join their forces in the Middle-East. He said, "yes", and if they succeeded in achieving this target there was no power in the world to stop them from achieving their final mission.

They told me that from next day they would start transmitting our report to Berlin.

About political situation in India, they said that our report was helpful to them though they would have liked to have more detailed information on the 'Quit India' movement.

Regarding our report on tribal situation, they said, they were satisfied but felt that the tempo of our work there was too fast and consequently the developments there might not synchronise with their overall strategy for that region. At this rate we might reach the highest peak of the movement very soon and then it might be very difficult for us to control it. They therefore suggested that the tempo might be brought down in such a way that we kept pace with their achievement on the Russian front.

I told them that as long as they did not keep us informed about their strategy and their expectations about our work, it would be difficult for us to synchronise with the requirements

demanded by the situation. Therefore there should be a clearcut discussion covering all points.

Mr Rusmus then asked several questions and I answered them.

*Q.* Due to 'Quit India' movement, I think the situation in India has changed in our favour. But the role of Mr Jinnah is very harmful. I suggest that the radio stations of all the axis powers and that of the Azad Hind government broadcast anti-Jinnah propaganda. What do you think of this?

*A.* I do not think that would help. Obviously Jinnah is trying to safeguard the interests of British imperialism. But if such a propaganda is started, Mr Jinnah and the Muslim League, in reply, will let loose virulent tirade against the Congress and other nationalist forces and that will harm our cause.

*Q.* I think it is necessary to plan systematic sabotage work in big industries to combine with the 'Quit India' movement.

*A.* I personally do not agree with this line of thinking and Mazotta (Subhas Chandra Bose) also will not I think accept this suggestion. Sabotage either of big or small industries will generate ill feelings against the saboteurs in the minds of the Indian masses. As we are heading towards the independence of our country, it will be harmful to destroy industries which are likely to help build our national economy. I request you to refer this point—maybe, without mentioning my opinion on this.

*Q.* The Britishers are using their army to suppress the 'Quit India' movement. How can this be prevented?

*A.* I suppose, you do not want the army which is engaged in suppressing the 'Quit India' movement should, instead, go to fight against your armies somewhere in the Middle-East? (this was, of course in a lighter vein). I say, it is necessary that our people and your propaganda machinery should create public opinion against the suppression of the 'Quit India' movement which is organised for the liberation of our country from foreign yoke.

Both Mr Rusmus and Mr Witzal said that the method of conducting 'Quit India' movement is wrong. The people take out processions and organise public meetings. The police and the army come to disperse them and if they do not disperse, the army shoots them down and then they disperse. Consequently

there is a great loss with no material gain, "How do you explain this?"

I replied thus: "Your assessment seems to be right. But the facts of the situation are like this: Just after the 'Quit India' resolution was passed the leadership of the Congress got arrested and there was nobody left in the Congress high command to give proper direction to the movement. Therefore all those who escaped arrest—whether on all-India, provincial or district level—direct the struggle as they think fit. Naturally their method is based on Indian traditions, i.e. on the 'participation of the masses in the struggle'. But this time the mood of the movement is quite different from previous struggles led by the Indian National Congress. At places the tempo is that of a real mass upsurge."

According to Mr Witzal the German armed forces after defeating the Russians on the southern front would not go to occupy the entire Russian territory, but their forces would turn to the Middle-East theatre. Mr Rusmus, on the other hand, was expecting the German armies to reach the Indian border, after defeating the Russians and overrunning Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan.

When this discussion was going on the talk which I had with Mrs Haji earlier came to my mind. She had expressed her hope of German armies coming to Afghanistan within six months. Then I thought that there might be a plan to invade Afghanistan and India.

We met again on the 15th of September and Mr Witzal asked me to give him a clearcut picture of the method of our work in the tribal areas. I explained our method in detail.

Then he told me that he had received a message from Berlin in which they had asked him to contact some new persons in Afghanistan and tribal areas who were supposed to be anti-British and pro-Amanullah Khan (the ex-king of Afghanistan). These names were supplied to the German high command by one Mr Ghulam Sadeeq Khan, brother of General Ghulam Nabi Khan who was against the present regime in Afghanistan and was killed by king Nadir Shah. He is a friend of Germany and a very influential figure in Afghanistan. Mr Witzal requested me to establish contact with them. The names were:

1) Mallick Hassan Khan, s/o Sardar Khan, belonging to Mohamand tribe of village Gandaw.

2) Mallick Aminjan, s/o Mallick Masal Khan, belonging to Mohamand tribe of Kudakhel.

3) Mulla Mohd Yusaf of village Babara (known as Babre Mullah).

4) Khan of Pashat in Bajaure.

5) Mullah Mohd Umar Khan of Swal Qilla from Shamazai tribe in Bajaure area.

I told Mr Witzal that Mallick Hassan Khan was already interned in the Kabul city and was not allowed to leave it. Therefore it was no use contacting him. However his elder brother's relations with us were good. Regarding the remaining four others, we were already having very good understanding and one of them Mohd Umar Khan of Swal Qilla which was our main headquarters was one of the most trusted and active anti-British militant fighters in that area.

I met Mr Rusmus and Mr Witzal again on the 7th of October 1942. They told me that a message had been received for me and we must meet again on the following day.

Next day Mr Witzal picked me up in his car. But he expressed his regrets and said that the meeting had to be postponed till the following day as they were not sufficiently prepared.

However we began a talk on general political and war situation. Mr Witzal being the most sensible and efficient officer of the whole lot of the German staff was very upset. He told me that they were meeting very stiff resistance on the Russian (eastern) front which they had never expected. The German advance was virtually stopped. However he was optimistic about their ultimate success though it might not be easy.

Mr Rusmus and Mr Witzal met me on 9 October 1942. They told me that Berlin wanted me to act on the following instructions:

1) To arrange for an aeroplane landing ground 1¼ mile long and ½ a mile wide.

2) To arrange for a fairly large quantity of aviation oil, which must be sufficient for at least two trips from a base in Europe to the tribal area.

3) To discuss with our comrades in tribal areas about the urgent necessity of organising a strong force there with a view to create some guerilla bases.

4) To arrange for safe accommodation for technicians, doctors, military experts, etc. and storing of light arms, ammunition, wireless materials of different kinds, maps, medicines, money, etc.

5) To organise arrangements for the stay of people coming there. It must be very secret. There might be some Indians also.

6) To try your best to establish chain relations between all the centres and NWFP.

7) Not to disturb the present arrangement in the least, but further consolidate the position.

8) Sabotage has to be the main item for destroying British military supply lines in India.

9) To seek ways and means to sabotage Anglo-American supplies to the Soviet Union via Iran.

10) There are some tunnels on the Iran supply routes to Russia. If these tunnels could be exploded a very useful purpose will be served.

11) To exact reports on military activities in India and also detailed report on the political situation has to be sent.

12) Efforts must be made to curtail or hinder as much as possible the production of war materials in India.

I told the Germans that I would be leaving Kabul within a week along with Ghulam Murtaza because of some urgent work. Jinnah would remain in Kabul to keep contact with them. I added that in case something happened to me, i.e. in case I got arrested or killed, Ghulam Murtaza would continue to work for me till somebody was deputed to take my place.

Murtaza came back with Abdul Rauf, our houseowner, after purchasing two horses for carrying our luggage. We left Kabul on 19 October 1942 and kept Jinnah behind to look after the house and keep contact with the Germans.

We arrived at Jalalabad on 20 October, stayed there for a day and reached Kudakhel (Miran Jan's place in the tribal area) on the 21st late at night. We passed a day there, heard report

of the situation in Mohamand tribal area and other areas adjoining Afghanistan and NWFP. I informed him of our talks in Kabul.

It was a very tiring journey on a horseback right from Kabul to Swal Qilla. I wanted rest and some diversion. It was also necessary to arrange sending a message to my elder brother Lala Jamnadas Talwar, then a Congress MLA, or to my younger brother Anant Ram about my coming visit to Ghalla Dher. Another younger brother Kishori Lal also used to stay at Mardan. I sent Mohd Umar Khan to Mardan on the 26th of October to contact anyone of the three brothers and inform him that I would be reaching Mardan on the 1st of November at about 10 in the night.

I left for Mardan properly disguised along with Ghulamul Rehman at about 4 in the morning on the 1st of November and reached Batkhella. From here I sent back Ghulamul Rehman. I caught a bus for Mardan, but got down at about 8 in the evening at Takhat Bhai. From there I took a tonga, reached Mardan at 10 in the night and got down just near the house of my brother in the Shankar Bazar. My people were very vigilant and were waiting for me.

I asked my brother how was it that he had not been arrested so far in the 'Quit India' movement? He told me that it was expected any day and therefore we must leave for the village. We left at about 1 a.m. and reached our village which was about 6 miles from Mardan at 2.30 a.m. I found my mother sitting near the house gate and she at once opened it. After some talk Lala Jamnadas left for Mardan. As he was apprehending arrest any time it was not advisable for him to be away from his house at Mardan while I was at my village house.

In such a situation it was very risky to stay longer even at my village. I therefore asked Anant Ram to arrange taking me to Akora Khuttak railway station, from where I could catch a train for Lahore.

I reached Lahore the next day, i.e. 3 November 1942. I immediately contacted Teja Singh Swatantra at his house and requested him to arrange for my lodging. He told me that there was absolutely nothing wrong in my staying with him in his house.

I shifted to his place the very next day and told him that I required some rest and then we could sit for talks and for sorting out problems and their solutions in the tribal areas etc. He agreed. Regarding my medical treatment I told him that I had no particular ailment as such, but my health was just running down due to heavy strain and lack of rest.

From 5 November 1942 I sat with Swatantra for full five days and gave him a report verbally of all the happenings since I left Lahore last.

He heard my report and also the demands made by our German friends on us for the preparation in the tribal areas according to their military strategy. All these questions required deep thought and a knowledge of the area. Luckily Swatantra knew the tribal situation even better than me.

Gurcharan Singh was put in charge for collecting materials for the political report and some materials for the military report also.

It was also decided that I and Swatantra would go to Bombay and once again place the whole situation before the party leadership. It has already been mentioned that the leadership agreed with us that the general party line for India could not be mechanically applied in the tribal areas and places adjoining Afghanistan and NWFP. The only slogan which could mobilise the masses there was that of a united struggle for safeguarding their interest against the antipeople intrigues of the British imperialists in that region.

I left for Bombay on 16 November 1942 and Swatantra followed on the next day. On reaching Bombay I contacted D. P. Sinha and asked him to inform Adhikari about my arrival and to contact me after Swatantra arrived.

D. P. Sinha came to me on the 18th afternoon and informed me of the arrival of Swatantra and said he would take me at 5 p.m. to the meeting place. Three of us met and I explained the whole situation to Adhikari. We were again to meet the following day at the same place. Up to now I was working under the guidance of Swatantra as conditions in the tribal area demanded. But now as the situation was becoming very critical and as I was not sure whether the instructions received by me through the legation were coming from Subhas Chandra Bose himself or from the

German war office, both of us felt the need for consulting the party centre more often. I was to be very watchful and judge the real intentions behind their war strategy. A very important thing was to find out what plans the Germans had regarding India.

Next day we again met and had a general talk about our activities in the tribal areas and Adhikari appreciated our work there. But he warned me to be very careful as it was a no man's land and anybody could have an access there—the revolutionary as also the British agent and so the danger to my life was always there. Finally Adhikari told me to go ahead with my work as the leadership was in agreement with my point of view.

After finishing our job at Bombay both of us left—of course separately for Lahore on 23 November 1942.

After studying the outlines of the reports prepared meanwhile it was decided that I should start for the tribal area and from there to Kabul. For that it was necessary that Sarla should go to Mardan to inform my people of my coming visit and Anant Ram and Waris Khan would have to be present at Akora Khattak station in the evening with burkha and necessary clothes.

Sarla left for Mardan on 3 December 1942 with a message that I would reach there on 8 December and would have to be taken to my village. She came back on the 6th evening and informed me that the line was clear for me to proceed on my journey.

I left Lahore by train in the morning and reached Akora Khattak in the evening. My youngest brother Harbans Lal was waiting for me just outside the station while Anant Ram and Waris Khan were waiting in the grove near the main road with a tonga. We hurriedly got into the tonga and reached our village at 10 p.m.

My brother and some other members of my family were waiting for us. Waris Khan too passed the night at our place as he was like a family member of ours. Next day I sent him to fetch Khushal Khan Khattack and Mir Ghazam Khan which he did; he too joined our meeting.

I made a detailed report to them of the present situation and the tasks before us. I told them that in the prevailing circumstances whatever is possible to strengthen our party position, organise our cadre for the final armed assault against our enemy within a year, must be done speedily and cautiously.

I took Khushal Khan aside and told him that he must establish contact with Swatantra. In course of conversation he told me that political and social conditions were not identical in India and the tribal territory. I told him that I also held the same view and had discussions with the party leadership. They had agreed that we were to carry on our work here along the line we were doing at present. He was glad to hear this from me as otherwise, he feared, we would have faced isolation from the mass of people. I told him about the financial arrangement for our work through Sanobar Hussain and then they left our village.

Sarla reached Mardan on 14 December and from there she came to my village the next day. She gave me the papers for which I was waiting. I found the reports satisfactory. She and my mother became quite close to each other. My mother had great admiration for her devotion and bravery. Anant Ram arranged for her journey back the next day. I sent a message through her to Swatantra that I was waiting for Mohd Umar Khan to come.

In the meantime Anant Ram informed Abdul Hakim, who used to live near our village, to keep himself ready to go to tribal area along with me (Abdul Hakim was the brother of Ghulam Ulrehman).

On 20 December Mohd Umar Khan came and informed my brother Kishori Lal that the meeting was fixed at Swal Qilla for 27 December. I had therefore to reach there before that date. Therefore I started with Anant Ram, Waris Khan and Abdul Hakim by tonga at midnight, reached beyond Askhakot by early morning, left the tonga and asked Anant Ram and Waris Khan to go back. I and Abdul Hakim then got into a truck going to Thana. We left the truck at a suitable point and started on foot. We reached Swal Qilla in the evening of the 23rd December.

I had told Sanobar Hussain to prepare a report on the tribal situation before I left for India. The report was ready and was quite encouraging. I told him that this must be shown to Miran Jan.

# Aftermath (1943-45

I and Ghulam Murtaza left for Kabul on 31 December 1942 and reached Jalalabad on 4 January next year.

We wanted to inform Haji Mohd Amin about the developments and so I went to his village Lalman alone, explained to him everything and asked for his reaction. He said he fully agreed with our decisions and promised to work hard for furthering our objectives in the areas adjoining Afghanistan and NWFP. He sounded very enthusiastic. The same evening I returned to Jalalabad. From Jalalabad we reached Kabul on 8 January 1943 and Mohd Umar Khan to have their opinion on it.

In the meantime I found to my utter surprise that Ghulam Murtaza had gone to Kabul, because he felt that Ayub (Mohd Jinnah) being new and alone might be feeling bored. Sanobar Hussain too had advised him to go to Kabul. On reaching Kabul Ghulam Murtaza found that his presumption was correct. Ghulam Murtaza and Ayub met Mr Rusmus and asked him his advice in the situation. He advised them to leave Kabul for the time being. They acted on his advice and came back on 25 December 1942.

On 27 December, our meeting took place in which besides myself Miran Jan, Sanobar Hussain, Ghulam Murtaza, the late Abdul Razak, the rifle manufacturer, and Abdul Latif Affandi participated in the discussion on tribal operations and our responsibilities in this regard.

They agreed to do all that was possible, for example, to explore possibilities of safe landing of a plane and make arrangements for the safe accommodation of the Germans and Indians who would be coming by it.

Those who attended this meeting were very happy and excited to know all about the plan and were eager to seize this opportunity to fight their age-long enemy, the British who had been

suppressing them so long. At last we dispersed on 29 December 1942.

When Ayub and Ghulam Murtaza left Kabul abruptly they did not make any arrangements for contacting our German friends on our next trip. Of course they were expecting me by the first week of January and were on the look-out for our arrival.

On 12 January at about 8 in the evening we were preparing our food when he heard a knock at our door. Murtaza opened the door and was agreeably surprised to see Mr Witzal at the door. Naturally we were all happy and I asked Murtaza to get the food ready while I was having a talk with Mr Witzal.

Mr Witzal said they were very much concerned with the abrupt break in our contact due to the sudden departure of Ayub and Murtaza. But they were expecting me back in Kabul by the first week of January and hence he used to pass through our street every day to find if the door of our apartment was open. Today he found our window open and immediately came in.

I gave him all the three reports and fixed 18 January for our next meeting. They needed that much time to study the reports, transmit them to Berlin and get back their instructions.

On the 18 January the first thing they told me was that I would have to stay with them for a week or even more. I agreed.

Mr Rusmus told me when I met him that he had read my political report very carefully and had also been reading reports from Indian newspapers, which they used to get earlier through their own sources, but were now getting through the sources arranged by us. He said our report and the news they got through papers gave them a clear picture of the political situation in India. He told me that they had come to the conclusion that the 'Quit India' movement was a strong national movement and seemed to have stabilised. Mr Rusmus told me that they were of the opinion that the present political situation demanded a military thrust by the Japanese from Burma side and 'Quit India' movement must at the same time be so intensified that big Anglo-American armed forces would be in a bog. He said, "We are going to inform Berlin accordingly."

Mr Witzal came in the evening and told me that he had read our reports and was glad to note that our work had improved all

round. He wanted to know the methods of functioning in India of different political organisations.

I told him there were many political organisations in India. There were some who believed only in open mass struggle like the Indian National Congress. Then there was Congress Socialist Party, which used both methods, open and underground. The Forward Bloc also believed in both the methods. The Bengal Volunteers worked through underground. The Communist Party of course worked according to its internationalist ideology and on the basis of antifascism. The Muslim League was the biggest pro-British party in India which was supporting the war efforts of the British. The Muslims constitute the biggest minority community in Inida. The Akali Party supposed to be a religious party of the Sikh community controlled all the gurdwaras in India and was supporting the war efforts of the British. The majority of the Indians in the army were Sikhs who were fighting for the British.

There were also a number of political organisations at provincial and even local levels. Some were fighting the British and others were supporting them. It was therefore difficult to draw a total picture of the political situation in the country. Even Subhas Chandra Bose had tried his best to unite all the left forces but failed in spite of the fact that twice he had been elected president of the Indian National Congress—the second time by the combined left forces inside the Congress.

Mr Witzal said, most of the movements in India were based on mass demonstrations, attack on police stations, post offices, railway stations and tracks and bridges. But the enemy usually came to know about all this before the attacks took place and so mobilised their forces to the maximum. That was why when the clash took place there was a lot of casualties on the people's side. They suffered a lot with very little gain on their side.

All these must therefore be planned secretly and carried out by men specially selected for particular type of jobs. For this a powerful apparatus was needed and it must be secret.

I told him that we knew all this about open and secret work. But we had developed a tradition in India to carry on our political activities through mass participation and that too in a non-violent way, though people also knew and sometimes used other methods whenever they were found more suitable. Ours was a

vast country with a large population which happened to be very poor. The tactics of mass struggles had so far proved quite useful against the enemy which was powerful and ruthless. The history of our freedom movement, right from the beginning to the present time, showed that the methods used, under the conditions prevailing here, had proved useful.

Our discussion lasted for full three days, i.e. up to 22 January 1943. On the 24th Mr Rusmus came to me and said, "Food situation in India is getting worse and it is likely that there will be a famine in the country. This situation must be exploited to make anti-British propaganda and to provoke riots for looting grainshops and government and military godowns." I agreed with him about the worsening food situation in the country and the possibility of Bengal heading towards an acute famine. But the hatred thus generated against the British could not necessarily be utilised for furthering our political struggle. Because for the starving people, the first concern would be food and food only. In such circumstances they might be led to loot shops and government godowns, etc. But it was more likely that they would stop there and not go for further political action. It was also likely that people would get demoralised and feel frustrated and consequently a disruption of the whole social and political structure might follow.

Mr Rusmus heard me very patiently and agreed with me that there the outcome might mean a setback for the revolutionary forces but food shortage could create a great headache to the Anglo-American military forces also. He said, "Therefore, this situation must be exploited, as in war every weakness of the enemy has to be exploited."

Afterwards Mr Witzal discussed with me the problem of collecting arms. I told him that most of our friends were having .303 bore rifles. But there was an acute shortage of ammunition and we were buying it at an exorbitant price.

He asked me what might be the quantity of arms we had at the moment at our disposal. I told him I could not give the exact figures but approximately it might be about fifteen hundred rifles and shot guns. This was our common pool. There were more than fifteen hundred rifles also with our supporters which were in

their possessions. Besides we had a number of pistols and revolvers of different bores.

I met Mr Witzal again on 6 February 1943. He then gave me a questionnaire, which he said was from Subhas Chandra Bose and I was asked to reply by 9 February 1943.

*Q.* What is the reaction in India to our anti-British propaganda from abroad?

*A.* Generally the reaction is good, in spite of the fact that there are different interests concerned here. But you know it for yourself that the sentiments of the Indian people as also of influential political circles are, to a great extent, pro-China and anti-Japanese on the one hand and pro-Russian and anti-British on the other. Therefore your propaganda should be limited, as far as possible, to attack against the Anglo-Americans. You have been the president of the Indian National Congress and the Congress has always been supporting China's cause against Japanese aggression. Therefore, if you go in for anti-Chinese propaganda at this stage from abroad, it will affect your position adversely especially among the intellectual circles.

*Q.* How is our Azad Hind broadcast received in India and how do you like our method of propaganda?

*A.* They are well received and the policy is good, but anti-China stuff should be minimum.

*Q.* How is the movement among our students? Our cadres working on the student front should be asked to redouble their work among the students.

*A.* The movement among the students is satisfactory. They are playing an exemplary role in the present struggle. But you know already that the student movement is split into two since long and, that has an impact on the movement.

*Q.* How did JP escape from the jail and who were the other persons who escaped with him? What is he doing now and what is his attitude towards my activities?

*A.* I cannot reply right now. I shall have to collect informations from our friends in India.

*Q.* How is Fazlul Haq and what is his attitude?

*A.* Fazlul Haq's attitude seems to be good. But how far will he be useful one cannot say just at this moment.

*Q.* How far have the Indian people faith in the Indian currency?

*A.* Due to inflation coupled with high prices and shortage of consumer goods, the Indian people are getting nervous but their faith in the Indian currency is not shaken.

*Q.* How is the food situation in India? Is it really bad and how could it come to this stage?

*A.* It is really very bad and getting worse and worse. This is because of the criminal negligence on the part of the British authorities. But Mr Fazlul Haq as the chief minister is equally responsible for relying too much on the misleading reports of the graindealers. Bengal is in the grip of a severe famine.

*Q.* What is the attitude of the people in India, Afghanistan, NWFP and tribal areas towards the Russo-German war?

*A.* The British government used to carry on anti-Russian propaganda amongst the people of Afghanistan over decades through Turkmans, Uzbeks, Tajiks, who had run away from Central-Asian parts of Russia to Afghanistan at the time of Russian revolution. Now they cannot reverse this trend even if they want to. The tribal areas and NWFP were also affected to some extent by this anti-Russian propaganda. But because of the efforts of the Indian revolutionaries in these areas, anti-Russian feelings have been wiped out and they have now become anti-British.

The attitude of the Indian people towards the Russo-German war is mixed. The sympathies of the people are more with the Soviet Union as you know.

*Q.* Is it a fact that the Russians have good influence amongst the tribal people?

*A.* The Russians used to have very good influence among the tribal area through Indian and tribal revolutionaries. But because of Russo-German war, Russia has become an ally of British. Consequently, the feelings of the people there which have always been anti-British are turning against the Russians also.

*Q.* Inform me about the activities of Mujahidins in the tribal area. Is it a fact that they are no longer revolutionaries?

*A.* For a certain period the Mujahidins remained anti-British. But after the murder of Maulvi Basheer Ahmed by a British agent, the leadership of this sect has gone into the hands of pro-British elements.

*Q*. Why do you hesitate to work with anti-Soviet elements in order to help our German friends in Kabul?

*A*. Most of the anti-Soviet elements in Kabul were British agents for many years before the second world war. Most of them are from the Central-Asian parts of the Soviet Union (Uzbeks, Turkmans and Tajiks who have settled in Afghanistan). After Russo-German war many of them came in contact with the Germans. I came to know this, partly through Mr Haji Abdul Subhan. And he shares my view that it is risky to deal with them. They will serve no purpose either of Germans or ours, as they have no interest in the liberation of India. This is my experience and the experience of our comrades in the tribal area also.

*Q*. Will you inform me about the working of the revolutionary organisation in Bengal?

*A*. A reply to this will be sent after my next visit to India.

*Q*. How strong is the 'Quit India' movement in NWFP?

*A*. 'Quit India' movement in NWFP is good but not as strong as the previous ones.

*Q*. Why is the movement in the Punjab weak?

*A*. This is a very complex question. It would, therefore, be better if this question is answered by Punjab comrades themselves.

*Q*. What about CPI and M. N. Roy's role?

*A*. CPI is opposed to 'Quit India' movement. One should not underestimate their strength. They base themselves on antifascism.

M. N. Roy has fully joined hands with the British.

*Q*. What do Swamy Sahajanand and Indulal Yagnik think about my activities abroad?

*A*. I will make inquiries about them in India and then let you know.

*Q*. Draw up a definite plan about forming a provisional government as I had instructed you earlier.

*A*. Even earlier, when you had already formed some sort of a body from among the comrades in Europe, I had told you that this issue should be delayed for some time. Even if you think that the time is now ripe for the formation of a provisional government, there are enough suitable patriotic persons in Europe and South-East Asian countries, from whom you can select a body.

I will discuss this issue with our comrades and inform you of their opinion. But as for me I think the time is not yet ripe. Because we will have to give publicity to the formation of the provisional government and that may create confusion at the moment.

I went to see Mr Witzal at the appointed place on 9 February 1943. But one Mr Hans Dow came to meet me instead of Mr Witzal. I handed over to him my replies to their questionnaire, and also the Indian newspapers which I had taken for reading. This contact place was located near the Russian legation.

I met Mr Witzal on 10 February at the same place when he hurriedly passed a typed slip of paper into my hands. However I noticed a large number of plainclothesmen all around the place, and so left the place post-haste. On reaching home I read the slip which gave me a big shock.

In it Mr Witzal had asked me whether I had handed over a letter—containing replies to their questionnaire—to Mr Hans Dow, the previous day or not. Mr Dow admitted that a letter was given to him but he found it missing when he reached home. It might have slipped from his hand while he was putting it in his pocket. It might have fallen into the hands of the police or a Russian passerby might have picked it up. That might be the reason why a number of policemen were present on the spot when Mr Witzal came to see me next day.

On 12 February 1943 I met Mr Witzal again on the same spot and gave him a letter. In the letter I wrote to him that I had given a letter to Mr Dow that day and was very much shocked to learn that the letter had been lost due to his carelessness. The loss was very serious because of its contents. I also suggested a new place for our meetings in future.

On 20 March both Mr Rusmus and Mr Witzal came to me and handed over the following instructions which they had received from Berlin:

1) Make concrete arrangements for the landing of an aeroplane in the tribal area. Ground area required for landing and other instructions will be given by Mr Witzal.

2) Arrange for accommodation of 20 persons, lodging and boarding in semi-European style, in the tribal area.

3) Your men must follow the instructions given to them.

4) There must not be any disturbance from your side either in India or in the tribal area.

5) We are pleased with your reorganisation plan. But please expedite it.

6) Sabotage and false rumourmongering play a very important part in such struggles. So please make yourself ready for these.

7) (a) Wireless contact with Berlin is essential; (b) arrange your wireless and other contacts with the Fakir of Ippi, via India, as per your earlier suggestions; (c) wireless contacts with Fakir of Ippi and Swal Qilla (Bajaure tribes) are essential for joint action whenever needed.

8) What help can you give us in Iran to blow up tunnels which are used for supplies from India to the Soviet Union?

9) Give us full information about enemy's offensive and defensive preparations and also about land, air and mechanised forces.

10) Send information about the morale of the Indian army and the Indian people.

11) Send suggestions about the propaganda from abroad against the enemy.

12) (a) Inform us about the strength of the communists and their activities; (b) and about the influence of the Soviet Union in India and also in the tribal area.

13) Make arrangements for our men to go to the tribal area from Kabul.

14) You should work with the Japanese as friendly a manner as with us.

15) Draw up a concrete plan for the uprising.

16) Make plans with Mr Witzal about the landing of our men on the Indian soil by submarines. The date of their arrival will be sent to you in coded message through the Azad Hind broadcasting station a few days before their landing. The place of landing will also be given where you are to receive them.

17) All schemes and plans about the tribal area must remain completely secret and the execution of the plans must be so timed that other tribal centres, which will have wireless contacts, will go into action as soon as they receive the signal.

At this stage they gave me a very big map, I think, it covered the area from Berlin up to Indian border, even with some parts of India shown in it. In this map, the Russian, Iranian, Afghan and tribal parts were depicted with the help of aerial photography and the European part was shown as properly surveyed. There was only the southern part of Russia in it. The map was a patchwork of many pieces.*

After studying this map it became very clear to me that the real intention of the German command was to overrun southern Russia, reach the Indian border through the tribal areas, and then enter the Indian subcontinent, presumably with our help. But if they at all reach the Indian border, will they come in as friends and liberators of Indian people or as invaders of India? The answer to this question became absolutely clear to me when I recalled to my mind the past experience of my dealings with them and their behaviour, as Germans. The intention was only *one* and that was if an opportunity comes to *invade India* and *occupy it.*

I studied their instructions carefully. They were of a complex nature. Actual implementation of these instructions apart, even their feasibility had to be discussed with the comrades in the tribal area, in NWFP and in Punjab, before I could give any reply. Especially selection of reliable and suitable persons for technical jobs like wireless operations etc. required deep think-

* *Battle for the Caucasus* by Andrei Grechko, Progress Publishers, 1971, pp 25-26: "Accordingly in planning 1942 summer offensive Hitler intended first and foremost to reach the Volga in the area of the great bend and to capture Caucasus".

"'At first glance these objectives had considerable appeal', wrote general Zeitzler. If the German army could cut Russia's main north-south line of communications by crossing the Volga in the Stalingrad area and if simultaneously the production of the oilfields in and about Caucasus could be harnessed to the German war effort, then the whole situation in the east could be changed and the future outcome of the war profoundly affected thereby...

"General Zeitzler who succeeded General Hadler as chief of army general staff disclosed Hitler's abjectines. 'Nor did his (Hitler's—EDITOR) immoderate plans (capture of the Caucasus—EDITOR) end there', he wrote, 'He intended next to send fast mobile columns through around the Caucasus into India.'"

ing and planning which would take quite some time. Likewise very elaborate plan would have to be chalked out before we could give assent to the landing of people by submarines, where safety of precious lives, not only of the persons landing, but of the crew of the submarine also, was of primary importance. If such things are done without elaborate preparation, then the inevitable result would be a fiasco as happened when some persons were landed by Japanese submarines. These patriots were arrested and tortured and finally shot. Supreme sacrifice on the part of these patriots served no useful purpose. This happened in the case of most of the Japanese attempts of landing persons either by parachute or by submarine, obviously because there was no proper coordination between the two axis powers—the Japanese and the Germans.

If our German friends had introduced us to their Japanese friends, we would not have allowed such things to happen. We would have asked the Japanese friends to postpone their plans till the time when we could make foolproof arrangements for the safe landing. We would not have advised parachute landing, without proper assessment of the locality of landing and without taking help of the Indian revolutionaries available in the vicinity. It was not difficult to plan this if our German friends had introduced us to the Japanese.

Mr Rusmus and Mr Witzal came to me in the evening to have discussion on the instructions they gave me. I said, I agreed with all their instructions except Nos 8 and 15. About these two I made my observations as under:

No 8—This job, to do sabotage work in a foreign country, is of a very, very serious nature and I do not think we have any contact in Iran who will undertake this work. I will have to discuss with my comrades in tribal area and in India. Perhaps we may get some links through the Indian army personnel.

No 15—This point requires clarification. What is meant by "Draw up a concrete plan for the uprising"?—please elucidate this point in greater detail. But before that I will put before you my understanding of the problem.

According to your plan some of your people will go from Kabul to the tribal area or some may land there from Berlin.

This is perhaps to make preparation for the easy passage of the German army towards the Indian border, with the help of our organisation in that area. You will also ask your axis partner, the Japanese, to thrust forward from the Burmese border. In this connection you want us to prepare ourselves to start a struggle which will help both of you in reaching your military objectives more easily. That is, you expect us to do sabotage work and go in for armed clashes which will make the despatch of British and Indian troops to the borders to meet your offensive much more difficult. Now your's and Jap's is a fully modernised war machine with trained armed personnel and arms, whereas we, unarmed people, will have to depend on mass actions coordinated, at the most, with some secret armed activity. It will take some time to reach a tempo for such mass actions. Now there is no time schedule for offensive from your side. Obviously it has to depend on so many factors. The point is—how are these two actions to be synchronised? In case you reach your climax earlier, i.e. before we are prepared for action, you will encounter a very stiff resistance from the British. In the opposite case if our tempo reaches a very high pitch and then if the energy thus generated is not utilised in a planned manner in coordination with your offensive, then it is more likely that it may go in a wrong channel with spontaneous actions taking place at isolated places which are likely to be crushed by our enemy, bringing in its wake dejection and frustration among the Indian people.

Mr Witzal agreed with me. He also told me that Berlin had agreed that I should be introduced to the Japanese to avoid repetition of past mistakes.

On 21 March Mr Witzal told me that they had informed Berlin about the place where the aeroplane could land in the tribal area. The Azad Hind radio would send a coded message about its landing much earlier, and we were to be watchful to catch it. The plane would come at night. Perfect transport arrangement must be ready to remove the luggage, which would be quite heavy. So also the arrangement for the men who would land. Fuel must be kept ready, because the plane would have to fly back immediately.

I met Mr Witzal on 25 March and then on every alternate

day till the 31st of that month. On that day he gave me a message from Berlin verbally. The message said that possibly the Japanese might start an attack on the Assam-Burma border. We were to assess the situation and help the Japanese if the offensive was in a big way. But if it was of a minor nature like the British in the Arakans, then we need not do anything. It seemed to my mind that there was some uncertainty in the minds of the Germans about the Japanese move.

We left Kabul on 2 April 1943 and reached Jalalabad on the 3rd. Abdul Rauf reached there on the 4th with our luggage. We sent him back the same day. On the 5th we started early in the morning by tonga for Gardi and reached there in the evening We entrusted our luggage to a friend who owned a mule. We asked him to take it to Kudakhel (Miran Jan's place) for Lalpura. We reached our destination in the evening. Miran Jan was present. I gave him the whole account of our stay in Kabul. He was glad to hear all this but was disappointed because of the uncertainty of German attitude, which seemed rather noncommital. I told him not to worry on this score. It looked like that they have not much confidence in each other. Anyhow we had to fight our enemy and so we must devote ourselves to our main task of organisation.

We were to carry on our work as per instructions received from Berlin and even to establish a wireless contact with them. But it was doubtful if these preparations could be of any use, because of uncertainty of success of the plans of the axis powers. Besides we had no direct contact with Subhas Chandra Bose and we could not verify whether the instructions coming from Berlin had his sanction or not. And the turn the war situation was taking on the Russian front showed clearly that the Germans were facing a very unfavourable situation because of formidable resistance put up by the Russians. The position on the Middle-East front was also no better. In such a situation the Japanese would also think twice before starting an offensive on the Burma border. I told Miran Jan that if we could use our ingenuity and mobilise all our resources, it was not difficult to carry out all instructions excepting sabotage in Iran. Miran Jan agreed with me.

We left Kudakhel on 9 April and reached Swal Qilla next day at evening. After meeting some friends and taking

some rest I decided to leave for India. By that time we had our own conveyance arrangements made.

I and Gullamul Rehman left on 27 April and reached Batkhella at about 7-30 in the evening. We passed the night there. Next morning we had a good breakfast in a wayside tea-shop and then started in the direction of Chakdara.

I caught the train at Rawalpindi and reached Delhi on the 29th evening. Swatantra was already informed by Anant Ram about my arrival and so he along with Achhar Singh Cheena were present there. We had long discussions on political matters and my trip to Kabul. I gave a copy of the instructions from Berlin to Swatantra to read it very carefully from political and military point of view. After I had finished my job with Swatantra, he and Chhina advised me to go to Nainital for a while for rest. In the meantime Swatantra was to make the reports etc. ready and arrange to send them to Kabul.

I started for Nainital on 4 May and returned to Delhi on the 14th. These ten days I lived a carefree life, with good home-cooked food and a lot of gossip and chit chat. This improved my health considerably. I was very anxious to know about my mother, her mental and physical condition. For she was passing all these years under terrible mental strain and worries. Her sufferings knew no limits. The execution of my brother Hari Kishan, then the death of my father, then the imprisonments and internments of one brother or another, financial loss and difficulties of maintaining the household, harassment from the police—all this she was bearing with exemplary courage and determination, unique for one of her social background. In recent years she was very much worried about me, as she knew my activities were extremely risky. My wife, therefore, suggested that I should ask her to come over to Delhi and stay with me for some days. So she came and stayed with me in Delhi for about 15 days. Swatantra was also to come back to Delhi on the 14th. According to prior arrangement made with Anant Ram my wife too reached Delhi before I left for Nainital. It was risky to live underground all alone, so it was good she arrived at Delhi before I had left.

I reached Delhi on the 14th and Swatantra also arrived on the same day. He was a graduate of Turkish Military Academy and

had studied military science. He read the instructions from the Germans and heard my reports about my talks with Mr Rusmus and Mr Witzal on political and military matters and their reactions on various points. Like me he also was of the opinion that the war situation—military and political—was gradually changing in favour of the antifascist alliance. He also doubted if the Japanese would start an attack on India on Germany's advice. If they wanted they could have done it long back but perhaps they thought it would be a gamble.

After completion of the interim report I left Swal Qilla on 27 May 1943 and reached there on 29th.

I found Ghulam Murtaza was having fever, being an old TB patient. But being a man of strong determination he was carrying on with his arduous job. I gave him the reports and briefed him about the whole situation and advised him to return soon with the reports which he should send to Anant Ram either through Mohd Umar Khan or Ghulam Ulrehman. I left Swal Qilla early on the 6th morning to catch the first bus from Tamalgara to Chackdara. I reached the sopt from where Anant Ram was to pick me up. He was already there and we started immediately, because I wanted to catch the train at Cambelpur station to reach Delhi the following evening.

I asked Teja Singh and Cheena to meet me. They came on 22 June, and we reviewed the situation once again. Now we were waiting for the news from Ghulam Murtaza and for the news from Berlin on Azad Hind radio.

Anant Ram informed me on 2 August that Ghulam Murtaza was back from Kabul and wanted to see me.

When I met Ghulam Murtaza at Swal Qilla he told me that he had given our report to Mr Witzal. As per arrangement he used to meet Mr Witzal every alternate day. On 28 June Mr Witzal told him that he would introduce Ghulam Murtaza to the Japanese, but because of some faulty arrangement the meeting did not take place.

On the 11th Mr Witzal gave Ghulam Murtaza a negative of a film taken on Lica which contained two copies of coded instructions. He told Ghulam Murtaza to go back and send these to me.

I put a number of questions to Murtaza to get full information about his visit. I took also the negative from Murtaza.

I started back from Swal Qilla on 10 August. I reached Delhi on the 12th evening. Swatantra also reached Delhi on 15th morning and came to me in the evening.

The first thing he told me was that he heard Subhas Chandra Bose's first broadcast speech from Tokyo radio on 13 August 1943. It was now clear that he was at present in Japan and was close to the South-East Asian theatre of war. It also meant that my presumption that the Germans might not have proved as helpful as had been expected by Subhas Chandra Bose and that is why he was feeling somewhat diffident, was correct. It seemed something like a rift had taken place.

In the instructions which we received from Berlin, they had, time and again, given much prominence to the Japanese starting an attack on Indian border. But they had failed to introduce us to the Japanese. In the light of the changed circumstances it became very necessary to establish contact with the Japanese. It was therefore decided that I should go to Kabul.

After all the preparations were over, I left for Kabul on 23 August, as per our usual arrangements. I reached Swal Qilla on 24th evening.

Ghulam Murtaza's illness was continuing and he badly needed rest and treatment. So I took Ghulam Ulrehman with me, and meeting Miran Jan on the way and passing through Girdi and Jalalabad we reached Kabul on 3 September 1943 in the evening.

We took rest on the 4th and I contacted Mr Witzal next day. Mr Witzal picked me up in his car and took me to Mr Rusmus's house. I gave them our political and military reports. Mr Rusmus told me that they were expecting a message from Berlin on the following day on the war situation which might be of interest to me. I asked them to introduce me to the Japanese. They agreed to do it early. I told them to give a copy of my report to the Japanese as it might be of interest to Mazotta (Subhas Chandra Bose) who was now in Japan.

On 8 September Mr Witzal took me to Mr Rusmus's house and discussed with me the military part of the report and sought clarification on some points. He asked me whether the

preparations of the allies in India were of a defensive or an offensive nature. I told him that in the report we had said that it still seemed to be defensive though planning for offensive was also going on, for instance, training in jungle warfare in Arakan, Wingate Chindit activities, etc. These were prelude to an offensive. To this he agreed.

Mr Rusmus again came in the evening to discuss the political part of the report. Especially he asked me about the food situation in Bengal and the industrial production in India.

He asked me about Subhas Chandra Bose's offer of rice to famine stricken India and its reaction on Indian mind. I told him that a man in the street would certainly like to grab the offer, but the shrewd people would say that it was a propaganda move on the part of Subhas Chandra Bose, because it was clear that neither the British would allow it nor was it feasible to send it when the bloodiest war was going on.

When I met Mr Witzal next on 14 September 1943, he told me that he would take me to Mr Rusmus's place the next day, as some instructions had been received from Berlin. Accordingly I reached Mr Rusmus's house on the 15th.

The first think Mr Witzal told me was that the Afghan government had complained to Berlin about their secret activities and demanded that they be recalled. Berlin showed their willingness to call them back provided the Afghan government arranged their safe conduct. Afghan government requested the British accordingly and so they had agreed to grant a safe passage through India. So both of them would be leaving Kabul very soon.

Then they gave me a series of fresh instructions and questions, which they said, had been received from Subhas Chandra Bose. They were as follows:

1) The plan to land men by a plane in the tribal area is hereby confirmed.

2) Now the question does not arise of our men from Kabul to go to tribal area.

3) Discuss the matter of establishing provisional government on Indian soil with Mr Witzal before he leaves Kabul.

4) Your struggle must coincide with an attack from our side.

5) Kabul is no longer safe to keep contact with us. But even then you will continue this contact as long as no other alternative arrangement is made.

6) Please counter enemy propaganda against the Japanese.

7) Your propaganda in the British army is not very effective. Please intensify it as much as possible.

8) Find out whether the British have any plan to start an offensive. If they have, please let us know what it is. This is very urgent.

9) How are the relations between the British and the Americans? Are they really good?

10) How is Subhas Chandra Bose's influence in India since he left Germany?

11) Please try to contact those who have been landed either by parachute or by submarine.

12) Send detailed information about the communists in India. Have they got direct connection with Moscow?

13) What is the reaction in India to the European war?

14) Do you know why the Russians have increased their staff so much in their Kabul embassy?

15) We ask you once more to try your best to obtain military information in details, whether it is land army, air force, naval force and other mechanised forces, production and store of arms and ammunition, etc.*

After discussing some other minor points we took up the question of a provisional government on Indian soil, as this had to be done before Mr Witzal left Kabul.

I said, "This problem will have to be tackled sooner than later. But before we give a serious consideration to this question, it is necessary to know the mind of Subhas Chandra Bose. Because of various factors we could not rebuild our links in Bengal which had been snapped earlier. Then it became still more difficult because of famine conditions. Due to Russo-German war some more contacts were lost. Yet another factor is that most of the important personalities are either in jail or underground. It is therefore necessary first to establish a very

* It was Berlin which sent these instructions. I am sure Subhas Chandra Bose had not been consulted in this matter.

efficient communication system to rebuild the contact and to co-ordinate them and then establish a firm communication system with Subhas Chandra Bose. It is more than likely that he has already given a concrete shape to this problem in consultation with the colleagues who are with him. He might be having some personalities in mind whom he knows intimately. In the circumstances I am unable to give any definite opinion on this question at the present moment."

Mr Witzal told me that according to the Berlin message this issue was of supreme importance and must be given immediate consideration. At the same time my point of view also deserved consideration.

On 16 September 1943 Mr Witzal introduced me to Mr Inoye, who was in charge of secret service in the Japanese legation in Kabul, at Mr Rusmus's house.

He put me many questions on the political situation in India and also about military preparations. He was specially interested to know whether military preparation was of an offensive or defensive nature. I told him that earlier it was mainly of a defensive nature but lately it is turning to an offensive one.

*Q*. What could be their plan during the first phase in case they started an offensive?

*A*. You know, Anglo-Americans have got a very powerful air force. They have been making up to now all their probings with the help of the air force. We presume that they will land their men by air in south Burma and north Malaya to cut Japanese supply lines to Burma and then from there they will move to Rangoon.

*Q*. When do you expect the offensive to start?

*A*. I cannot say anything about it now, but probably it will not be very early.

*Q*. What in general is the opinion of the Indian people about the Japanese?

*A*. Since Japan started its aggression against China, the Indian National Congress and all progressive political parties have shown sympathies towards China and condemned Japanese aggression. The Indian National Congress passed a resolution expressing its solidarity with China. The Congress did not stop by passing a resolution only, but sent a medical mission to help

the Chinese. Subhas Chandra Bose was also of the same opinion at that time. But because of the change in the national and international alliances and political situation and because Subhas Chandra himself is now in South-East Asia, the public opinion towards Japan has changed to a certain extent, but not fully. However his continued presence there and his efforts for an armed attack against the British may make a considerable change in the public attitude towards Japan. But the British are making use of the Muslim League for anti-Japanese propaganda on the grounds that in case the Japanese who are Budhists (meaning thereby that they are nearer to the Hindus) win the war, it will be a victory for the Hindus.

After some discussion I asked him if he had got any message for me from his government. He replied that it would have to be discussed later on. I asked him if there was a message from Subhas Chandra Bose. He told me that only the day before he was informed that he was to be introduced to me. This he had communicated to Tokyo that very day and had asked for instructions.

I told him that due to certain reasons I would be leaving Kabul soon, but it would not take long for me to come back.

We left Kabul on 21 September, reaching Gardi on the 22nd evening and arrived at Kudakhel next evening. We then reached Swal Qilla on the 25th. I left Swal Qilla at about 4 p.m. on the 29th to catch the last bus from Tamalgara along with Ghulam Ulrehman. We passed the night at Batkhella and next day I went to the place where I was to meet Anant Ram. I found him waiting for me. I asked Ghulam Ulrehman to go back and Anant Ram and I proceeded to Rawalpindi to catch the train to Delhi. I reached Delhi on 1 October 1943.

Swatantra had already been given prior intimation about my arrival in Delhi and so he had reached Delhi on the 4th morning.

I said to Swatantra, "With the present mode of functioning I feel the necessity of some help in my work. I should have a reliable but unknown person to stay in Delhi in my absence who will look after my household, though his real job will be to help me in my work. At present my wife and child and a chowkidar stay in Delhi. While in Kabul sometimes I feel the necessity of some urgent consultation with you. In such an eventuality I

will either send some courier, or arrange through a reliable contact to post a letter at Peshawar. The comrade staying at my place will receive the courier or the letter and act on my suggestions."

Teja Singh promised to look into the problem. I placed a complete report of my activities during the 44 days spent in Kabul and also gave him the instructions received from our German friends. I requested him to study all the aspects of my report, as well as the instructions—political, military and technical (landing of plane, stock of petrol, working of wireless, etc.)

We then discussed the war situation in both European and Middle-Eastern fronts. My impression was that because of a very stiff Russian resistance in Europe and also some resistance in the Middle-East, the balance of war was definitely shifting towards the antifascist alliance. That would have its repercussion on the South-East Asian war theatre as well. But in any case we must be prepared to carry on our programme to the best of our ability.

Swatantra was clear about the political perspective when he said, "Even if the British win the war with the help of their allies, theirs will be a second rate power and they will not be able to cope with the internal and external contradiction emerging out of the present situation."

He left me after a week and told me that he would start working on the basis of my report and also inform the party headquarters about my activities. He also asked me to visit the party headquarters and give a clear picture to the leaders on my own.

I therefore went to Bombay for a week and came back to Delhi on 25 October 1943. After a few days I went to Naronna barrage in Aligarh district and from there to Banbassa barrage in Nainital district to recoup my health which was badly affected by the irregularities of an underground life. This period of my life in which I recovered my lost health and vigour will always remain in my memory. And the credit for all this goes to my wife. Though nonpolitical she helped me loyally as a real Indian wife, and it was actually because of her selflessness and devotion that I regained my health to a great extent.

After my return to Delhi I met Swatantra on 2 December 1943 and reminded him about contacting the Bengal Volunteers. He

said he was trying his best through various sources but so far he had failed. It seemed that the all important persons I had mentioned to him had in the meanwhile been arrested. He said it was unwise on our part to break with Santimoy Ganguli when he had come to Lahore to seek our cooperation. Consequently we had lost all contacts with the Bengal Volunteers. I told him that if he could provide me with a reliable contact I would myself go to Calcutta to reestablish contacts. He replied, "I am not going to allow you to risk yourself for such jobs. You are the person who is, at present, running the thing and it is better to stick to our main work."

I then told him that he knew very well that the Japanese had been sending people, either by parachute or in submarine, to India. But so far most of these patriots had either been killed or arrested. If the Japanese tried to continue this adventure, without our help and cooperation, I am afraid, many more would be lost without any benefit to our cause. So we must ask them to stop this.

Swatantra thought that I should now go back to the tribal area and meet all responsible comrades who were working in their respective areas, including Waziristan where Fakir of Ippi had his headquarters. Comrades from NWFP such as Khushal Khan, Mirghazan Khan, Zarat Gull and others also be invited.

I therefore left for the tribal area on 12 December 1943 and reached there on the 15th. A meeting was called on 28 December. It was decided that we would try to implement all the instructions we had received and make proper preparations.

I left the place on 4 January 1944 with Ghulam Ulrehman. We had to catch the last bus at Tamalgara for Batkhella. We reached Batkhella at 8 in the evening and spent the night there.

Later I caught the train at Rawalpindi and reached Delhi on the 6th evening. I took an inordinately long time here to prepare the report in which we wanted to make every point clear to the Germans. This report was also meant for the Japanese. It was at last ready by the first week of April 1944.

I left for Kabul on 13 April 1944 and reached Swal Qilla on the 14th, fairly late at night. I found Murtaza ill again and had therefore to take Ghulam Ulrehman with me. This time the journey was really hazardous because it was a season of rains and hail-

storms. After catching cold on the way we, at last, managed to reach Kabul only on 27 April 1944.

On arrival I tried to contact our German friend, but could not get him till the 30th of that month. I gave him the report and it was decided to meet again on the 1st of May for discussion. He also gave me a message which he said was received from Berlin and Mazotta.

The message was as follows:

1) The present Japanese activities on Burmah-Assam front should not be considered as a big offensive against India.

2) A big offensive will not start before the monsoon.

3) Japanese troops will land on south Bengal coast and Calcutta and then you are to start your 'disturbances' in the best possible way both in India and the tribal area.

4) We have every reason to say that the Russians know about our relations with Indians and some of the reports which were given to us by you have also reached them. It is very likely that they might have passed them on to the British.

5) Therefore the Germans and Mazotta very strongly demand information about the man who has given such information and thus betrayed our cause.

6) What is the attitude of the Muslim League in northern India?

7) What is the tribal situation?

8) What is the opinion of Indian people about the Japanese invasion of India?

9) What is the reaction of our people to Russian propaganda in India?

10) What is your opinion about the disturbances in southern Afghanistan?

To these questions I replied as follows:

"My answer to question No 4 cannot be given unless and until you give me a convincing proof or a rational explanation for your assumption of leakage. I am not going to believe that while Mr Rusmus was passing through India some one had contacted him and told him this story of leakage.

"Firstly, the question of some pro-Russian person in our organisation meeting Mr Rusmus while he was passing through India is absurd. Because nobody from our organisation knew about his

passage through India. I also did not know this though I was in India at that time.

"Secondly, the British government knew that Mr Rusmus had been in India for many years before the outbreak of the war and possibly he might be having some contacts in India. Naturally the British intelligence service was keeping a very close watch on him to find out who were his contacts. So the possibility of a leakage in this manner must be ruled out. But there is another possibility—the possibility of the British secret service playing a hoax on Mr Rusmus cannot be ruled out. A man properly tutored by the secret service might have met Mr Rusmus and given him this story. The British government knew that Subhas Chandra Bose had gone to Berlin with the active help of the Germans. They also might be suspecting that the German government might be still keeping contact with Subhas Chandra Bose's followers and anti-British revolutionaries in India. So the intention of the British secret service in giving this concocted story must be to create mistrust among ourselves.

"Thirdly, I want you to recall a serious incident which took place on 9 February 1943. On that day I passed on a packet to Mr Hans Dow. That packet contained my replies to some questions of our German friends, reports on secret military and technical matters and plans of our works etc. I had met Mr Hans Dow in the close vicinity of the Russian legation. Next day, i.e. on the 10 February 1943, when I met Mr Witzal he gave me a shocking news of the loss of the packet from the hands of Mr Hans Dow. The packet was most likely lost in the vicinity of that spot itself. Now it does not require much imagination to make out what might have happened to the packet if it had not gone to the dustbin. It was quite plausible that either a Russian or a pro-Russian passerby happened to pick it up and having read its contents must have passed it on to the Russians. Or it might have fallen in the hands of the Afghan police and through them it must have reached Russian hands. This presumption is much more rational and plausible than the theory of leakage. And this also explains the later demand made by the Afghan government for the expulsion of Mr Rusmus and Mr Witzal from Kabul.

"I admit there might be a leakage, but certainly not from our side and I will not accept such stories without any valid proof.

Therefore, the blame must be put squarely on Mr Hans Dow for his negligence.

"I will however tell you quite frankly that if you have got the least suspicion about me or about our men then it is not advisable for me to carry on relations with you any longer. You may inform Berlin and Mazotta about my views because I neither want to mislead others nor do I want to be misled myself. You have created a very serious position for me. I again repeat that if the leakage is there it is due to the carelessness of Mr Hans Dow and its consequences will be disastrous, much more to us than to you. This whole episode was most unfortunate as it has disrupted harmonious relations existing between us for the last three and a half years."

I met our German friend again on 12 May 1944. There were two messages for me from Berlin. One was again about the leakage to which charge I had replied earlier in detail and had therefore nothing more to add.

This German friend told me not to disclose our plans to the Japanese when we meet them next. It was decided that three of us would meet on the 16th. The Germans did not evidently like the idea of my meeting the Japanese alone.

But I thought that the Germans had now no stake or interest in us and there was no reason why we should have any in them either. All our interest was now in the Japanese because of the presence of Subhas Chandra Bose in South-East Asian front and the formation of the INA. But the position of the Japanese was not basically different from the Germans. For if the Germans were to lose the war, the Japanese would not sooner or later escape the same fate either.

We met at the Japanese place on the 19th. I met Mr Inoye separately for an hour and discussed the following points:

*Q*. What is your opinion about Mr Rusmus's departure from Kabul? You left Kabul in October 1943 and he left soon after. My government suspects some thing behind this move.

*A*. You perhaps do not know that a packet containing very important materials which I had given to Mr Hans Dow was lost by him. This incident took place in the vicinity of your legation and the Russian embassy and this was long before I met

you last time. His departure might have been in consequence of that.

*Q*. What would be the reaction of the Indian people if the Japanese invasion comes after the rainy season?

*A*. My reply to this question is there in my report and there is nothing more to add.

*Q*. How do you explain the leakage?

*A*. Do you suspect me? (he immediately said 'no' to this). The leakage, if there was at all, was not intentional. The Germans are making too much noise about this leakage, but they know very well about the loss of packet which I gave to Mr Hans Dow and which contained very important secret information. I am not prepared to take any blame for this incident, nor are any of my men involved in it. This is how the Germans are trying to shirk responsibility for their own mistake.

*Q*. Are there no pro-Russian or communists in your organisation?

*A*. I was myself a member of the Communist Party and Subhas Chandra Bose knew it before leaving India. Even then I have been working with the Germans and the Italians, while I knew that Subhas Chandra Bose was not a communist. But our common cause was our struggle against the British. And that is why I successfully brought him to Kabul from India. The rest of the story you know yourself. I am working with you now and I have been working with the Germans because I myself and my fellow comrades feel very strongly that our main enemy is British imperialism and we have to liberate our country from their domination. And that is why we cooperated with Subhas Chandra Bose and helped him and have been cooperating with the axis powers. From the very beginning the Germans and the Italians knew everything about me and about the comrades who are working with me. I know very well what kind of people are working with us and I am quite satisfied with them. Now it looks very strange that our German friends are thinking this way at this stage. (The Japanese friend said, "I am very sorry to put all these questions to you. We have no reason to suspect you personally. Nor has Subhas Chandra Bose any misunderstanding about you." And then he expressed his regrets. I told him what we know each other for the last three and a half years and we had no reason to

suspect each other. But if they have even a shadow of dobut, it is quite fruitless to continue our relations. He asked me if we had any further information about the landing of the party of 8 men and if we had any contacts with them. I referred to the report given to the Germans.)

*Q.* What are your monthly expenses in the tribal area?

*A.* Our monthly expenses are from Rs 9000 to Rs 11,000, sometimes more, sometimes less. (He said their financial position in Kabul was very weak, same as in the case of the Germans because they had no proper communication and transport arrangements with their capitals. Afghan government did not provide them with adequate exchange more than what was absolutely necessary. I also suggested that if the people who had managed to land and establish contact met me at the new address, we would use their wireless contact and it would be easy to get further help from that side. He appreciated my suggestion and assured me that he would do his best to establish WT contact directly. He told me that he had already informed Tokyo about my arrival but so far no message was received from them.)

I then stressed the question of an independent contact, and asked him to make an effort to contact the men who had landed earlier and then left his place.

On 20th May I met for the first time our German friend, Mr Zagumulla. There was a message for me from Berlin. It reads:

1) We have now decided finally about the landing of the plane and so we cannot have any more alterations as to that.

2) Please arrange for 2000 gallons of aviation petrol. If you cannot, then we shall have to come down by parachute. But in that case we can bring very essential material with us and nothing more. Besides you will have to take responsibility of the safety of the two pilots, to keep them safe either in Kabul or elsewhere.

3) The plane will be of USA type and every care will be taken to stop the noise at the time of landing.

4) We will bring all equipments necessary for our uprising.

5) We will advance from the tribal area into India.

6) We are supposed to arrive there by the 15th of June, but if this date is not suitable to you let us know your suggestion (to this I replied it could not be before the 10th of July).

7) Use for the communication between Berlin, India and Italy the cipher 'Flying Boat' and 'Flower' instead of the cipher 'Rice' which is known to you.

I left Kabul on 25 May 1944 and arrived at the tribal centre on the 31st. On the 9th I arrived in Delhi.

As per prior intimation Swatantra also reached Delhi on the 10th.

After hearing my report he said that my reply to the Germans regarding the leakage was very correct. At the same time he expressed his surprise at the attitude of Germans in blaming us for the leakage when they themselves were at fault.

Then we discussed the problem of landing of the aeroplane. It was decided to inform Berlin that due to certain difficulties the earlier date of 10th July had to be postponed. No new date was fixed but Berlin was to be informed after the arrangements to receive it were ready. This had to be done immediately. Swatantra left Delhi and promised to come back on 14 June. In the meantime he was to arrange to send the wireless message regarding cancellation of landing date. He came back on the 14th and said the message was sent in the new cipher code. Berlin was also informed that previous suggestions from India stood cancelled. In a further discussion I told Swatantra that the position of the Germans had become precarious and their secret service apparatus was collapsing. It was therefore necessary for me to go back to Kabul as our Japanese friends might be waiting for me and I had no direct contact with them.

Swatantra gave me the report and briefed me about the whole affair on 15 July 1944. I left Delhi on the 18th and reached Rawalpindi on 19th. Anant Ram was waiting there for me with the car. I reached Swal Qilla the same day.

I planned further programme with Sanobar Hussain and Murtaza. From them I came to know that from the 18th (a day previous to my arrival) the celebrations of the Afghan independence day had started and it would continue up to the 28 July. Because of extra police vigilance and a number of Peshwari people going for the celebrations, it was dangerous for us to reach Kabul before the end of the month. We therefore started on the 28 July and arrived in Kabul on 3 August 1944.

I contacted the German on the 7th evening and gave him the report and three addresses. Next appointment was fixed for 10th at the same place.

In the meantime Murtaza had fallen ill. He was suffering from malaria, some sprain and swelling of the thigh. It was a difficult job to keep the appointments, nurse the comrade and cook the food, all alone, when I myself was not keeping well either.

I met our German friend on the 10th when he gave me a questionnaire and a message from Subhas Chandra Bose. He asked me to give my answers during my stay there if possible. The questions and my replies handed over to him on the 12th are as follows:

*Q.* Which of the followers of Gandhiji are with him in his move for a compromise with the government?

*A.* Besides those who are very close to him and who have implicit faith in him, industrialists are influencing him most. Of course persons like Mrs Sarojini Naidu, Bhulabhai Desai, B. G. Kher and C. Rajagopalachari are doing their best to create the ground for a compromise. You must have heard about this on the All India radio and in the press.

*Q.* Which of the ministers are still loyal to me?

*A.* No minister in the present Nizamuddin cabinet is loyal to you. They all belong to old loyalist school. They are making fortunes, fanning communalism and supporting the prowar policy of their British masters.

*Q.* Is Narendra Narayan Chakravarty a minister or a parliamentary secretary? Is he still loyal to me?

*A.* He is not a minister, but a parliamentary secretary in Nizamuddin ministry. I cannot say whether he is still loyal to you, because he has joined the ministry.

*Q.* Has my party as a whole supported Nizamuddin government in Bengal or was there a split in the party on this question?

*A.* Your party did not support the Nizamuddin government as a whole. There was split on this point and Narendra Narayan Chakravarty with 5 other members crossed the floor to sit on the government benches against the decision of the party.

*Q.* What is the result of the last election of the Calcutta Corporation? Who is the mayor now? Which party is the strongest in the corporation?

*A*. 19 seats have been won by your party, but I have not got full information as regards which is the strongest party and who is the present mayor. Some seats have been captured by the communists. Details will be given to you after WT contact is established.

*Q*. To which prominent party member should I send my agents?

*A*. You should not send your agents to any member directly. You should send your men direct to the addresses given to you and they are to use the same old password.

*Q*. Is Fazlul Huq still popular in Bengal? Please give him my best greetings and assure him of my future support.

*A*. Yes, he is still popular and his sympathies are with you. He will prove useful at the necessary time, as mentioned in my previous report. Your greetings will be conveyed to him.

*Q*. What attitude do the Sikhs have towards the government, especially the Sikh troops?

*A*. I cannot give an answer to this question just at the moment. It will have to be referred to the comrade concerned.

*Q*. Is listening to axis broadcast permitted in India?

*A*. Yes, but not in public places.

*Q*. Which stations are appreciated particularly by our party members?

*A*. Official Berlin, Tokyo and Singapore broadcasts are appreciated, but the contents and the technique of presentation of the Singapore radio is liked most.

The following is the message I received from Subhas Chandra Bose:

"I am very glad with your last report. My political movements and military enterprises are exclusively conducted by Indians with Indian money. I am depending on the Japanese only for arms and ammunition. Please fight vigorously against anti-Japanese propaganda in India. I would certainly not cooperate with the Japanese if I were not fully confident of their pledges. They have proved by facts that they will keep their word and promises. Remember always that we alone cannot break the British power in India. That is why we have to seek help from Germany, Italy and Japan, otherwise we will be in eternal slavery.

"The British will, no doubt, try to create Pakistan in India after the war. That will be the end of the idea of Indian nationalism.

Please visit M. Gandhi personally. Give him my best greetings and assure him that I am working for the independence of India. I will do nothing that will lower the honour and jeopardise the interest of our motherland.

"I am not satisfied with your propaganda amongst the British Indian army. Influencing them with pro-Japanese sentiments will help my fight immensely.

"From the knowledge gained at the Burma front I will not hesitate to say that the final victory is ours. In Indian Air Force there are several anti-British officers. Please contact them and influence them to come over to us with their planes. Squadron leader Niranjan Prasad now in Cox Bazar, Chittagong, and several other officers of the British Indian army including commander Mukherji and squadron leader Awak probably stationed at Peshawar, squadron leader Jangma in Kohat are bitterly anti-British. Contact them.

"Instructions about WT contact directly with me will follow.

"Not all agents sent by me to India were given passwords, though all of them were tested and found trustworthy. This precaution was taken in order to safeguard your organisation in the event of the exposure coming through police torturing the agents. We will send agents during the following months to Bengal, specially to Sylhet, Shillong, Comilla, Agartala and Dacca. Agent sent to my nephew in Calcutta is completely trustworthy. Support him by all means, specially in making WT contact with me. Agent sent to Kantilal and all others sent along with him are trustworthy. Probably they are now stationed at different places in India. Report about Tara Singh was not correct. He is good and honest, though not intelligent."

Our German friend told me that when Mr Rusmus was in Kabul in November last one Russian approached him and showed his willingness to serve them (the Germans); that Russian told Mr Rusmus that the Soviet government knew that the Germans had wireless contact (and also the codes and frequencies etc.) with the Indian revolutionaries. Not only that, the Soviets had got copies of reports which the revolutionaries had sent to the Germans. Mr Zugumulla further said that it was for that reason the WT communication between Berlin and India, and Kabul and India had to be stopped. Only periodic tests were carried out.

I said, "This was a new clue made known to us which should prove helpful in our investigation, please give me some time to think over this."

He told me that Berlin is trying to establish a WT link between Burma and India and they have already started the tests. After they succeeded they would pass the contact to us. Frequency etc. would be sent to us via Berlin. The same cypher would be used between Burma and India. The code between Berlin and India (after my arrival in India) would be 'Orient and importance' and the code between India and Bose would be 'Orient and manuscript'.

Later on Mr Inoye gave me the following questionnaire and message from Subhas Chandra Bose:

*Questionnaire*:

1) Political ground for Gandhiji's release. Has the release any relation to the Manipur operations? Gandhiji's attitude towards Britain and Japan and his future plans.

2) Probability of release of the other Congress leaders; probability of a compromise between the Congress and the British government. Names of the promoters of compromise either on the Indian and Anglo-American side. Among the followers of Gandhi there are surely some who have become Anglophil—names of those who turned over to 'revolutionary methods'!

3) Judging by the radio broadcast from Delhi and London, the British authorities are supposed to keep secret the fact of participation of the Indian National Army in the Manipur operation; whether the Indian people are aware of the participation. Effect of the Manipur operation on the 'Congress' and 'revolutionary groups' and on the masses of the Indian people generally. Names of individuals and groups who welcomed the said operation.

4) Attitude of the Indian army towards Britain and towards Japan. If they are hostile to Japan, why? And the reason why they are loyal to the British authorities in the Burma-Indian frontier districts.

5) Degree of the Bengal people's expectation from Manipur operation. Whether we can rely upon their cooperation in case of our march into that province?

6) Names of our party members who hold actually a minister's post in the Bengal province and especially of those who are loyal to me, Narendra Narayan Chakravarty: does he actually hold a minister's post in that province and is he still loyal to me?

7) Has my party in the Bengal legislative assembly approved of the Nizamuddin cabinet? In connection with the participation in that cabinet didn't any split occur in the party?

8) Results of the municipal elections in Calcutta? Name of the present mayor of Calcutta.

9) Names of the leading members of our party in Bengal who are still out of jail and especially of those to whom I can send my agents.

10) Are there no changes in the list of the 'confidential agents' in Bengal, since you sent it to me?

11) Is Fazlul Huq still popular? Please tell him to rejoin premier Tojo after the Bengal got cleared of the British army. Please request him to give an instruction to his party members to cooperate with our INA in case of our march into Bengal.

12) Please suggest an adequate method or propaganda necessary for us to win over the masses of the people, especially of the peasant population in the eastern Bengal.

13) Hasn't Akali Party lost its influence among the Sikhs after it went into cooperation with the British? Attitude of the Sikh people and Sikh troops towards British government.

14) Ebb and flow of the Communist Party during the past one year.

15) Prosperity or decline of my influence.

16) What has become of my brother Sarat? Of my family, of my nephews?

17) I received from you last November a message on Tara Singh. Have you got my response on it? Is he doing useful work?

18) Kisan Sabha's attitude to us? Are Sahajanand and Yajnik supporting our party? Their attitude to Manipur operations?

19) Are you still permitted in India to hear the radio broadcasts from the axis stations? Names of the most popular axis radio stations. Influence of the axis radio broadcasts and necessary measures to make that influence more effective. Other methods

of propaganda from either Europe or the East Asia to reinforce the revolutionary movement in India.

20) Are there not any countermeasures which can be carried out from outside in order to oppose the powerful Anglo-American propaganda in India and especially against their anti-Japanese propaganda among the Indian army?

21) The Indian soldiers do not seem to have the slightest idea and knowledge about India's independence movement in the East Asia, the provisional government, free India or the Indian National Army. Is any propaganda set forth already among the Indian army to do something in this regard?

22) Essential points of the anti-Japanese propaganda by our enemies among the Indian people and troops.

23) State of activities of our subterranean organisation and names of parties and groups which cooperate with us?

24) Are there any established institutions or schools to train saboteurs?

25) Cause and origin of the explosion incident in Bombay and its echoes.

26) Why does the Anglo-Indian government's report on the disturbances in 1942 in India not mention about our revolutionary movement? Names of the central figures and groups in those disturbances.

27) The agents whom I sent into India since December last are staying in the Punjab, the United Province and Bengal and still I intend to send more. Please keep contact with them.

28) Are there any signs of intensifying the revolutionary activities in India?

29) Please inform me about the outline of your plan to bring about a revolution in India and about the assistance and support required of us.

*Bose's Message to His Party*

"The independence movement outside India is conducted solely by Indians. They enjoy of course the support and help from the Japanese side but without the slightest indication of intervention in our internal affairs. We, Indians, are all collaborating regardless of religions, the Mohammedans playing an important role

among the Indian National Army. We are of firm conviction about Britain's final defeat but the war seems to be prolonged. Our countrymen must be prepared and ready for bigger sacrifice. The Indian army grows every day stronger and its women detachment, too, is developing very fast. The preparation for the establishment of a free India government in the liberated territories of the Manipur, Assam and Bengal provinces is already complete and candidates for administrative services, in future, have been trained for the purpose. Having encountered the Anglo-American forces at the Burma-India frontier we have again reaffirmed our conviction in the final victory over them."

*Bose's Instructions to His Party Members*

1) To oppose Gandhi and his national government in case a compromise between him and British government is reached.

2) To develop the revolutionary movement in pace with the progress of our military preparation and not to act or to move carelessly or too precipitately.

3) To avoid being thrown into jail.

4) To prepare sabotage plan for war materials factories, but not put them into immediate operation.

5) To continue the revolutionary movement in the NWFP and the tribal territories.

6) To damage enemy air force by executing sabotage acts in aerodromes by destroying enemy planes and by assassinating enemy air officers.

7) As there are some anti-British officers in the Indian Air Force to invite them to come over to us with aeroplanes. Squadron leader Niranjan Prasad of Cox Bazar, in particular, is supposed to be anti-British.

8) To come in contact with me by establishing a radio junction in Bengal. The preparation thereto should be completed during your stay in Kabul.

9) To maintain a radio communication with Kabul by reorganising your telegraphic code. This will be of great use for future military operation.

*Bose's Instructions to the People of Assam & Bengal (including the Manipur State):*

1) As there is no need of fear from Japanese and Indian national armies, not to flee from your hearth, but to assist and cooperate with them in case they march into the Indian territories.

2) To check the scorched earth policy of the British army in case the said army retreats from your territories.

3) To check the retreating British army in guerilla fights.

4) To disrupt rail-road and telegraphic and telephonic installations as well as powder magazines, ammunition storehouses, oil reservoirs of the enemy.

5) To cooperate with the administration of the free Indian government which will be established in the liberated Indian territories.

*Bose's Request Transmitting His Message to the Agents in India*

"At the end of 1943 my agents had been sent into India and some of them came in contact with my friends in Bombay presidency and others in Bengal. They had safely carried in India portable WT sets for their communication with me. But we have no communications with them though the appointed date for the opening of communication has already elapsed. Therefore I urgently request you to convey the undermentioned message from me to the said agents after you find them out.

" '1) Our communication will start on and after 1st August 1944.

" '2) The despatching frequency of the Burma station will be changed respectively as follows:

a) 8200 K.C. instead of 7250 K.C.

b) 6500 K.C. instead of 6200 K.C.

" '3) Your aerial lines (Antenna) shall be set down parallel to the direction of Rangoon but in case of using Japanese apparatus Antenna shall be fixed 45 (angular degrees) facing the direction of Rangoon and the earth line should be stretched on a level on the opposite direction to the antenna.

"'4) It is desirable to establish your despatching stations as near to Rangoon, as possible, but if danger prevents you to do so, you may also put them near Calcutta.'

"PS: As soon as this message is received, they are requested to confirm it telegraphically to me together with receipt of the messages and instructions despatched by me which are as follows:

(I) My questionnaire;

(II) My message to the party;

(III) My instructions to my party members;

(IV) My instructions to the people of Assam and Bengal provinces (including the Manipur state)."

After he gave me the above messages and the questionnaire Mr Inoye told me that he had informed Tokyo that he was going to keep me under his shelter (in his own house) till further instructions came from Tokyo. He asked me to give replies to these questions. I told him that it is not possible for me to reply all these questions without consultation with my comrades. The subject was also lengthy—it would take a long time to reply. But I replied some of the questions orally and promised to reply the remaining ones after my return from India. He noted down my replies. One point I stressed was that men must not be sent without passwords and they must be directed to the addresses given to them.

On 15 August Mr Inoye told me that a message had been received from Tokyo which said that full instructions for me had been sent through a Japanese minister who was coming to Kabul via Moscow. He was expected in Kabul on 31 August and so till then I had to wait in Kabul.

On 16 August 1944 I again had a discussion with Mr Inoye during which he said:

"In our opinion Germany is sure to lose the war.

"The second front is to our advantage. If the war continues in Europe for a longer time so far so good for us. Even if it ends soon we will not mind much.

"We expect a conflict between Britain and America on one side and Russia on the other which is of great advantage to us. European countries will go under the influence of Russia. Fear of Russia will make Britain and America keep a good deal of their forces in Europe which means less manpower to fight in Asia. Russia on the other hand will be more interested in the recon-

struction of European countries. All her energies and manpower will be used there. We have no apprehension that Russia will interfere in Asiatic war."

On China he said:

"Wang Ching-wei was of very little use to us. He could not mobilise the forces to his side, especially the youth. Only some feudal elements were on his side.

"It was our great failure not to win over Chiang Kai-shek to our side. This gave the opportunity to the communists to strengthen the Chinese forces against us. Now they are very strong. Our main fear is from the communists.

"Next step in our strategy is first to smash China completely so that allies do not get any land bases (aerodromes etc.) near Japan. We have already won a good deal. We have captured all the railway lines and the air bases from where Americans used to bomb our towns are now in our hands. We are constructing a railway line from Shanghai to Bangkok and from Bangkok to Rangoon. A good deal of work has been completed already.

"We have already fortified all the areas and territories we have won so far, i.e. part of China, Malaya, Java and Burma. We think we can fight back the allies and finally win the war."

Mr Inoye outlined their longdrawn plan thus:

"Russia will be winning over the whole of Europe to her side and will be a great power. We want to counteract her by having equally large countries in Asia on our side, that is, Japan, China, whole of Southeast Asia and India. This presupposes, of course, that India is freed from the yoke of western nations. If India is not free and does not join the Asiatic bloc then there is constant danger to all Asiatic nations from Russia. This is why we are willing to help India in their struggle for independence.

"Even if Germany could win the war instead of Russia, a fight with Germany would have been inevitable. Therefore, in any case a solid bloc of all Asiatic nations is essential for safeguarding our future."

As for Tojo's resignation he said:

Tojo had to resign because:

(a) He failed in his efforts at total mobilisation, especially of women.

(b) Loss of Saiphan during his regime.

(c) His wrong strategy about war in China. However we are certain he will come back. At present he is taking rest.

He then went on thus:

"We do not expect Russia to declare war against us. Even if Russia makes some demands we shall try our best to satisfy her. We have a very big naval force. We were second in the world before the war started, England being the first. Whereas England has lost much while fighting against Germany, we have so far lost a very negligible part of ours. Though America is making a good deal of propaganda about our loss, the fact is that we ourselves are not giving any naval fight but playing a defensive role and our losses are only incidental. Most of our original fleet is in tact, it has meantime increased largely whereas America is losing heavily.

"Our weakness however was in the air force. Before the war started we had no aeroplane factories producing planes. We had only assembly plants. During the second year of the war our production went up by 500 per cent taking our figure during the first year as 100. Today it has reached its peak, i.e. 13 times the original figure. I do not know our exact numerical strength but if we can fulfil our plan of production then by the end of this year we shall have no fear on this count also. All plans of other productions also are being fulfilled in time, so by the end of this year we shall be in a position to fight for any length of time. This year 1944 was very critical for us, but it seems we are almost out of the woods now."

Mr Inoye next asked me about the strategy of allied offensive against Japan.

I replied: In my opinion, based on the information received from various sources, the allies will not launch any major land offensive from India-Burma front. Instead they will make strong naval attacks supported by air force. For this they are strengthening their naval force, but they will have to wait to finish the European war before they can gather full strength of air force for this purpose. First they will try to capture Andaman islands and might simultaneously go in for attempting landings in south of Moulmein and also perhaps in North Malaya to cut out Bangkok. They will use the same tactics which they used when opening the second front in Europe. Capturing Andamans will

cut the supply line to Burma by sea and capturing Bangkok will cut supply to Burma by land.

He thought my reply was of utmost importance to help the strategy of his military command and so hastened to his office to communicate this to his government.

Later I told Mr Inoye and three other Japanese friends: Italy too was our friend. But now she has surrendered and it is likely that she has given all our secrets to the British and the Soviets. Judging from the present position it is likely that Germany too may collapse and in that case she may also give all information to them. That would be a dangerous situation for both of us, especially for us as we have a long way to travel. I therefore suggest that we should not disclose the new relations and the new wireless contacts etc. which we were building.

They agreed to my suggestion and remarked that in fact they themselves wanted to make this suggestion but they were feeling rather awkward about it. I said, "We need not feel embarrassed in such a situation but should have frank talk if we have to avoid disaster and bitterness in future.

After some time Mr Zugumulla came in.

He told me that he had no special instructions for me from Berlin. All instructions would be given now by the Japanese and by Subhas Chandra Bose. He said, I should contact Berlin by WT with the new code after I had reached Delhi. He again reminded me that we should try to investigate into the matter of leakage. I promised to do so.

I asked him about the war situation in Europe. He said that Germany was sure to win. Though the situation seemed critical, they were now in a better position because of the shortening of the front and organisation of the forces on entirely new lines. The attempt on Hitler's life did not mean that his influence on the people had waned.

He requested me to visit Kabul during the middle of November 1944 if possible and then bade goodbye.

Then the four Japanese again came in. The newly arrived minister from Moscow made a speech before he proposed a toast. He said, "The prospect of European war is gloomy. It is clear that Germans will lose the war sooner or later. But that should not discourage us. We have pledged ourselves to the task

of liberation of Asia from the domination of European powers and we will stand by our pledge. There will be no change in our strategy. We are confident that we shall fight to the finish and come out victorious. In our pledge of liberating Asia we have promised all help to India. This is not only a moral duty to us. It is also necessary in our own interest that we give this help to India. I therefore hope and expect in return full cooperation from the Indians in this plan of liberating India."

In reply I made speech during which I said, "I cannot on my own make a promise or give a pledge. I hope my leader has already done this before your leaders. It is the duty of my leader and of us to give whatever help is possible from India. I assure you that we are the only constant anti-British revolutionaries in India. It is no obligation on our part to help you, but it is our most sacred duty to do so in order to liberate our country from foreign slavery."

Before he left the place the minister told me that Mr Inoye was a great man and had successfully carried out great tasks in the past. It was he who carried Rashid Ali Gallany from Persia to Turkey and from there to Germany. Cawasaki was also of equal importance and a man of integrity. He had taken the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem from Persia to Turkey. After that Cawasaki gave me two documents (i) A message from Bose, dated Rangoon 28 June 1944, and (ii) A questionnaire of military information regarding army, navy and air force. He also gave me typed instructions regarding WT contact, code, cypher, etc. and also a book on cyphering and decyphering.

Cawasaki told me that I should go through all the papers and codes and cyphers and if I needed any explanation he would do it on the following day. He and Sito then left the place and I remained with Inoye.

The message from Bose to myself was as follows:

Rangoon, June 27, 1944.

"1) I am sorry that you did not wait for my message and hurriedly returned home.

"2) Several of my agents are now in India. I have deliberately not given them the password for fear of disclosure. Please find out these men and make contact with them.

"3) I shall try to send more agents in future to make contact with my party at home and work in cooperation with party members there.

"4) From recently captured Indian prisoners-of-war and also from documents recently captured by us at the front, it appears that anti-Japanese propaganda inside India is very strong. My impression is that you are not doing enough to counteract anti-Japanese propaganda.

"5) From recently captured prisoners-of-war I get the impression that propaganda in the British Indian army in India is quite ineffective. In spite of strong radio propaganda conducted by us in East Asia, news about activities in East Asia and about the Indian National Army is not known to the rank and file of the Indian army at home. Since you in India can listen to our radio broadcasts, it shall be easy for you to propagate news regarding us, both among civilian public and among the Indian army in India. Please do your best to communicate our news to the Indian army.

"6) It is also very necessary for you to do propaganda among the Indian air force. This should be rather easy for you because the number of the Indian air force personnel is not large and because the national element in the Indian air force is comparatively large.

"7) It is absolutely necessary for you to combat anti-Japanese propaganda in India. If you can create pro-Japanese feeling in India then the Indian National Army will also become more popular among the Indian public.

"8) In Manipur and Assam the Indian troops including Gurkhas are on the whole fighting hard for the British. This only shows that nationalist propaganda has not sufficiently influenced them.

"9) It is probably too late for you to try to influence the Indian troops in Manipur and Assam. But you can try to influence the Indian troops in the rear, for example, in Shillong, Dacca, etc. Please begin this propaganda before it is too late.

"10) Please try to personally meet Mahatma Gandhi and influence him to continue his opposition to any compromise with, or any surrender to, the British government.

"11) The following arguments should be used by you in

your propaganda at home for creating more sympathy for our military operations:

"(a) The whole independence movement in East Asia is conducted by Indians with Indian money and Indian resources.

"(b) The Indian National army is composed of Indians, is officered by Indians, is trained by Indians, and is fighting at the front under Indian leaders.

"(c) The more help we get from our countrymen in India the less help we shall need from Japan. Japan will be only too glad if Indians can fight their own battles and achieve freedom through their own efforts. It is we Indians who have requested Japan to give us military aid and that is why the Japanese army is now fighting in India.

"(d) Japan has proved her bona fides and her sincerity by recognising the independence of Burma and of the Phillipines. Japan has also proved her sincerity towards India by recognising the provisional government which the Indian people have set up.

"(e) As soon as any part of India is liberated from the British yoke, the provisional government of Azad Hind will be set up there.

"(f) The provisional government of Azad Hind has already prepared its own postage stamps. Currency notes of the provisional government are now being printed and they will be brought into circulation in the liberated territories in the near future. All arrangements have been made to set up a state bank in India as soon as the provisional government is set up there.

"12) Indians in East Asia are preparing for a long military campaign in India. They are consequently preparing for total mobilisation of their resources. Indians all over East Asia are generously contributing money and supplies, while Indian youths are coming forward to join the Indian National Army in large numbers. This work of mobilising men, money and supplies will go on, as long as the war goes on and as long as India is not completely liberated.

"13) You should also carry on propaganda to the effect that this war is the only opportunity we have for winning freedom for the next hundred years. Moreover the British government will never voluntarily grant us our liberty during this war. An

honourable and peaceful understanding with Britain is quite impossible. If we want our freedom we must fight for it now.

"14) The opening of the second front in Europe should be welcomed by us from the Indian point of view. Our enemies will now be busy in Europe for a long time and they will not be able to send fresh reinforcements to India. We should therefore 'strike while the iron is hot'.

"15) The situation in Asia is so favourable to us that we can win our liberty quite independently of whether Germany ultimately wins or loses the war in Europe. We should not therefore be bothered at all by what will happen in Europe, but should continue our struggle with vigour and enthusiasm.

"16) Personally, I am of the view that Germany cannot be beaten in Europe.

"17) It is absolutely necessary for you to establish wireless communication with me from a centre in Bengal or Assam. Please do this at once. Otherwise our work will suffer much.

"18) In order to help us in our military operation we want the following assistance from you:

"(a) Military information regarding enemy forces in Bengal and Assam.

"(b) Sabotage activities behind the front line, i.e. in Bengal and Assam. This means destroying communication, blowing up of ammunition and petrol dumps and damaging the enemy's air force by all possible means.

"(c) Subversive propaganda within the British Indian army.

"(d) Sabotage activity should be gradually increased as our military operations advance further and further.

"19) If you cannot send us information by wireless, please send men by land to bring information to us.

"20) Please put party men into the Indian army who will come over to our side when the right opportunity comes.

"21) The British are now carrying on atrocious propaganda against the Japanese in order to create anti-Japanese feeling among the Indian people. You must counteract this propaganda also. You can do so by reminding the people that in the last world war, the British carried on atrocious propaganda against the Germans, which was proved to be false when the war was over.

"22) In the last week of May 1944, the Delhi radio broadcast the news that twelve men sent by me to India through

Baluchistan went over and joined the British government. This party was led by a Pathan named Asal Noor Khan. Can you find out if these men voluntarily joined the British government or if they were accidentally captured by the British and then forced to make a confession? In this batch of twelve, there is one *Saifur Rehman,* brother of *Abbas Khan* of Peshawar.

"23) Please inform Abbas Khan that one of his brothers, who went to Libya, is now in the Indian National Army in Europe. Another brother, Saifur Rehman, was sent by me to India by submarine in March this year in Asal Noor Khan's party.

"24) Please follow carefully the progress of our military operations in future and adjust your propaganda and sabotage activity accordingly.

"25) Can you not create disturbance in the North-West Frontier Province by instigating some of the frontier tribes? This would indirectly help our campaign.

"26) Please inform Bengal comrades that I shall soon send agents to Bengal. They may take some time to reach there.

"27) Is there any news about the maharaja of Manipur? Is he for or against the British?

"28) After meeting the enemy troops in Arakan, in Manipur and in Assam, we have become more convinced of our final victory. We know that we have a long and bitter struggle ahead of us, but we are nevertheless absolutely confident of our final victory.

"Note: If contact with R. K. (Bhagat Ram) is quite impossible, either personally or by wireless, please explore other possibilities of conveying the above message to him.

Subhas Chandra Bose."

Next morning, i.e. on 3 September 1944, Mr Inoye gave me the following questionnaire for answers to be given in my next report:

(I) (i) Capacity of assembling and repairing aircrafts and tanks, armoured cars and motor cars.

(ii) Quantity of production of ammunition, cannon, grenades, etc.

(iii) Production of steel and aluminium.

(iv) Condition of import and export of the above material.

(II) (i) Time and date of the establishment of the war production factories and condition of expansion from time to time.

(ii) The area of the factories and the condition of factory buildings if possible according to the process work.

(iii) Number of workers involved in war production factories, working hours.

(iv) Condition of the transportation of production as from where the material comes and where it goes.

(v) Transportation condition in the important ports.

(III) (i) What effect has been made on the Indian masses when Japan and INA attacked India.

(ii) Attitude of Indian communists and change of their technique of activities (after the attack), specially positive or negative attitude of CPI for example: is their demand for national government still strong or has it cooled down?

(iii) Have they put aside their communist demands for acquiring mass support?

(iv) Are they actively working against Bose and the Free India Government or not? If so, what are their activities like?

(v) Soviet influence among the tribes.

After giving me the above questionnaire in the morning Mr Inoye left his house and came back in the afternoon with Sito and Cawasaki. He then told me that he had a talk with the military attache in Moscow on their next move. He said that though they had lost Michina they would take it back soon. They would also start their offensive in North Burma as soon as the monsoon was over and attack the new Burma Road. A major offensive all over China would also be started.

I returned to my place that very day and started back on 5 September. We arrived at Jalalabad on the 8th, stayed there for 4 days and on the 13th again started moving. I arrived in Delhi on 24 September 1944.

I had sent a message to Swatantra to meet me in Delhi. He came and we discussed the matter in detail. He promised to give me a political and military report as soon as possible and left Delhi. He came back on 6 March with the reports.

I left Delhi on 8 March 1945 and reached Swal Qilla on the 11th noon.

This time I was caught by rain and I had to cover all this distance in drenched clothes and under showers of rain. This had its natural effect on me. I was down with fever and I had to stay at the tribal centre till the 17th of March. On the 17th I started again with Ghulam Ulrehman and reached the other centre on the 21st. On 21 March we started for Jalalabad. At Jalalabad we came to know that the Afghan prime minister who had been staying for health reason there during the winter season had to start for Kabul the following day. Naturally he would travel with heavy armed guards and CID people around him and hence we had to make a halt at Jalalabad for three days. We started from there on 25 March 1945.

At Jalalabad we came to know about a new regulation promulgated by the Afghan government regarding permit for travelling even for a Afghani subject if he wanted to go to Kabul. If anybody from Jalalabad district or any other district wanted to go to Kabul he would have to carry a certificate of identification and a certificate that he is a subject of the Afghan government. These would be available from the district authorities. These certificates were to be checked at Budkhak, 12 miles from Kabul. It would be extremely difficult to escape unnoticed if one travelled in a lorry, though it would be possible to pass through if one travelled on foot. We had neither time nor sufficient means to obtain such certificates at Jalalabad and so we started without them, depending only on our wits and luck. Anyway we arrived at Kabul in the evening of 26 March 1945 without any untoward happening on the way.

On 27 March the chief of German secret service Mr Zugumulla accidentally saw me in the bazar and we exchanged our usual signs of meeting. I met him again on 28 March and gave him a copy of the report brought for him. He told me to go to Mr Inoye's house on the 29th at 8 p.m.

I went to Mr Inoye's house and handed him the copy of the report meant for him. I also gave him copies of instructions regarding WT contact which he had given me last time.

We started talking about the war situation in general. It seemed he was eager to talk himself rather than ask me questions. He said: "Our reverses in Burma are real and not strategic. These are due to our weakness in air. We were aware of this weakness even before we entered the war. But we mainly depend

on our navy and infantry. We know that our navy is also weaker as compared to the allied navy. It is a fact that allies are very strong in material equipment both aerial and naval, but we also know how to use our weak navy against the strong navy of the enemy. Our main strength lies in our infantry, i.e. in the spirit of our men, their high morale and their determination. Though our enemy had an easy battle in Burma you will find that Burma-Siam battle will be most bloody. Though we are losing in the Pacific, which is no doubt very bad for us, the real battle will be fought from where we started our first offensive, i.e. in China. We know the aerial superiority of our enemy and hence the possibility of the bombardment of our cities on our mainland and destruction of our war industries. But we have taken precautions against this just like the Russians when the Germans were advancing on the Russian soil, i.e. by way of removal of war factories from the war zone to the far-off interior and that is why Russians are victorious."

At this juncture I asked him how could the Russians be victorious as the war was still going on in Germany. He said, "Now it is very clear that Germany will collapse within two or three weeks." He continued, "We have shifted our war industries to Manchuria and our enemy does not know their location. So also to attack Manchuria they must have air bases in China otherwise they cannot fly over Manchuria. But we are not allowing them to get a foothold in China from where they can start aerial offensive. Moreover our position in China is more consolidated. Nanking government is more helpful to us now than when Wang Ching-wei was at the head of the government. I cay say that in all occupied China we are very strong and we can use Chinese forces to fight against our enemy."

I asked him what he thought of the Russians. Will they enter into war against Japan after Germany is defeated? He replied, "We do not think so. After the war in Europe is over, there will be two powers who will be dominating the international arena—Russia and America. The Russians have no claim against us and no interest in the Pacific. So why should Russia sacrifice even a single man to help America as it is America who has interests in the Pacific, not the Britain? Stalin is a great statesman. He thinks cooly and realistically. He will see to it that Russian prestige does not go down in going in for imperialist adventures,

though they have sufficient power to do so. However, in case Russia attacks us we have sufficient manpower and equipment reserved on the border to meet any offensive. You know we had 55 divisions of our best army, called the 20th Army, posted on the frontier and we have not removed a single man from there. Moreover we think that the alliance between America and Britain will not last long. America has no gains to achieve in Europe. They are simply helping Britain. But once Burma and Malaya are freed—which is not an easy matter—the British will have no further interest in the war and they may not like to help the Americans in the Pacific war. So also Americans have more interest in China which can be seen from Roosevelt's special interest and intervention in Chinese affairs. For the time being Britain is allowing this but after her hands are free she will not allow America to continue this policy and there will be a break between the two. So also because of the fear of Russia both America and Britain will not be able to transfer their full power from Europe to Pacific. That is why we think that we will have to fight America only."

Then he told me that their position in Kabul was very critical. There were dark days for the Germans, but for Japan also it was difficult to do any activity. The Afghan government had warned them, again and again, not to carry out any secret activity. The legation was watched and the CID was very active.

At 4 p.m. that day Mr Zugumulla came to me. He brought the following questions from Subhas Chandra Bose (my answers also given) :

Q. Who is Ajit Roy? Is he in our confidence?

A. I have no knowledge of this fellow. I will refer this to our comrades.

Q. Are Purshottamdas Trikumdas and Mrs Asaf Ali arrested?

A. Purshottamdas was arrested 2 years back but Mrs Asaf Ali is still absconding.

Q. What about the formation of Congress ministry in NWFP?

A. The ministry was formed after I left India so I have no knowledge about it.

Q. How did Satyaranjan Bakshi get arrested?

A. Satyaranjan Bakshi and many other followers of yours were arrested some time after your disappearance.

Q. What about Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan?

A. He was released after my departure from India.

Mr. Zugumulla then left the place.

On 15 I went to Mr Inoye's house. He was waiting for me and he received me very cordially as usual. He told me that no instructions had so far been received from Tokyo. Three messages had been received which say (i) Bose has been informed about R.K.'s (Bhagat Ram) arrival in Kabul and he has been informed about Indian situation and failure of WT contact etc. (ii) Tokyo/Burma/WT lines are overloaded and confused. (iii) Because of urgent military work and overburdening of lines even acknowledgement of our message has not been received.

I asked him what he thought about the cancellation of the pact between Russia and Japan. He said it was not only in the interest of Russia and Japan, but for world security and peace that Russia and Japan kept good relations with each other. However if Russia decided to attack Japan they had forces specially reserved for such an eventuality.

I asked him what was Japan's reaction to Truman becoming the president of America after Roosvelt's death. He said there would not be any change in Japan's attitude towards USA, as it was immaterial who was the president as long as America's policy remained the same.

He said, "But Roosvelt's death will have far reaching effects on China's politics. It was Roosvelt who with special powers vested in him was maintaining Chiang Kai-shek in his position—giving him full support—but after his death China's position will be shaky. Another point is that because of Roosvelt's strong support to Britain she did not interfere in Roosvelt's policy in China, but now Britain will openly take side and this is likely to bring about changes in Chungking government and new government may come to some agreement with Yenan. Russia is likely to have much influence in China. She may even recognise the communist government." He added that it is also likely that there would be disturbances in China. He said that Roosvelt's death was a great blow to the unity and solidarity of the allies.

On 23 April 1945 Inoye gave me the following message from Subhas Chandra Bose:

"Previously I had asked you not to go in big sabotage work, but now yon can start it in a systematically planned and organi-

sed way. Monsoon will be on soon and if you start the work during this season, it will be of great help to us. I and the Japanese high command fully appreciate your work in the past and are thankful for that. You should concentrate on the sabotage of transport and communication systems.

"You should also make propaganda for our cause on the lines we do here, i.e. harping on the differences between the allied nations. The differences have already become acute and will crop up at the Sanfrancisco conference. We have to work in such a way that these are accentuated and a clash becomes possible between Britain and America.

"There will be a lull in the activities on the front during the monsoon and our enemy will be busy mobilising resources in preparation for major operations after monsoon. If you do sabotage work in such a way that these materials do not reach the front, it will be a great help to us."

In the meantime Mr Zugumulla came in and Mr Inoye left the place. Mr Zugumulla said that he had two questions for me. They were:

(1) The German ambassador in Stockholm who is on a special mission there has reported that Madam Kollontai will go soon to India on a secret mission. Do you know anything about her proposed journey?

(2) Brother of Amanullah (ex-king of Afghanistan), Mahomed Amir Khan, and his father-in-law, Abdul Hakim Khan, who was Afghanistan's agent in Peshawar, were captured and interned in Burma. Now they have been brought to India. Do you know in which jail they are kept at present?

My answers were:

1) I do not know anything about this.

2) I do not know but I shall make inquiries.

Afterwards I had a talk with Mr Inoye. He said, "The situation in Europe is very bad. As per reports received from Tokyo the Red Army has entered Berlin and Hitler is still there. He will not leave Berlin but die there. After his death, the German collapse is certain and this will happen within a week, because the Red Army has launched a heavy offensive and there is no possibility of checking it."

He again emphasised that though they had to face reverses and lose territories, they were sure of coming out victorious at the end, as they mainly depend on their infantry. In the end he asked me to convey his greetings to our comrades and expressed regrets for his inability to establish WT contact.

Wishing him goodbye I left him on the morning of 24 April 1945.

On the 27 April at 1 p.m. we started in a tonga. We chose a tonga and not a lorry straight from Kabul, because we thought that if we travel in tonga the guards on the 1st and 2nd posts which are about 1 mile and 2 miles respectively from Kabul city limits would think that we were going to a nearby village and would not ask for permits.

We thus came to the main post which is about 12 miles from Kabul. There we waited for a lorry. As soon as a lorry came I approached the driver and settled the fair and told him that we had no permits. He asked us to walk for about a mile and then get into the lorry. So we decided to walk. In order to escape the attention of guards we pretended that we were going on the nearby brook to have a wash prior to namaz and that we were not travelling down. However, as soon as we started the guards questioned us as to where we wanted to go. We had to tell them that we wanted to go to Jalalabad. When they asked for permits we told them we were tribal businessmen doing business since long and we did not know that a permit is necessary even for a tribesman and we asked them to allow us to go. They said that I should approach their officer and tell him the story. We went to the officer and told him that we have had business with the tribal people and we had come to Kabul for settling the account. He was quite sympathetic and believed in our bona fides and treated us as gentlemen. He said that according to the rules he could not allow us to go further, but he could allow us to go back to Kabul for bringing the necessary permit. He said, "As per rules I must send you back with the guards, but as you are gentlemen I allow you to go back as you like."

We had the following alternatives: (i) To go back and try to get the permits which was extremely difficult and would have taken about 5/6 days. (ii) To go back and buy 2/3 donkies and tribal dress and pass as real tribal people. This too would have taken 4/5 days. (iii) To buy tribal dress and pass the post at

night and walk the whole distance. (iv) To bribe the officer. (v) To bribe the guards. (vi) To approach the officer again and appeal to his Pathan sentiment and seek his permission. After discussing amongst ourselves we decided on the last course.

I approached the officer, and told him that we did not mind going back for obtaining permit but that would involve some expenses—about 150 Afghanis which also we did not mind; but we could not afford to spend 5/6 days. So I appealed to him to have faith in us as Pathans as he himself was a Pathan. I was all the while talking in a very polite way and my appeal to his Pathan sentiment had an effect and he allowed us to travel. As a token of gratitude I asked his permission to give some bakshish to the guards. Though at first he said 'no', he agreed on my second request, and thus we were free to travel straight. On the evening of 28 April 1945 we reached Jalalabad. We stayed there for a couple of days as we were very exhausted. We started from Jalalabad on 1 May 1945 and arrived at the tribal centre on the 6th. I reached Delhi on 17 May 1945.

Teja Singh Swatantra came to meet me on the 20th. I reported to him the whole story. He said, now that the Germans had lost the war, it was impossible for the Japanese to carry the war on their own for a long time. Now, what would happen to Subhas Chandra Bose? That was a very important issue to be thought over. He was of the opinion that it would be wise for him to disappear, along with his friends, from the scene of war, just before the surrender of the Japanese.

Then the question of my future activity also came up for discussion. It was decided that I would stay at my place in Delhi and watch the military situation in the east. In the meantime Swatantra would make efforts to establish WT contact with Subhas Chandra Bose as per our new arrangements which I had fixed last time with the Japanese. If such a direct contact could be established, Swatantra would suggest to Subhas Chandra Bose to disappear from the scene of war. When the Japanese surrendered I would go again to the tribal area and do whatever was possible to mobilise all resources for anti-British activities.

* * *

After the war however the international and national political scene changed completely and the country was caught in the

grip of a communal carnage on an unprecedentedly large scale, bringing all normal political activity to a standstill.

It was therefore useless for me to remain in India. Hence I left for tribal area to continue my normal anti-British activities there.

While I was in the tribal area our country was partitioned into India and Pakistan and in such circumstances it was not possible to do any useful work there. Many comrades working in the tribal area therefore wanted to return to their respective places in the NWFP.

I also decided to return to India. My family and other relations had already reached India and there was nobody left in our ancestral place which I loved so dearly. I passed through that area with a heavy heart, in gloom and despair.

The journey was irksome, hazardous and a long one. The safest way to East Punjab seemed to be via Bombay. It took me almost a month to reach Bombay via Karachi. At last I reached Bombay on 26 February 1948. From Bombay I came to Punjab in search of my family whose whereabouts I had meanwhile come to know in Bombay.

## APPENDIX—PART ONE

### No 1

### Accused's Statement

Hari Kishan, s/o Lala Gurudasmal, zamindar resident of Ghalla Dher in Mardan district, was questioned by the court as and when and with what object he came to Lahore.

*Answer*: I can't say when I came to Lahore but I came to kill the governor of Punjab.

*Question*: Where did you stay at Lahore?

*Answer*: I do not want to answer this question.

*Question*: Did you enter the hall with a complimentary ticket?

*Answer*: Yes: I obtained a ticket.

*Question*: From where did you get that ticket?

*Answer*: I won't tell you.

*Question*: Did you shoot at H.E., when he was being led in a procession towards the exit at the close of the convocation?

*Answer*: Yes: I fired six shots.

*Question*: How?

*Answer*: I fired 2 shots at the governor, and other shots in selfdefence. I had no idea of taking the life of any other person.

*Question*: Do these things (revolvers, catridges and other articles) belong to you?

*Answer*: Yes.

*Question*: Was the assistant subinspector wounded by your shot?

*Answer*: I do not know.

*Question*: Do you want to say any thing more?

*Answer*: No, nothing more. But I would like to say that I am responsible for this outrage.

The case was adjourned.

(from *Tribune*, 6 January 1931)

## No 2

### Accused's Statement

The court then put a few questions to the accused:

*Question*: Did you hurt inspector Budh Singh with your revolver?

*Answer*: I do not know. I did not even see him at that time.

*Question*: Have you got a licence for this revolver?

*Answer*: No, I have no licence. I purchased this revolver from an Afridi tribesman in my village Ghalla Dher.

*Question*: Do you want to say anything?

*Answer*: No, nothing.

The court then framed charges against the accused as mentioned above and committed him to sessions.

(from *Tribune*, 7 January 1935)

## No 3

### Arguments of the Defence Counsel

*Lahore* 24 *January*

At the resumed hearing of the jury trial of Hari Kishan in connection with the university hall shooting outrage in the court of Anderson, sessions judge, Asaf Ali, defence counsel, commenced his arguments. He said that not a single eye-witness has been produced, who could say he had seen any person being injured by the shots fired by the accused. Witnesses deposed to having heard shots. It was just possible that somebody else was also firing. Unless the jurors were satisfied that accused's shots injured the deceased and others, the accused could not be held guilty.

Taking it for granted that shots were fired by the accused, he asked the jury to look into this question very minutely. Two bullets injured his excellency the governor, one Dr Miss Dermitt, one Chanan Singh and two inspector Wadhawan. One bullet struck the verandah. Even if in the case of Wadhawan it was argued that only one bullet struck him, the number of bullets came to five and only five bullets were recovered. Hence the bullet that struck Chanan Singh remained unaccounted for. Wherefrom did the bullet that struck Chanan Singh come? Chanan Singh was struck in the face and the bullets which struck

his excellency in the arm could not strike Chanan Singh in the face unless he was a child. The prosecution had not put in direct evidence to show that the accused had any grudge against the deceased.

There were five statements of the accused before this court, continued the counsel. Two were made before the lower court, one oral statement and one written statement were addressed to this court, and the fifth statement was his alleged confession.

Mr Asaf Ali read the written statement of the accused and said that the accused had decided not to take the life of the governor. It was sufficient for his purpose to injure him. Some police officers who were armed rushed at him. The accused apprehended danger to his life. So he fired in selfdefence. There was evidence to show that police officers grappled with him. As the accused stated, his motive was to create worldwide sensation. Personally he had no motive or grudge against the governor.

The accused who held human life as sacred came to Lahore with the express purpose of shooting the governor and not killing him. He saw the governor come from a great distance and had he the intention of killing his excellency, he could have shot him in the front and would not have fired at him when he passed the accused and went to the door. This showed the accused's intention was merely to injure the governor with a view to create sensation.

Counsel replying to the PP argument said that law allowed even the worst criminal to defend his person. After having fired at his excellency, the accused felt himself in danger and hence fired in selfdefence and not with the intention of killing anybody.

*Chanan Singh Could Not Speak*

Dealing with the prosecution evidence counsel said that the time of occurrence given by P. N. Dutt was 1.15 p.m. while the time recorded in the medical register was 1.20 p.m. Counsel said that they could not rely on oral evidence. It was a cock and bull story to say that Chanan Singh was speaking to Surat Singh, subinspector. Counsel said it was impossible for a man to speak when lingual muscles and tongue had been injured. Chanan Singh died on the 23rd December and the medical certificate was given on the 27th December from memory. Such medical opinion, said the counsel, could not be relied upon. Col Bharoocha's oral opinion might be of value to Col Harper Nelson in view of Col Bharoocha's experience. But in the eye of law such opinions are not worth the paper on which they were written.

*Doctor's Memory*

He did not take notes even. He relied according to his state-

ments, on his memory only. And this was the kind of memory he had. He was asked as to when he gave the certificates regarding injuries to the police men. He replied that they were given on the 24th December. So it was clear that his memory was unreliable. They should require more weighty evidence to come to the conclusion that the deceased had died as a result of the revolver shot injuries.

Referring to the evidence of P. N. Dutt, registrar of the Punjab University, counsel said, there was confusion in the statements regarding the number of shots, some heard four shots, some five and others six. It was possible that more than six shots were fired.

Taking the evidence of subinspector Surat Singh, counsel said that this man had stated that the deceased had a talk with him after he was injured. There could be no evidence with the counsel, emphatically urged the defence counsel, except the dying declaration of the deceased. As there was no evidence, the prosecution probably thought of putting this witness in. This was a clear proof of the fact that the deceased could not speak even a word after he had received injury. Counsel submitted even if the deceased made a certain statement to the said subinspector, would it had gone unrecorded? He must have noted it in his diary or somewhere else. But there was no reference to the cause of Chanan Singh's death in the police records. Assuming that even such a statement was made unless Chanan Singh gave a description of the person by whom he had been injured, the statement was of no value, because two persons were arrested on the spot. Counsel submitted that they could not convict persons on such evidence. They must have conclusive and unrebuttable evidence to convict the accused.

Continuing Mr Asaf Ali said he would not waste time in discussing the evidence of Capt Wolf, ADC to his excellency, and others. He did not understand why the prosecution produced them. Referring to the evidence of a constable, who prepared a statement of injuries, counsel said that he had mentioned only one injury caused to the jaw of the deceased. Col Bharoocha had given 2 injuries while Dr Roshan Lal says that the injuries on the face of the deceased were 3 in number. So they had 3 different statements with regard to the injuries of the deceased person. They should decide for themselves upon whose evidence to rely.

*Provisions of Law Violated*

Discussing the evidence of Mr Lewis, arms and ammunitions expert, counsel said it was doubtful that all these bullets had been fired by the particular revolver of the accused. Counsel

then took up the evidence of M. H. Mahmood, magistrate, regarding the alleged confession of the accused and said that he was not informed that Mr Mahmood was a magistrate. The accused was not produced in court but in his house. The accused was in custody of the police and the fun of it was that the alleged confession was not sealed by the magistrate. The magistrate according to his own statement got up when the DSP arrived at his house with the accused. Impression of the accused must be that the magistrate was under the influence of the police. It is wonderful that the magistrate, continued the counsel, did not know where the police officers stood when he was recording confession of accused. The magistrate had deliberately violated the provision of law. Instead of keeping the alleged confession with him, he handed it over to the DSP without his asking for it.

The accused stated, he did not make any confession. Taking it for granted that he made the confession it was a statement to avoid serious trouble to himself. Everything, remarked the counsel, was done in a hurry. Statement was recorded on 2 January when it was a holiday in the magistrate's house. According to the accused's own statements he was worn down and police probably thought this was the time. The iron was hot and they struck and then the accused was sent to judicial lock up. Counsel said that unless they were satisfied that it was a voluntary statement, it was not worth the paper on which it was written. The magistrate did not distinguish between the words "subah" and "salah" and did not translate questions which he put to the accused from English into Urdu. Counsel wondered how he made the accused understand things.

*Medical Evidence Conflicting*

A few names had been mentioned by the accused in the alleged confession. He had stated, these persons knew him and that one Dasaundha Ram identified him. If it was so those persons ought to have been produced in the court as prosecution witnesses but it had not been done. Neither the testimony of Dr Roshan Lal was to be relied upon. Counsel submitted that medical examination was conflicting and hence cannot be believed.

Counsel proceeding said that from the evidence of Mr Neel it was clear that the accused was grappling with police officers. According to him these police officers were armed with revolvers. He might have been shot at. He was justified in firing in selfdefence. The foreman of the jury said there was no evidence that police officers had drawn revolvers. Counsel replied that there was no evidence either to show that they had

not drawn their revolvers. Mr Singh was the only witness who saw accused firing two shots but could not say in which direction.

*Legal Aspect of Case*

Discussing the legal aspects of the case Mr Asaf Ali said that prosecution had charged the accused under section 302 IPC in the act of the murder of Chanan Singh, deceased and under 307 IPC on two counts in respect of attempt on his excellency the governor and that of Wadhawan. But counsel suggested that in his mind the charge in respect of assault on the governor should be under section 324 IPC (voluntarily causing hurt likely to cause death) punishable with 3 years' imprisonment. Counsel submitted that the prosecution could not frame any other charge. As regards inspector Wadhawan it was the case of simple injury, counsel placed it under 326 of the negligence act or 324 IPC. The only section that could be applicable in the case of Chanan Singh's death was 324 IPC (culpable homicide not amounting to murder). The accused was not aware of even the name of the deceased and had no enmity with him. He had no intention to kill him. It was a rash act committed in selfdefence. Counsel further said the offence could be placed under section 304(2) or at the utmost prosecution might urge it to be placed under section 300. But it did not fall within the purview of section 302 IPC—that would be an act done with the intention of causing death. The accused did not intend to cause grievous injury or death. It was purely an emotional and impulsive act. He did it to get away safe.

As regards the dying declaration of Chanan Singh it was not in accordance with the law. The declaration made to a police officer must be in black and white and signed by the deceased. Counsel asked the jury not to take any note of it.

The alleged confession of the accused was highly irregular.

Concluding counsel strongly appealed to the jury to leave aside all considerations while giving verdict, taking in view only the gravity and seriousness of the case. K. S. Kolander Ali Khan replying said that the sections suggested by the defence counsel were not applicable.

The hearing was then adjourned till Monday next when the court would address the jury.

## No 4

### Hari Kishan Sentenced to Death

*Lahore, 26 January* 1931

At the resumed hearing of the jury trial of Hari Kishan in connection with the university hall shooting case outrage, Mr Anderson, sessions judge, addressed the jury with regard to the facts of the case and the statements of the accused.

About the written statement of the accused the court remarked that most of it was irrelevant and the court read only those portions of the statement which it considered to be relevant. Now the question was whether Chanan Singh, deceased, his excellency and Wadhawan were injured as the result of the shots fired by the accused. They had direct evidence to show that the accused was seen standing in the visitor's gallery and firing. Besides this they had the statement of the accused himself that he fired six shots. It had been contended that another man was arrested along with the accused and the injuries might have been caused by that man. The evidence showed that the shots were fired from a platform on the left side. As to the number of shots, the accused had admitted having fired six shots. The evidence of Mr Lewis, manager of Walter Locke Co, showed that bullets recovered could be fired from the revolver possessed by the accused.

Proceeding the learned judge drew the attention of the jury to the condition of the bullets and explained the circumstances under which they were recovered. It was for the jury to judge if the injuries sustained by Chanan Singh were due to those bullets or not. They had direct evidence as to the injuries sustained by the three persons. There was no evidence that any one else fired shots at the time.

*Chanan Singh's Dying Declaration*

The next point to which the learned judge drew the attention of the jury was the dying declaration of Chanan Singh, who told Surat Singh that he received injuries as the result of the shots fired by the accused. In this connection counsel for the accused contended that the deceased meant not only the accused but possibly the other man who was arrested.

They had to judge whether that statement was correct or not. It should also be taken into consideration that the statement was

A copy of the actual judgement could not be obtained though the Pakistan government had been duly approached and requisite fees paid.

not entered in the zimnies. The learned judge expressed doubt regarding the correctness of that statement.

Referring to confession made before Mr Mahmood, magistrate, the learned judge said that the accused denied having made any confession. The accused alleged that his signatures were taken on two blank papers and the police made use of them as they liked. The charge made by the accused, if proved, would be very serious. The judge left it to the jury to judge this point. The learned judge held that the confession of the accused was admissible, but left it to the jury to decide whether it was due to pressure, torture or inducement. The accused had admitted the main facts of the case. As regards Chanan Singh's death, two doctors, Col Bharoocha and Dr Roshanlal, had stated definitely that the death of Chanan Singh was due to the shots fired by the accused. Col Bharoocha while being examined, no doubt, appeared to be somewhat impatient but it was not the jury to decide if Col Bharoocha could have stated what was not correct. The judge remarked that he would accept the opinion of Col Bharoocha in view of his experience and standing. The judge regretted that the post mortem examination of the deceased body was not performed.

*Did Police Officers Fire?*

Continuing the learned judge said that there was no evidence on record to show that the police officers also fired. The police officers no doubt were armed but there was no direct evidence that any police officer drew his pistol. The learned judge read out the charges framed against the accused under section 302, IPC, for the murder of Chanan Singh and section 207 on two counts for an attempt on the life of his excellency and Wadhawan. He quoted the law defining these offences. He added that in judging the intention of the accused the jury should look to the result and the natural consequences of the action. The learned judge asked the jury to give their true, honest and impartial verdict, after considering the points raised by the defence and the prosecution counsels and the facts placed before them by himself.

*Jury's Verdict*

The jury returned a unanimous verdict of 'guilty' against the accused on all the three charges. They recommended that the court should show mercy to the accused on account of his young age.

*Judgement*

The sessions judge then pronounced orders rejecting the jury's

recommendations for mercy and sentenced the accused to death on the charges of murder and transportation for life on each of the other two counts.

(from *Tribune,* 27 January 1931)

## No 5

### Hari Kishan Executed; Dead Body not Delivered to Relatives; Protest Meeting at Lahore

Hari Kishan was executed in the Mianwali jail on Tuesday morning. The dead body was not delivered to his relatives. The cremation was done near the jail under official supervision. Meetings were held at Lahore and Amritsar, protesting against the execution. Hari Kishan has been sentenced to death in connection with the murder of subinspector Chanan Singh, attempted murder of Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency, governor of Punjab, on the occasion of University Hall shooting case.

*Lahore, 9 June*

The news of execution of Hari Kishan spread like wild fire throughout the city. On receipt of the news, some of the vernacular papers brought out extraordinary issues. The local Naujawan Bharat Sabha organised a huge procession from Parimahal. The procession was headed by Dr Satya Pal and other prominent workers of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha. The procession passed through prominent bazars of the city and terminated outside Mori Gate where a public meeting was held.

A largely attended public meeting was held tonight in the Municipal Gardens outside Mori Gate under the auspices of Naujawan Bharat Sabha, Mangal Das presiding. Speeches were made by Dr Satya Pal, Ram Chandra, Smt Swadesh Kumari and others expressing sympathy with relations of Hari Kishan and condemning the action of the government in hanging him. A resolution was also passed to this effect amidst shouts of "Hari Kishan Zindabad". After the termination of the meeting the crowd divided itself into groups and went about in different directions of the city singing national songs and advising the people to declare hartal tomorrow (10 June) as a protest against the execution of Hari Kishan.

Malik Jeewanlal Kapoor, president, district Congress committee, Mulk Raj, vicepresident, Naujawan Bharat Sabha, Lahore, and Kranti Kumar, general secretary, Naujawan Bharat Sabha, Lahore,

made the following announcement: "Hartal should be observed tomorrow in the city of Lahore in conncetion with the execution of Hari Kishan. A procession will start from Parimahal, inside Shahalmi Gate, Lahore at 5.30 p.m. After the procession a meeting will be held in Municipal Gardens outside Mori Gate, where leaders will make speeches. People should observe hartal and join the procession and meeting."

*Mianwali, 9 June*

Hari Kishan was executed at 6 a.m. today. All approaches to the jail were closed to the public. The dead body was not delivered to the relatives who were even refused permission to be present at the cremation of the body which was done near the jail premises under official supervision. The relations were not also allowed to perform the last rites after the cremation.

*Lahore, 10 June*

To demonstrate against the execution of Hari Kishan a mourning procession was taken out this afternoon from Parimahal by the Naujawan Bharat Sabha. About a thousand men, women and students carrying black flags, started at 6 p.m. from Parimahal singing national songs and raising shouts of "Hari Kishan Zindabad". The men accompanying the procession were bare headed. Dr Satya Pal, Panda Sant Ram, Pindi Das, Midraj Tandon and other members of Naujawan Bharat Sabha headed the procession. A group of about 50 ladies each carrying a black flag in hand accompanied the procession singing patriotic songs.

After passing through Shahalmi Bazar, Machhi Hatta, Bazar Hatta, Lange Mandi, Gumti Bazar, Lahori Mandi, Lahori Gate, Anarkali station and Changar Mohalla, the procession terminated at the Municipal Gardens, outside Mori Gate, where a public meeting was held. There was a hartal in the bazars inside the city through which procession passed.

*The Meeting*

At the public meeting of over 5 thousand people including 500 ladies, some wearing black saris, Kranti Kumar presided. Speeches were made by Ram Chandra, Dr Satya Pal, Dr Banarsi Das, Mulk Raj, Panda Sant Ram, Master Yash Pal, Smt Saraswati Devi and Smt Preetam Devi congratulating the people of Lahore for observing hartal and attending the meeting in such large numbers. The speakers condemned the action of government in executing Hari Kishan especially at a time when a truce had been effected between people and the government. A resolution was moved from the chair and carried amidst shouts of "Hari Kishan Zindabad". The meeting terminated late at night.

*Mianwali,* 10 June

The relatives of Hari Kishan reached Mianwali, at 7-30 on the 8th instant to have the last interview with him. Mr Bhagat Ram Talwar, brother of Hari Kishan who is undergoing imprisonment, was also brought from central jail, Peshawar. He was handcuffed and chained while he was brought from Peshawar. He was taken direct to jail from the railway station.

The relatives of Hari Kishan submitted an application to the district magistrate on the 9th June in which they enquired on what date Hari Kishan would be executed. The district magistrate, it is reported, replied that he had nothing to do with the date of execution but when he got the information he would depute one magistrate who would be present at the time. He advised them to go to the jail authorities to get the necessary information. So the relations sent another application to the superintendent of jail asking him to let them know the date of execution. The superintendent replied that the date of execution could not be given and he further said that the jail authorities would perform all Hindu rites according to the shastras.

*Last Interview*

The relatives of Hari Kishan had last interview at 11.10 a.m. on the 8th June. At the time of interview they were surrounded by the jailor, deputy jailor and warders. The jailor kept a time-piece in his hand and informed the interviewers that the interview must close at 11.30 a.m., i.e. just after 20 minutes. At first they were told to hold the interview with Hari Kishan outside the cell-yard—which was about 200 feet from the place where Hari Kishan was made to stand. The brother of Hari Kishan told the jailor that it was very difficult for them to talk with the prisoner from such a long distance. It was also very troublesome for them to stand in the open with the scorching midday sun overhead. Then they were allowed to have the interview inside the cell-yard. Hari Kishan was quite happy and cheerful. His health was good. After talking about some domestic matters they enquired from him if he had anything to say about his last wish. Hari Kishan, it is reported, said, "I have only this desire that I may again be born in India. I am a humble servant of the country. If you are given the dead body, it is my desire that I should be cremated at the same place at the bank of the Sutlej where Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru and Sukhdev were cremated." Just then the clock struck 11.30 and the interviewers were asked to clear out and the condemned man was shut in. It is reported that Hari Kishan's body was cremated in the gravevard near the jail premises. The graveyard is meant for the burial of unclaimed Mohammedan bodies. It may be noted that it is the same graveyard where the body of

Ilam Din, murderer of Raj Pal, was burried, before it was exhumed and delivered to the Mohammedans to be taken to Lahore.

Soon after the execution the father and the brother of Hari Kishan approached the district magistrate for the delivery of the ashes who advised them to wire to the Punjab government for the purpose.

Accordingly a wire was sent but no reply has so far been received. In the evening the relatives of the deceased are said to have been assured by the district magistrate that he would wait for the orders of the government and the ashes would not be disposed of until next morning. Now it transpires that the ashes were removed at the dead of night and were disposed of in the manner not known to the public. It has not so far been ascertained that the services of which a Brahmin was requisitioned for the performance of the last rites, and it is being surmised that if the services of a Brahmin were availed of he must have been brought from outside.

*Mianwali*

The place where the body was cremated is being strictly guarded by the police. The relations of the deceased who came for interview left for their home yesterday by the evening train, but the brother and another relation of the deceased are still here to ascertain the manner in which ashes were finally disposed of.

(from *Tribune*, 10 June 1931)

## No 6

### Martyr Hari Kishan

It seems a little difficult to recall those 40 years old incidents, the incidents I have been trying to forget all these 40 years. But it is a duty that I should have discharged long back. The story of martyrdom of this brave young man Hari Kishan who dreamt of freedom for his country and laid down his life for this cause should have been placed before the people of this country long back. I owed him this duty.

Some years back I wrote a series "Angaron ka Afsana" which appeared in Sunday editions of the daily *Milap* for almost a whole year. I intended to write the story of martyr Hari Kishan,

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Ranbir who is the editor of *Milap* and who was a coaccused in the governor-shooting conspiracy case wrote this article specially for this book.

in the concluding issues and also wanted to explain why decision was taken by the party to fire at the governor of Punjab, Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency and why death sentence was passed on me and my colleagues, Shri Durga Dass Khanna and Shri Chamanlal Kapoor and how we were released. For these concluding issues I needed a copy of my book "Phansi ki Kothri" written by me after release from prison. In this book there were no details about the work done by martyr Hari Kishan, Shri Chamanlal Kapoor, Shri Durga Dass Khanna yet I wanted to make the background of this book a part of this series. I kept searching for this book written by me but I could not lay my hands on it all these years. I could not discharge my duty towards this great martyr and the country. I should have done so long back.

There is an interesting and cogent reason for omitting in this book details of the work done by martyr Hari Kishan, my own role and that of my colleagues, Shri Durga Dass Khanna and Shri Chamanlal Kapoor. I wrote this book in 1932. I could not possibly mention all the facts in this book. Although I had to purposely omit mention of many details, yet I very explicitly described the great sense of sacrifice and courage of martyr Hari Kishan, and other young men who created a big stir in the country by their selfless work. When the advocate who was my defence counsel in this case of conspiracy against me came to know that I was writing a book he demanded that I show it to him before it is published. I had to show him the manuscript which was clipped by him by almost 60 per cent. He scored out almost the entire description of the work of martyr Hari Kishan, my own role and that of other revolutionaries. The book did describe the life in British jails, particularly prison cells where those condemned to death are locked up. This book also had a revolutionary content but did not include description of the work of this youngest martyr of northern India, Hari Kishan, who willingly and with a smile laid down his life for the cause of the nation. Some people may have liked this book but I knew the book did not mention what I wanted to say in it.

I was looking for that book for the revolutionary content in it to complete another book I wanted to publish under the name of "Angaron ka Afsana" but I could not trace "Phansi ki Kothri".

This day I am writing this note not to complete my book but only as a tribute to that brave young martyr whose innocent but determined face I can still visualise like a photograph before me.

So far people have considered this great revolutionary work of firing on the governor of Punjab as only a part of the work of the revolutionaries who were working, apart from the Indian

National Congress, for the independence of the country in their own way and that these activities were not inspired by the political situation of the country of that time. The facts, however, are that this step was taken to give strong support to Gandhiji and the Indian National Congress without their knowledge, in their struggle against the British government. In this period the revolutionaries of Punjab and other states had their attention focused on the Lahore conspiracy case against Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru, Sukhdev and others. Once the revolutionaries prepared a plan to raid court-room in the central jail where this historic case was being tried and to force release of Bhagat Singh and his colleagues from the police custody. All arrangements were made but why this plan was dropped and not implemented will make a long story. After abandoning this plan, leaders, workers, officers and soldiers of Hindustan Socialist Republican Army awaited the court verdict on Bhagat Singh and his colleagues. There was no hope of their acquittal. It was decided to wait till sentences were announced on their cases when the country will be in a state of stir and it would be time for the revolutionary forces to strike. Some stray incidents took place but, by and large, during this period regrouping of forces to organise them and keep them in readiness took place.

Whereas militant forces were getting organised to help strengthen the hands of Indian National Congress in their struggle against the foreign rule, Mahatma Gandhi gave a big snub to them in an article "Ways of the Bomb" published in *Harijan*. Shri Chandra Shekhar Azad, then chief commander of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army furnished suitable reply on behalf of the revolutionary forces in an article "Philosophy of the Bomb" published in *Red Parchas* issued and circulated as underground spokesman of the forces who were not convinced that only passive resistance would usher in freedom for the country. The two articles advocated diametrically opposite views regarding the means for achieving the same end. Late Shri Motilal Nehru made efforts to end or narrow down these differences between the two viewpoints and called several leaders of the militant forces to Allahabad where they met Mahatma Gandhi in Anand Bhawan. Prolonged talks were held but they could not settle their differences. Mahatma Gandhi very emphatically told them that he will not even listen to any talk advocating violent methods. He further told them that in case they wanted to work for the country they must renounce their methods and accept his policy of nonviolence without reservations.

Obviously believers in "The Philosophy of the Bomb", Shri Chandra Shekhar Azad and his colleagues, were not prepared to agree to this. The talks broke down.

Gandhiji started salt satyagraha in 1930 with the conviction

that the British government would yield under the pressure. This passive resistance continued for several months. There was considerable response from the people in the initial stages. Many people were jailed but with time this enthusiasm cooled down. The volunteers who were in jail were showing signs of uneasiness and the British were aware that the movement would die its own death. They made absolutely no efforts for any settlement.

Mahatma Gandhi, too, assessed the situation. He sounded liberal leaders of that time like Dr Sapru and Shri Jayakar for intervention. They made an approach to the then viceroy Lord Irwin for settlement. They also told him that Gandhiji would withdraw his satyagraha in case he would come to some kind of settlement. The two leaders made many efforts but the viceroy was adamant. He insisted that before any talks for settlement or for release for political prisoners can be initiated Mahatma Gandhi should withdraw his satyagraha. Gandhiji could not accept this position as it would mean blanket surrender. But the movement was losing its initial force. Many prisoners came out of jail after signing an apology.

In this period Pandit Motilal Nehru was also released on account of his illness. Besides being a freedom fighter, he was also a good statesman. He was not a blind follower of the creed of nonviolence. He made correct assessment of the political situation prevailing in the country at that time. He was also aware of the intransigence of the viceroy. He sent a message to Chandra Shekhar Azad through Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi of Kanpur. It said, "Country is facing defeat. Surrender of Mahatma Gandhi will be a big blow to the freedom movement of the country. Will the youth of the nation be only silent and helpless spectators of this debacle? Will they only stand by and tolerate this grave injustice and insult to our people, nation and her leaders? The viceroy is refusing to agree to even a dialogue with Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders."

On receipt of this message leaders of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army held discussions on their role in a situation created by this insolence on the part of the viceroy. They agreed that even though they did not participate in the satyagraha led by Gandhiji and did not agree or even approve of his nonviolent methods for attainment of independence from the British, by and large the movement was directed against the British and they could not sit by and watch the movement fizzle out. They decided that they would play an active role and by their work force the viceroy and his government to come to terms with the Indian leaders. They decided to assault high British officers in big cities of the country to create a terror amongst them to make them realise that freedom fighters could also use force to achieve their means. They also prepared plans for the use of

arms against the British to give them a jolt. They needed this shake-up so that they should know, if they did not immediately come to terms with the Indian leaders, a mighty force of militant and revolutionary workers who had little faith in nonviolent methods would rise as one against the British government. It was as a follow-up of these plans that the governor of Junjab was shot at. Similarly the British governors of Bombay and Bengal and an English inspector general of police of UP were also shot at. All these incidents occurred one after the other in quick succession which caused terror in the minds of the British which was what these revolutionary workers wanted. This work in different provinces imparted a revolutionary content to the agitation against the British. Immediately after these developments the viceroy Lord Irwin contacted Jayakar and Sapru and told them that he was prepared for a settlement with Gandhiji but he would have to withdraw his satyagraha. They told the viceroy that Gandhiji would not withdraw the satyagraha till he and other satyagrahies are released. The sacrifices of young revolutionaries reversed the process. Whereas earlier Gandhiji was seeking settlement the viceroy would not bother. Now it was the viceroy who was very anxious for a settlement and was making efforts for it. Further developments are part of our history.

Gandhiji along with other satyagrahis was released. Agitation was withdrawn. Lord Irwin invited Gandhi for talks at Simla which resulted in Gandhi-Irwin pact, also known as salt pact.

Unfortunately, history omits any mention of the hand and the power behind the change in the attitude of the viceroy and the forces that compelled him to seek and come to terms with the Indian national leaders. It was the work and sacrifices of the Indian revolutionaries and the plans of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army which shook the very foundations of the British government. The work of the youngest martyr of northern India, Hari Kishan, was part of this plan. Perhaps Gandhiji was not aware of the work of this young, quiet and innocent Pathan but if we had Motilal Nehru and Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi amongst us, they would have told us that one of those heroes of the victory of the agitation was this young man from village Ghalla Dher, who redeemed the honour of the nation. For his beloved country he gave up his youth and laid down his life before he could reach the prime of his life as if his youth and life had no value in face of the demands of the honour of the nation. So far I have tried to explain the political condition of the country at that time. Now I shall narrate briefly the story of four days in the life of this great martyr Hari Kishan.

After the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army took a decision to save the satyagraha of Gandhiji from defeat, the revolutionary forces of Punjab started making plans for their role in

this struggle. It may not be out of place to mention here that revolutionary groups never held public meetings. There are no speeches, no slogans. They work their way through quietly, without publicity. Their work is generally carried out secretly. They get together in groups, plan their work quietly and disperse to execute their assignments in a manner that even their associates do not know of the details. In a slave nation where revolutionary workers are few, where there is suppression from the government, secrecy had to be maintained at every step. These workers in Punjab took a decision that the governor of the Punjab be shot at. How this proposal was to be implemented and who would execute the actual assignment of firing at the governor, was left to me. My friend Durga Dass Khanna asked me if arrangements could be made to implement the plan. I nodded and said to myself, "Arrangements can be made for this and similar other plans also." Putting it briefly I had three plans in mind.

Firstly, to fire shots at the governor of Punjab. Whether he dies or not, the incident will shake the morale of the British government.

Secondly, the person who fires shots should be saved from being arrested by another half a dozen men. Those men were to swarm over the place of incident with revolvers, bombs and hand-grenades.

My third plan was to bomb the new year's day parade of the British army and officers in Lahore cantonment by planting time bombs in that part of the Parade Ground where British officers were to take salute. I was confident that successful implementation of these proposals would shake the very foundations of the British raj even if no significant work is done by our counterparts in other provinces.

We started making preparations for the first and second plans. If we had to abandon our second plan it was because of insistence of this brave young martyr, Hari Kishan, who had tears in his eyes when he said, "Trust me brother, I will not run away. I have come here to lay down my life for the country and the nation. I have not come here to sacrifice other young revolutionary workers to save my life. Their services should be utilised for execution of similar other plans." We were working on the details of the third plan when I was arrested on 26 December 1930. I shall therefore narrate the first plan.

I am not a Pathan but I always admired them. I believe that they are not only brave and courageous but they can also be trusted. They will fulfil their promise even if it cost them their lives. They are honest and sincere friends. But if they are against you they will do their best to harm you. They do nothing half-

heartedly. For this work of shooting the governor of Punjab I thought of only a Pathan.

Here I wish to state that I have no training in the use of revolvers and other fire-arms. I never learnt how to take aim. I do not like even the sound of a fire shot. During my work in the revolutionary movements of the country I procured and handled many pistols and revolvers. I even learnt how to oil them and clean them. I also distributed these fire-arms amongst comrades for their use in executing our plans but I never took aim or fired myself. If I had this training, maybe I would myself discharge this assignment of shooting the Punjab governor. It was because of my lack of training that I decided that a Pathan be assigned this duty because I knew that a Pathan is generally a good shot. He is born and brought up in environments where fire-arms are frequently used. He goes to no school for this training. It is part of his usual life. But the question was whom to assign this job.

I thought of several Pathans—some Hindus, some Muslims—but all passionate followers of the same religion, love of the country. I had very limited time at my disposal. I could not contact them all. Chamanlal Kapoor of Mardan who had love of the country at heart was a friend of mine. I wrote to him and asked him to come to Lahore. I told him that I needed the services of a young revolutionary for a very big job and that this young man should be a good shot and should be prepared t. lay down his life for the nation. Chamanlal Kapoor offered his own services but I asked him if he was sure of his aim. I also told him that aim was to be taken with a revolver and not with a gun or a rifle. I do not remember his exact reply to me but I did get the impression that he did not have experience in shooting with revolver or a pistol. He said that he would practise taking aim with a revolver but there was no time for practice and therefore I very emphatically turned down his offer and told him that this assignment was to be executed by someone else. I asked him if he had a colleague and comrade who could be trusted with this secret assignment.

Chamanlal was silent for a while. He said, "yes", he had a dear friend and comrade who was a good shot and could be trusted with any assignment. He also said that this young man was a great patriot and for the sake of the nation he would be prepared to execute any job. Chamanlal Kapoor was disappointed that he himself was not being given this job but I had a mission in my mind. I saw tears in his eyes. But I only said, "Keep this young man ready. Send him to me when I write to you."

I was not aware at that time that the young man Chamanlal Kapoor was thinking about was his own kith and kin. I do not remember the exact date in December 1930 on which I called Chamanlal Kapoor to Lahore. We had very little time at our

disposal. Hindustan Socialist Republican Army was in a hurry. I remember, however, that Chamanlal Kapoor escorted young Hari Kishan to Lahore on 20 December 1930, only three days before the governor shooting incident. I also remember that I was a little disappointed when I saw Hari Kishan for the first time. My image of this Pathan friend of Chamanlal Kapoor was a big and robust man. But Hari Kishan was young, innocent looking, almost a boy with a light body. Chamanlal was younger to me. Hari Kishan was even younger to Chamanlal. I asked myself if this young innocent-looking man will be able to discharge such heavy responsibility. "Will he be able to withstand all the tortures and severe beatings of the ruthless police which are sure to be inflicted upon him?"—I expressed my doubts. Chamanlal Kapoor said that in case I had any doubts about young Hari Kishan I should let him (Chamanlal) execute this assignment. Young Hari Kishan had tears in his eyes and told me, "Why should you even think so about me? I shall never betray your trust." I told him that it was a very difficult task. "I will try my best to see that you are not arrested but chances of our success may be very meagre. After arrest police will beat you mercilessly. They will torture you. They will make you lie flat on ice slabs. They will put your hands under the feet of cots. They will prick your nails. They will torture you with sleeplessness and try to force all the facts out of you. They will show no mercy." Hari Kishan listened very patiently and said, "I am aware of the torture I will have to undergo. I am fully prepared for it. You can put me through a test, I assure you I will not fail you. I have come fully prepared both mentally as well as physically to offer supreme sacrifice of my life for the country. I have been looking for this opportunity. Please don't take it away from me." Hari Kishan had tears in his eyes. Those tears were real and genuine pearls. A brave innocent young man was making an offering of them at the alter of the dear land which gave him birth. He was impatient and anxious for this supreme sacrifice of his life for his motherland. I had no words to express my happiness and joy on seeing those pearls of his tears. I was proud to see that we have young men in our country who think of nothing else but sacrifice for the cause of the nation and get disappointed and restless when they find such an opportunity slips away from their grasp.

When I turned towards Chamanlalji he said, "Hari Kishan is right. You can certainly trust him. If you still have any doubts, I am always at your disposal. I may not be as good a shot as Hari Kishan but I will certainly withstand police torture." Hari Kishan was a little annoyed, and insisted that he be given this assignment. When I noticed his firm determination, I placed my hand on his shoulders and said, "Don't worry, Hari Kishan, you

will do this job. This is my decision. I trust you and I know you will not betray this trust." At the same time I told Chamanlal that his job was done and that he should go home and set about his work and should forget that he came to Lahore.

Chamanlal embraced Hari Kishan and told him that he envied him for his selection by Ranbir for this job. He left quietly.

All this transpired between us in the *Milap* office on Ganpat Road at Lahore on the morning of 20th December when Hari Kishan and Chamanlal reached Lahore the same day by the morning train. They came directly to the *Milap* office from the railway station. Office of the *Milap* was on the ground floor and our residence on the first floor. After Chaman left I took Hari Kishan to my room in our residence. After wash and his meals, I told him to lie down for some rest after the night journey. He said he did not come to Lahore for rest and wanted to see the revolver to be used by him.

I do not quite recall at this time whether I had three or four revolvers at that time with me. I delivered all of them to Hari Kishan and went to see Durga Dass Khanna and told him about the arrival of the young man we were waiting for. Durga Dass said that he would come to me after making necessary arrangements. On my return to my place Hari Kishan pointed at one of the revolvers and said that out of the whole lot he liked that one but that he had one with him which was the best of all. I smiled and said, "If you like you can keep them both with you. I am scared of the very sound of a gun shot." Hari Kishan said, "If I escape death I will take you to my village and make you a crack shot. The gun fire will sound like music to you."

I had doubts if this brave and courageous young man would escape death. I had an elaborate plan in my mind but there was very little hope of success. I shall describe this plan in subsequent pages.

In the afternoon Durga Dass Khanna came over and took Hari Kishan with him. I shall never forget the love and affection with which Hari Kishan looked at me before leaving. We became so intimate and close to each other as if we were together for years. He quietly asked me, "Do we meet again?" I embraced him and said, "Dear brother, we have many things to do yet."

At that time I knew that Hari Kishan was to be lodged in a house in Rajgarh mohalla of Ramnagar at the back of Sanatan Dharam College, Lahore, but I had never seen that house. I also did not know who lived in that house. Durga Dass Khanna made arrangements for lodging for Hari Kishan and I did not know the man who lived in that house. He belonged to Durga Das Khanna's group.

Next day I went to Hari Kishan along with Durga Dass Khanna. I saw this house Rama Cottage and also met the

man who was host to Hari Kishan. His name was Wasandha Ram. Frankly I did not like this house. I also did not like this man—Wasandha Ram. Later on this man Wasandha Ram became an approver. It was on the basis of his evidence that Chamanlal Kapoor, Durga Dass Khanna and I were sentenced to death in the court of sessions judge. Actually the house was still under construction. The house next to it was also under construction.

This house of Wasandha Ram comprised of only two small rooms and a katcha courtyard. The owner of the house also lived at the back of these two rooms. I told Durga Dass: "The locality is safe but the house is not suitable." He said in reply that it was a question of only two days and that he could not arrange for a better house.

Later Wasandha Ram mentioned in his evidence at the court that Durga Dass and I went to his house in the morning of 21st of December 1930 and met 'Ramlal' very affectionately. Wasandha Ram did not know, at that time, the correct name of Hari Kishan. He was introduced by Khanna as 'Ramlal'. And so Wasandha Ram knew this brave and courageous young man whose name was to be written in golden letters in the history of Indian freedom movement for two days, by the name of 'Ramlal'. Wasandha Ram also stated in his evidence, "Ranbir and Durga Dass told me at that time that Hari Kishan would fire at the governor of Punjab who will come for convocation in the University Hall on 23rd of December 1930." The facts, however, are that whereas the first part of his evidence is correct the second part is absolutely false. It is correct that Durga Das and I met Hari Kishan with love and affection. I held Hari Kishan in embrace for long time. I held both his hands and kept looking at him for a long time but it is false that we discussed our plans in his presence.

Frankly I did not wish to say even a word in the presence of Wasandha Ram. It seems Wasandha Ram lied before the court at the instance of the police to furnish some logical basis for his story. We had no intention of taking Wasandha Ram into confidence. The house was very small; we therefore along with Hari Kishan went out of the mohalla and Rajgarh area where this house was situated. In a lonely place we revealed complete details of our plans to Hari Kishan and told him about the 'big job' assigned to him.

I saw a strange glare in the eyes of Hari Kishan when he heard that he was assigned the job of shooting the governor of the Punjab. He was very happy and enthusiastic about his part of the job, he smiled and said, "It's truly a 'big job'." I warned him that it was a very dangerous assignment full of grave risks—"There is very little hope that you will be saved." Hari Kishan

said very emphatically, "I have not come here to spare my life. How long can a person escape death? Ultimately one has to die and there can be no better death than the one for the sake of the country."

After our discussion, Hari Kishan left for Rama Cottage where he had to stay for another two days. Durga Dass also left for his work and I went back to my place. Durga Dass was assigned two duties. He was to arrange for clothes for Hari Kishan to avoid police suspicion of a young man in a Pathan dress. Secondly, he was to arrange for entry pass for Hari Kishan. I revealed my part in the whole plan to Hari Kishan a day after.

It was about dawn when darkness makes way for the light of the day on the 22nd of December 1930 that I waited for Hari Kishan outside the museum near Bhangion-ki-Top—a relic of independent India now decorating the roadside of the great city of Lahore reminding passersby of the freedom struggle and selfrespect of a great nation now lost to the foreign rulers. This huge, quiet and dead structure of the gun seemed like a corpse or genie. At the back was the Gole Bagh, on the right side in front was the wellknown museum of Lahore. On the left I could see the University Hall and its high imposing pillars. While looking at these pillars I was thinking of the details of the plan we were to execute the next day. After a short while Hari Kishan reached there along with Wasandha Ram. I smiled as I saw him and asked him, "Hallo Ramlalji, I hope you spent a restful night." Hari Kishan smiled and said, "I slept well, but it is very cold here." After sending back Wasandha Ram I asked him if this cold would affect his capacity in taking aim. "I was also thinking about it. Please arrange for gloves for me." "That will be done. I shall ask Khanna who will make necessary arrangements. Now come with me. I will explain to you further details of our plan"—I said in reply. I took him to the University Hall and explained to him the path to the entrance of the hall and how he would enter after showing his entry pass. I also pointed out to him the approximate location where he should take his seat near the dias. I told him that this was only the first part of this big job. The second part of the plan consisted of saving Hari Kishan from being arrested. It was planned to place two young men near the two pillars of the hall. After Hari Kishan comes out of the hall firing revolver shots, these two young men would throw bombs on the police to create panic and to prevent the arrest of Hari Kishan. In this melee another two young men with revolvers would approach the University Hall from the side of the museum and cause chaos by firing shots from their revolvers. In the panic so created another young man on motor-cycle would drive along the road opposite the hall building and slow down a

little. He would wear dark glasses and fly red flag on his motor cycle. Hari Kishan would mount the motor-cycle in a hurry and be whisked away. The other young man would get lost in the crowd.

When Hari Kishan heard this second part of the plan he got a little worried and said, "This is a very dangerous course. You have not, probably, considered that the plan entails grave risk to the lives of so many young Indian workers. Bursting of a bomb can kill several people. Indiscriminate firing will also kill so many innocent men and women. And to do all this just to save me whereas I have no desire to escape death at the cost of so many lives. I have given it considerable thought at night. I have decided that I shall fire at the governor and will make absolutely no attempt to escape. After arrest I shall tell them clearly that I came to kill the governor of Punjab because he is the representative and symbol of that system which has kept our people in bondage and under their iron heel." I told him, "Major part of the plan to save you has been completed. The part still to be done will be completed by the evening. It cannot be said without any doubt that the plan will be successful and you will be saved. But I do wish to make a good attempt to save you." Hari Kishan stated in reply, "Please listen to me and abandon your plan to save me. Lives of our revolutionary workers are very valuable and must not be wasted in pursuit of dubious causes. The life of not even one of them should be put in danger for my sake. Moreover, we will be sorry for the death of innocent Indian men and women in executing such a plan."

When I was looking at this innocent young man I was amazed at his strength of determination and will-power. I was amazed at the depth of his love and affection for his country and his people and his sense of sacrifice for the cause of his nation.

I said quietly, "I am making this effort only to save you." Hari Kishan said in reply, "I consider you my leader and elder brother but I am very firmly of the opinion that it is not proper to risk so many lives in an effort to save me. Please let me do this alone by myself. If I succeed I shall be very happy that the plans of the party were successfully executed. If I do not succeed I will have no cause to repent for so many lives."

I was not happy with his reply. I wanted that this brave young man be saved. Even if he could not be saved it would be worthwhile making an effort at any cost. But when I saw his firm determination I started rethinking and said, "You are the main person and the hero of the whole plan to be executed tomorrow. I will not do anything against your wishes. Let's go back now. I shall take you to your place."

On my return, after leaving Hari Kishan at his place of lodging in Rajgarh, to my residence I got busy in so many assignments.

The first job was to cancel the part of the plan I had prepared to save Hari Kishan. I had to inform all those who were to participate in this job. Above all and the next important thing in my mind was the assignment to ensure that the memory of this young man who was going to lay down his life for his country remained fresh in the minds of his people. I am primarily a journalist. I was thinking of the press release of the governor shooting incident. They would carry news of the arrest of the young man and perhaps, also, later on, the news about the martyrdom of this same young man. I asked myself about a photograph of this young man.

I am not a photographer and do not know much about taking pictures with a camera. I could not take a professional photographer to Hari Krishan for his photograph. I did not know what to do.

I had owned an ordinary camera. Occasionally, say once or twice a year, I would take pictures with this camera but with poor results. Sometimes, I would hold it unsteadily or it would be out of focus or the light would be poor. The photographer used to give me instructions every time I went to him. He would tell me how to use the camera, how to hold and which button to press and when and how much light was required. While taking pictures I would forget these instructions every time. I had difficult time even loading and unloading a camera.

That day I had no other course but to take the photograph of Hari Kishan myself. I took out my camera and went to this photographer, Balraj, who had his studio in Anarkali. I always used to go to him for films. I got the camera loaded and once again made an effort to understand the intricacies and the use of the camera which I could never learn. Once more I took instructions from him. I told him, "I will leave the camera with you after taking photographs. You may take out the film for developing and cleaning the camera."

Armed with this camera I reached Rama Cottage in Rajgarh where Hari Kishan was to spend another night. There was sun in the courtyard of the two-room house of Wasandha Ram. This was the setting sun. When I reached there Hari Kishan was having a chat with Wasandha Ram. I told them that I came to take a photograph of Hari Kishan. He was asked to sit on a chair outside the courtyard. I focused the camera on him and pressed the button but the kind of photographer I am, it seems the camera moved with the pressing of the button. I wanted to make another try but I was not sure the camera would move again. I asked Hari Kishan to give me his chair so that I could press the button with camera on the seat. That way it was not likely to shift.

When I faced Hari Kishan and looked into the camera placed on the chair, I did not see his head. Obviously the chair was too low. This did not work. I now thought of placing the camera on a table and asked Wasandha Ram for it. He brought a tea-table from the owner of his house. I placed the camera on it and took four or five snaps. I did not know about the results but took the camera to my photographer in Anarkali and told him that he should use the film still to be exposed and take out the film for developing. I told him that he should keep the prints of the photographs taken by me ready. I would take them in two to three days.

It seems unnecessary to mention here that the stiching of the new clothes for Hari Kishan was ready by the evening of 22nd of December. Durga Dass had also arranged for an invitation card for him for entry into the hall. The name on the invitation card was erased and replced by 'Mohammad Yusuf'. It was on the strength of this invitation card that Hari Kishan got access into the University Hall about 11.00 a.m. the next day, that is, on the 23rd of December 1930.

It is an interesting aspect of the underground revolutionary work that Durga Dassji did not know who Hari Kishan was, how he came to Lahore and where he belonged to. I also did not know the name of the invitee on the card erased and replaced by 'Mohammad Yusuf'. This was done by Wasandha Ram at the instance of Durga Dass Khanna. Each one of us carried out his own assignment without interfering or poking into other's job. Later on when Wasandha Ram became an approver in the case against us. Durga Dass Khanna came to know about Hari Kishan and where he came from. We worked together for months but I never asked him the name of the invitee on the card.

I met Hari Kishan for the last time when I took his photographs. I never met him again. His father came to see me in Borstal jail where we were kept as undertrial prisoners. I wanted to congratulate him for the brave and courageous act of his valiant son but I found him a little sad. I thought he was unhappy on account of the arrest of his young son Hari Kishan. After all he was a father even though the father of a revolutionary young man. Parents of such patriots also have a heart and feelings for their sons and daughters. His young son was heading towards death. It was, therefore, but natural that he should be sad. But I was amazed when he took me aside and said, "I am pained because you trusted my son but he could not come up to your expectations." I was bewildered and looked at him but before I could say anything he continued in the same quiet but detremined tone, "Hari Kishan could not kill the governor of Punjab but you need not bother. I shall send every one of my sons to you one by one. They will lay down their lives for the

nation and the country. If they fail, I will myself fight as a soldier of the freedom fighters. I assure you my aim never misses."

I promptly touched his feet not only because he was father of a brave and undaunted man but also because he was a great man himself. It was this great man who inspired passion for freedom and sense of sacrifice for the people and the nation in his son Hari Kishan. This great man who was the embodiment of sacrifice for the nation and the conutry, the man who completely detached himself from this world and sacrificed himself for the great cause of the nation. Now I could understand the great strength of determination and will-power in Hari Kishan. Now I could also understand why Hari Kishan told me—"Do not try to save my life by risking lives of others." Many years after this incident when Dr Radha Krishnan became the president of the Republic of India, Hari Kishan's words came to my mind: "Let me die alone. No other life should be risked for my sake."

Dr Radha Krishnan was on the dias when Hari Kishan fired at the governor Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency on 23rd of December 1930, in the University Hall. If I had not submitted to Hari Kishan's request and if bombs had been thrown and indiscriminate firing had taken place according to my plans, who knows how many people would have died. Who knows what would have happened to Dr Radha Krishnan himself.

On the morning of 23 December 1930 Wasandha Ram delivered to me in the *Milap* office the clothes in which Hari Kishan came to Lahore. Wasandha Ram probably had no knowledge of two hand-grenades. Wasandha Ram probably had no knowledge of these bombs and the revolver wrapped in the clothes. I knew Hari Kishan would become a martyr of the nation and, therefore, I wanted to preserve these clothes.

On 23rd of December Hari Kishan fired at the governor about 11 a.m. I heard of the news in the *Milap* office when the editor came running and told me about it and asked me for my instructions. I told him, "These things have now become almost an everyday affair. Some people are out of their minds and start firing without rhyme and reason." I continued with my work as if I had nothing to do with this incident.

The same day about 3.00 p.m. Mr Sayyad Ahmad, SP, summoned me to the police station opposite D.A.V. Middle School. He started talking about the book *India's War of Independence* written by Savarkar. This book was published in full and sold underground in 1929. Returns from the book were utilised for purchases of bombs and revolvers. 'Publisher—chacha' appeared on the cover of this book. Sayyad Ahmad wanted to know if I had seen this book and knew anything about it and that if I knew this 'chacha'. Obviously I pretended to have no knowledge of any of these things and told him, "I have not seen this book. Please lend

me a copy of it if you have one I shall return it to you after I read it." It was apparent that he was not quite satisfied with my reply and I suspected a search at my residence. Immediately I reached my residence I called in a young comrade whose name I do not remember. I gave him the bundle of clothes and told him, "Tie some weight to these clothes and submerge it in deep waters of Ravi tonight." The footwear in which Hari Kishan came from village Ghalla Dher to Lahore was also wrapped in this bundle of clothes. The bombs and revolver were sent by me to somebody else. I was arrested on the night of 25 December. Later on my house was searched but the police could not lay their hands on anything incriminating. It is apparent that this search was carried out for the clothes of Hari Kishan about which Wasandha Ram had told the police that "I delivered them to Shri Ranbir."

(*Four Crucial Days in the Life of the Youngest Martyr* by Ranbir of *Milap*)

## APPENDIX—PART TWO

### No 1

### THE ROLE PLAYED BY S. NIRANJAN SINGH TALIB CONCERNING SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE'S ESCAPE FROM INDIA TO ABROAD

I met S. Niranjan Singh Talib on 11 March 1974 at Chandigarh at about 7.30 p.m. at his residence and asked him the following questions (his answers are also given).

*Question*: Probably you know that I am the person who planned Subhas Chandra Bose's escape from India and also I was his sole escort up to Kabul and arranged for his further journey from Kabul to Berlin via Russia through German and Italian legations' help.

We remained for about 55 days together in this adventure and Subhas Chandra Bose told me about you that Niranjan Singh Talib, who was publishing and editing at Calcutta a daily paper *Deshdarpan*, was the first person with whom I discussed my plan to go to Soviet Union and asked him that this plan can be successfully implemented with the cooperation of the Punjab Kirti Party comrades. Therefore, you should contact the Kirti Party leaders for this purpose and you agreed to carry out this responsibility and for this purpose you contacted S. Baldev Singh, a big industrialist of Tatanagar, under the impression that S. Baldev Singh has some friendly relations with Kirti Party leaders and may get his help for this purpose. You were in friendly terms with S. Baldev Singh also. And you talked to S. Baldev Singh about the same. By chance Achhar Singh Cheena, who was absconding in those days in the fateful murder case and was staying with Sardar Baldev Singh at that time. S. Baldev Singh arranged your meeting with Achhar Singh Cheena. You discussed with him Subhas Chandra Bose's Plan, which he appreciated. But he wanted to discuss this plan himself with Subhas Chandra Bose. And you arranged their meeting at Calcutta.

After meeting Subhas Chandra Bose, Achhar Singh Cheena left for Lahore to discuss the plan with Kirti Party leaders. Is this correct?

*Answer*: It is correct to certain extent, but the exact story is not like this.

I was called by Subhas Chandra Bose through one of our intermediary and I met him. In the meeting he disclosed to me his plan to go to the Soviet Union and told me that the Soviet leaders have agreed to help India in its fight for independence with all sorts of necessary arms and ammunition and also financially. But they are not prepared to send their fighting forces in any shape, as this is against their policy because the revolution always starts from within. And they want that some very important person should come to Moscow to discuss about this matter in details and for this purpose it has been decided that I should go.

But this plan can only be carried out with the help of the Punjab Kirti Party leaders. Therefore I was asked to contact Kirti Party leaders for the execution of this plan.

I agreed with the idea and promised to contact the Kirti Party leaders. Achhar Singh Cheena used to stay with S. Baldev at Calcutta, and not at Tatanagar. But due to some doubts, Cheena came to my place and asked me for shelter. I arranged a shelter for him and we used to meet each other outside through one intermediary. Cheena was clean-shaved in those days.

Before leaving we decided necessary code words and fixed addresses etc. so that we may not meet again and again. I contacted Achhar Singh and related to him every thing about Subhas Chandra's plan. And added that it is his party only which can help in this greatest adventure for the country's independence. Subhas Chandra was of the same opinion. After some discussion, Cheena told me that it would be more appropriate to meet Subhas Chandra Bose and I arranged for this meeting. We both went together. He discussed with Subhas Chandra Bose all aspects of political nature and also of technical nature. Achhar Singh Cheena agreed and got convinced about the plan to be executed with a promise to discuss this plan with other leaders of the party for approval.

We fixed all necessary arrangements between ourselves for further meetings and communications. After this both of us left Subhas Chandra Bose. Achhar Singh Cheena told me that for execution of this plan he would need Rs 2,500 and that I would have to arrange for him at once.

Very often we used to utilise S. Baldev Singh for financial purposes and at that time I had no other source except to get the money from S. Baldev Singh. We both went to the house of S. Baldev Singh, it was about 12.30 a.m. and the chowkidar told us that Sardarji was sleeping. But I told the chowkidar that I had come to meet Sardarji for an urgent matter. Chowki-

dar arranged my meeting with S. Baldev Singh, who used to stay upstairs. I went up and Cheena remained down.

I met S. Baldev Singh and told him about the money. S. Baldev Singh gave me the money, but enquired of the purpose of the money. I replied that the money was needed for Bose and left the house.

Next day S. Baldev Singh made inquiries from his chowkidar and came to know about the presence of Achhar Singh Cheena, as a result S. Baldev Singh became suspicious. There was one Mr Dey, an engineer, in the corporation, he was a good friend of S. Baldev Singh and under the influence of drink Sardar Baldev Singh narrated the whole story of our visit to Mr Dey. Mr Dey was also closely connected with Subhas Chandra Bose. He passed S. Baldev Singh's impressions and narration to Subhas Chandra Bose. In the meantime Achhar Singh Cheena had already left for Punjab and to NWFP.

Subhas Chandra Bose started preparations for the escape. After some time a delegation of Shiromoni Akali Dal led by Master Tara Singh went to Calcutta and met Subhas Chandra Bose. At that time Subhas was unshaved for a couple of days. Master Tara Singh cut a joke, "I think you want to became a Sikh." Bose replied, what was wrong if he became a Sikh. In the meantime Subhas Chandra Bose discussed his plan with Master Tara Singh. Master Tara Singh was very glad to know about Subhas Chandra Bose's plan and gave him assurance of his help.

When Master Tara Singh and his delegation came back to Punjab he called a secret meeting of the working committee of Shiromoni Akali Dal and discussed Subhas Chandra Bose's plan in the meeting. Though the meeting was very secret, even then the plan was leaked out. Subhas Chandra Bose was informed about this leakage afterwards.

(Because of both these happenings—one that S. Baldev Singh talked to Mr Dey and second leakage of the plan by some one in the working committee of Akali Shiromoni Dal—Subhas Chandra Bose temporarily postponed his plan and started an agitation for the demolition of Halwell Monument for diversion.

*Question*: Whether you played any role at the time of Subhas Chandra Bose's second attempt for escape to Kabul and then to Russia.

*Answer*: I had no role to play at the time of his escape from his Elgin Road house on 16 January 1941. But I was present at that time at Wooburn Park Road after midnight. And I saw the car carrying him out of the house and passed safely.

## No 2

### Interview with Achhar Singh Cheena

I met Achhar Singh Cheena at Amritsar at his son-in-law's place on 19 July 1974 and he gave me the following accounts concerning his role in the escape of Subhas Chandra Bose. Though he was very weak and ill when he came to know about the person who is meeting him, he slowly revived and started talking to me, trying to recollect old memories and answering some questions put to him by me. He then became fully alert and tried his best to reply my questions.

*Q*. Is it a fact that you had been living at Calcutta in 1940, when you were wanted by the British police—as you were involved in the fateful murder case?

*A*. Yes.

*Q*. With whom were you staying at Calcutta?

*A*. In the beginning I used to live with S. Baldev Singh, a big industrialist from Punjab. But I found it was not very safe there. Therefore I shifted to another place, which was arranged for me by S. Niranjan Singh Talib, whom I used to meet very often.

*Q*. What was he doing in Calcutta?

*A*. Talib Saheb was publishing a periodical *Deshdarpan,* alongside his other political activities.

*Q*. Who was financisg you at this time in Calcutta?

*A*. S. Baldev Singh was paying me Rs 100 every month through S. Niranjan Singh Talib.

*Q*. Is it a fact that S. Niranjan Singh Talib discussed with you about a plan of Subhas Chandra Bose for going to the Soviet Union? And were you asked to help Subhas Chandra Bose in his mission?

*A*. Yes. Talib Saheb and I discussed this plan very exhaustively and afterwards I asked Talib Saheb to arrange my meeting with Subhas Chandra Bose, to discuss with him personally all aspects of his plan.

Talib Saheb arranged my meeting with Subhas Chandra Bose, where Talib Saheb was also present.

*Q*. What was the nature of the discussion which took place in the meeting?

*A*. Subhas Chandra told me his purpose of going to the Soviet Union, which I appreciated very much. But I asked Subhas Chandra Bose: "Why will the Soviet Union accept you, when they think that you are a fascist"?

He laughed and said that this sort of thinking about him does not exist now. And you might be knowing that I supported Soviet Union's stand at the time of Russo-Finnish war. Subhas Chandra Bose said, "Now their attitude is positive." I told Subhas Chandra Bose that I was satisfied but it is necessary to discuss the plan at our highest level and get it approved. And I am sure that it will be approved. Therefore we should fix up code and cover addresses for further communication. To this Subhas Chandra Bose agreed and everything was fixed. Next day I left for Punjab and discussed the plan of Subhas Chandra Bose, which was approved. I and Ram Kishan were entrusted with the task of arranging all this. And for that I and Ram Kishan came to you and discussed with you the plan. And what happened afterwards you know fuliy well.

*Q.* You know that we all worked for the success of this plan and all the arrangements were completed. But due to the Halwell agitation, that plan had to be postponed. But even then the party sent Ram Kishan to Kabul to go from there to the Soviet Union, after establishing contacts with Soviet embassy at Kabul. But you know that after trying his best, he failed to get any positive response from the Soviet embassy people there. He sent, therefore, a message through Abad Khan to pass on the party for further instructions. This message I had passed on through Gurucharan Singh Sansra.

The party then decided to send you to Kabul for establishing contacts with the Soviet Union and I and Abad Khan arranged for your further journey to Kabul and you reached Kabul. What happened after this?

*A.* I reached Kabul and met Ram Kishan. He explained to me about his efforts for contacting the Soviet embassy people. And he said there is no use taking any more risk for contacting the Soviet embassy people.

Hence we decided to go to the Soviet Union on our own.

*Q.* You mean that you did not try any more to contact Soviet embassy people though you were sent for that purpose by the party.

*A.* I did not try to contact them because of the report Ram Kishan had given me.

Q. Party sent you because you used to know the Soviet diplomats at that time at Kabul.

*A.* We thought it better not to try. Because, it was risky and also there must be some reasons for them, not being responsive. Therefore we decided to go to the Soviet Union on our own. And we started towards Russia-Afghan border and there we had to cross the river Amu (Oxus) and while crossing the river Amu, Ram Kishan was washed away by the

fast current of the river and got drowned while I succeeded in crossing the river. However I got arrested by the Soviet border guards.

The border guards took me to their officers and they contacted Moscow. Moscow sent a comrade to meet me, I reported the whole story to him and he took me along with him to Moscow.

*Q*. What was your impressions, when you explained to the comrades at Moscow, about Subhas Chandra Bose's plan of coming over to the Soviet Union?

*A*. They did not say anything, but my impression was that owing to the international situation prevailing at that time, the Soviet Union was very cautious and did not want to embarass the British. But the border posts were instructed if he (Bose) comes to give him safe passage.

At the same time they were feeling that there might be complications if the British, in that case, comes to know that Bose is in the Soviet Union.

## No 3

### Extracts from "The Great Escape" by Sisir K. Bose

*(by courtesy of Dr Sisir K. Bose and the Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta)*

Uncle gave me only a little over two days' notice of the date of escape. It was to be the evening of Thursday the 16th January 1941. I immediately got busy about the car. I wanted the car to be freshly serviced but the earliest booking I could get was on the day of the escape. Nevertheless, I agreed.

There was no question of asking for leave of absence from my college. I attended to my work on the day but managed to get away early on some pretext. Explanations were reserved till after the mission was over and I was safely back home. I was not to be in disguise. I was to be in my usual dress, viz dhoti, shirt, a warm jacket and chappals. Just before the event, uncle gave me one of his caps—a Kashmiri woollen one (which he had worn in Europe in the thirties). I was to wear it in case we were challenged or when we were driving in daylight to give a somewhat different slant to my appearance. I have treasured the cap fondly. I was to carry only a small suitcase for my personal effects.

Only on the night before the escape, it suddenly occurred to me that the suitcase that I had bought and packed up for uncle might not, because of its size, be put into the luggage

space behind the rear seat of the car. I measured the height of the suitcase and that of the inlet of the space and found that my apprehension was unfortunately true. I decided to exchange the suitcase with one of my father's of the proper size. I had to scrape off M.Z. from the one and S.C.B. from the other, get some Chinese ink in a rush and interchange the initials on the suitcases. The work was clumsy but there was no other way.

## XII

The fateful day eventually arrived. I behaved like somebody possessed though without showing any outward sign of excitement. Uncle told me towards the end that he was taking a plunge into an uncertain future and as many as twenty years might pass before he could return home. As to the escape and my part in it, his prognostication changed as the day drew near. He was quite sanguine at first but doubts seemed to have entered his mind now. He made two significant remarks. One was that if the secret could be kept somehow for four or five days at most, "I'd jump the ditch" (Ami pagar par hoye jabo), he said. And the other was that he was not very sure that my part in the job would remain a secret for long in view of so many possible sources of leakage. He asked me to be prepared for harsh treatment from the police and perhaps a long term in jail—nothing more serious.

The wanderer car was under servicing on that day. And it was taking an agonisingly long time. The car however arrived when the evening was well advanced. I got the luggage ready.

Father walked up to the second floor and called me out to the spacious terrace. Anxiety was writ large on his face. I had never had a more solemn meeting with my father in my life. He put me a number of pointed questions regarding the whole plan. It was clear that he had all the details in his mind. The terrace was lit up. He taught me a very important lesson when he said in the beginning that he wanted to speak to me in the open because he believed that 'a conspiracy under the lamp-post' had the best chance of success. I could see that he had grave apprehension regarding our safety. He asked me if I was absolutely sure of my physical endurance to carry out job in hand. I told him that driving a car was something I enjoyed and I was confident of myself and also of my car. Father was almost certain that we would be challenged at Chandernagore and our car searched by the French police for contraband goods. And if we were challenged, he was very doubtful of uncle's disguise could stand the test. It was decided that I would send father a telegram from Bararee mentioning my sister-in-law's health and we took leave of each other.

I heard from mother later on that father kept awake till 2 o'clock in the morning waiting to hear the familiar hum of the wanderer car passing in front of our house towards the north. But he did not hear the sound of the passing car and went to bed wondering what might have happened.

I came down and asked the cook for early dinner telling him that I was tired and wanted to go to bed early. My mother sat quietly by me as I ate. I then followed her into her room and asked for some money for contingencies on the way. "God only knows what you people are up to!", that was all she said to me and smiled faintly. I had to get the other chauffeur of the house out of the way. He lived on the premises but used to eat out. Mother arranged to send him away for his meals.

I took the wanderer car out of the garage and parked it close to the pantry door. There used to be a porter at the front door under the porch and he had to be bypassed when I brought the luggage down. I did that in stages—first from the second to the first floor and then from the first to the ground floor, hiding them in dark corners on the way out. I was able to load them into the car unnoticed by other children of the house or the servants.

It was around 8.30 in the evening when I was ready to go. I came out into the front porch in the most casual manner and met the porter. I told him that I was going out to our garden house at Rishra and if I was delayed there for any reason, I would spend the night there. They were not to wait for me beyond 11 p.m. but were to close the gate.

I drove out and turned northward, opposite to the direction to the Elgin Road house. I filled the tank from a petrol pump on Lower Circular Road, obtained an additional can of petrol and got the tyre pressure and the battery checked. I moved on to Chowringhee and entered Elgin Road from that direction. I drove into the Elgin Road house in the most natural manner and parked the car near the rear staircase.

I left my jacket in the car and went upstairs in the most casual and care-free manner.

## XIII

Uncle was then changing into silk dhoti and chaddar and preparing for a ritualistic dinner that he wanted to take in the presence of his mother and others of the family on the eve of going into 'seclusion'. Ila, Dwijen and Aurobinda (who I found had by then taken into confidence and asked to help in carrying on the bluff) were improvising a partition of the room with screens. Uncle ate his special dinner sitting on the floor at the far end of the room surrounded and watched by his mother, sister-in-law, nieces and nephews, of whom I was one. After he

had finished, grandmother and others took leave of him without realising that it was going to be a long separation. Uncle looked serious but kept his emotions under control.

Uncle had evidently been able by then to have convinced the members of the family of his 'pious resolution' and explained to them how things had to be managed during his selfimposed retirement. The manner of serving food from outside the screen was explained to the cook; a number of small chits of papers with various readymade instructions scribbled on them in uncle's own hand were left behind for being shown to visitors according to the nature of their business; he also left a number of letters addressed particularly to comrades in prison which were to be postdated and mailed one after another after he had left.

As the night advanced, the members of the family retired to their rooms on the top floor one by one. His mother retired to her room next to uncle's. I have no knowledge how long she was awake or whether she was awake when we left a little after 1.30 at night. Other elders were no problem. Only two elder cousins chose to hang around. I sat with one of them in the next room (Ila's bedroom) listening to the radio and trying to tire him out with all sorts of diversionary conversation. Around eleven o'clock he yielded and declared his intention to go to bed and I rose with him pretending to be preparing to go home. The other elder cousin was more stubborn and was clearly suspicious. He was coming back from time to time from his room upstairs to see what was going on. He even asked why I was staying back so late and why I had my car with me that particular evening. I gave him some explanation which seemed not to give him full satisfaction. Eventually, as time wore on, uncle asked Dwijen to go upstairs and keep the suspicious person company and hold him in bed somehow till we had left.

The route of exit—along the long corridor to the rear of the building and the rear staircase—was checked and was found clear.

The screens were in position and uncle was dressing up as Mohd Ziauddin in his part of the room. His bedding was rolled up together with some undergarments and extra sheets.

Netaji wore his own closed-collar brown long coat, broad pyjamas and the black fez-type cap. He made an important change in the original plan of disguise. He said that he had tried the kabuli chappals that I had bought for him. But he felt that he would not be able to walk in them well. He therefore chose to wear his own old pair of laced shoes which he had used in Europe and in which he felt safe and comfortable. He discarded his usual pair of spectacles in which he was

usually seen and took with him a pair he had given up more than a decade ago, oval glasses with a frame of thin rolled gold. He would wear glasses only when he would walk alone and in the dark. Otherwise he would appear without them.

Instructions to Dwijen were that he was firstly to hold his suspicious cousin down and, secondly, watch the road and give us the 'go' signal by clearing his throat loudly when the front of the house was clear of the CID men and other passers-by.

We hardly imagined that full three hours had passed while we waited for the coast to be clear. Eventually the signal was heard from above and we got ready to move. Netaji came out into the sort of vestibule that had been carved out near the exit door of the room. He affectionately bade goodbye to Ila, with the parting words, "God bless you!" She had already been told that lights in his room should be kept burning till at least an hour after we had left.

Aurobinda carried the holdall and was asked to lead the way. Uncle came next and I formed the rear. The three of us, on tip-toe and grazing along the inner wall of the long corridor, moved out. The moon was shining bright and uncle had warned that there must not be any shadows on the wall. It was a perfectly silent march and we reached the bottom of the rear staircase by the side of which I had parked the car. Aurobinda put the holdall by the driver's seat, opened the left rear door for Netaji and then made a quick mark to open the front gate. Netaji took his seat without the slightest noise and held the door without closing it so that anybody awake might not hear two doors closing instead of one and might not suspect that two men were leaving instead of one. After uncle was comfortably seated, I stepped out rather noisily stapping the ground with my chappals, took my seat and banged the door with force. Only a pack of crows made some noise in response to my demonstration.

As I saw the front-gate opening up in front of me, I started the car and making a hell of a noice, drove out without losing much time.

## XIV

According to his instructions, I took at first a southern direction although our destination was to the north. We did not find anything within any dangerously short distance from us. The CID people were comfortably settled under blankets on a makeshift wooden bed at the junction of Elgin Road and Woodburn Road. They had chosen this strategic site in order to be able to keep watch on the two Bose houses simultaneously and get in case of necessity to the front of either house

without losing time. While we drove out, they were clearly not awake. We went down Elgin Road only for a short distance then turned southward into Allenby Road. We took the first road to the left towards Lansdowne Road and then turned northward to get on to Lower Circular Road. After we had entered Allenby Road, Netaji closed the door he was holding on to. For quite some time both of us kept on looking back frequently in order to see if any car was following us. Nobody evidently was but any moving light behind us made us suspicious. I felt quite concerned about the delay in our start because we had planned to be in Dhanbad before it was light and I did not want to take any risk by driving too fast. Out of anxiety I was unnecessarily flashing my torchlight again and again on the dashboard clock to check on the time. We drove down Lower Circular Road as far as Sealdah. Near Sealdah we had to slow down as we came upon a collection of hackney carriages shunting about on the main road. As I flashed my torch on the clock, complaining that these people were delaying us further, Netaji warned me saying that the light reflected from the dashboard was lighting up his face and I must not play with the torch in that fashion.

As we drove up the whole length of Harrison Road, we realised that Calcutta was asleep and we felt reassured. Only near the Howrah bridge did we see a couple of taxis and a few resting hackney carriages. There were two ways of crossing the river to get to the Grand Trunk Road, one across the Howrah bridge and the other across the Willingdon bridge by Dakshineswar. The latter was a better route in that the roads were better. But there was a toll system on the Willingdon bridge and the toll collectors used to come close to the passing cars and, who knows, might recognise somebody!

The noise that the wheels made against the surface of the Howrah bridge and the cobbled roads of Howrah disturbed me. As if people were listening! As we got to the Grand Trunk Road and passed through the industrial areas, we passed armed police sentries here and there who looked at us but did not bother. Between ourselves we went on identifying the landmarks and the towns, Lilooah, Uttarpara, Bally, Bhadreswar, Kotrung, Konnagar, Rishra, Serampore and so on. He evidently knew all about the places but he allowed me to lecture to him.

After we had driven for an hour, I suggested that uncle might try to sleep so as not to get too tired at the end of it. I had all along felt really concerned whether he was well enough physically for strains and risks of the journey. He would not sleep because, as he said, it was bad for the driver if the only other occupant of the car slept. He must keep me company and so

he did. He offered me hot coffee from time to time, poured it out of the thermos flask that Ila had given us, and even offered to hold my cup as I sipped coffee at a barred level-crossing. He wanted me to relax.

He opened serious conversation by referring to de Valera's escape and asked me if I knew about it. Fortunately I had looked up some of the famous escapes of history during the past month.

He startled me by saying that he had seriously thought of giving up his plan for the night in the face of the suspicious he had raised in the minds of some members of the family, outside the conspiracy. He said that in matters such as this there was a limit up to which one could go in the matter of taking people into confidence. He wanted me particularly to talk on my return to those who knew about his secret departure and ask them to strictly adhere to his instructions to keep their 'mouth shut'. He told me further to continue to visit the Elgin Road house daily as before and spend some time there every evening. Father also later on asked me to do the same.

About midway between Calcutta and Burdwan, I had to brake up the car rather abruptly when I suddenly came upon a closed railway crossing. The engine stopped and would not restart for a while because of an overflow of petrol. Uncle was really concerned. I assured him that things would be all right in a few minutes. Meanwhile he served me coffee.

Some final decisions were taken regarding our plans for the next twenty-four hours. He gave me details of how he would approach and enter my brother's house at Barares. Another decision that he made during the drive was that the idea of my sending a telegram to father in Calcutta from Bararee should be dropped. There was no necessity of providing unnecessarily a record of my absence from Calcutta either to the government department or to other members of the family who did not know of my journey and who might by chance see the telegram.

As we passed Chinsurah and approached Chandernagore, we prepared ourselves for any possible encounter with the French police, with what I thought to be an absurd master-chauffeur drama. Father's grim forebodings had made us particularly alert about the French city. The road through it however was completely empty. Only a couple of traffic police constables in their rather different sort of uniform were sighted in the bylanes. We heaved a sigh of relief when we got through unscathed.

I maintained moderate speed and did not try to make it too fast. The Howrah-Burdwan stretch of the Grand Trunk Road had many curves and bends. Proper wheel control was therefore desirable. Netaji recalled the many other night drives he had undertaken in the course of his tours round the country.

He was used to faster driving but left the matter entirely to me. Both of us were particularly concerned about the rate of our progress. As the milometer of the car was not working well, I frequently steadied the steering wheel with one hand and flashed the torchlight on the passing milestones.

When we passed Burdwan it was already past four o'clock. I pointed the railway station to him and sped through the town where everybody and everything was asleep.

Beyond Burdwan, the road straightens out a lot and I could safely accelerate the pace. The car appeared to be performing better and better as it warmed up! As we passed through Durgapur forest, the wellknown hideout of dacoits of olden days, the night landscape seemed to change—the red soil, the tall trees and the bright moonlight together created a romantic set-up too absorbing for one like me tasting adventure for the first time in his life. I was dashing along at high speed when I suddenly discovered that a large pack of buffaloes was crossing the road just in front of me. Fortunately the brakes did not fail and the car screeched to a halt just short of a direct collision with the animals. They jostled around the car for a little while and then moved away. My heart beat heavily and I looked askance at uncle. I found him so unexpectedly unperturbed that I forgot about the episode and sped along.

When we reached the outskirts of Asansol, the dawn was just breaking. I noticed a petrol pump just outside the town and wanted to refil my tank. Netaji did not quite like this. Can't you do without it? ("Na nile hoy na?") He said pointing to the can of petrol I had with me. I said, that should be always on reserve and that I did not want to take any chances. He clearly did not want strangers to come too near him. I parked the car a little ahead of the pump to that the vendor operated from well behind the car and as he did so I kept him engaged in conversation. I drove through Asansol town as fast as I could.

Between Asansol and Dhanbad we drove in good morning light. For once I felt that this disguise was good. The changing gradient of this stretch of Grand Trunk Road appeared to be helping us in hiding at the bottom of the slopes and rising from time to time only to go down again. A number of cars passed us from the opposite direction. I had been wearing my cap since daylight broke and I thought it gave me a sense of safety.

There was a checkpost for passing vehicles at a village called Gobindapur a small distance from where the road to Dhanbad branched off from the G. T. Road. As I approached it, I could see the barrier coming down slowly. I slowed down and I found a man coming forward with a pencil and a book in hand. When I had come sufficiently near the man moved

backwards and the barrier was also lifted simultaneously. Soon after I left the Grand Trunk Road in the direction of Dhanbad.

I remarked that the man had noted the registration number of our car, adding that it was a routine matter, which I had noticed while passing this way only a couple of weeks ago. Uncle asked me at least thrice if I was sure that the man had written down the number of the car.

We passed through one part of Dhanbad town and I felt extremely uncomfortable in broad daylight because of our association with the place and the risk of being recognised. I started counting turns and identifying culverts, chimneys and tenements for the right way to Bararee where my brother lived. I was delighted when I recognised my brother's house and also the coke oven plant behind it where he worked. It was around 8.30 a.m. I was to drop uncle at a safe and reasonable distance from the house, give him the direction to it and drive into the house alone. Uncle wanted me to be absolutely sure that I was showing him the right house. He chose a spot about 400 yards from the house where he got down from the car.

## XV

I drove into my brother's house with confidence and quite naturally. I found two men, one of them was my brother's driver—in front of the house when I got down and I was glad that I was seen coming in alone. I left my small baggage and uncle's bedroll behind and rushed into the house. I had only ten to fifteen minutes time to prepare my brother for what was coming.

My brother was in his bedroom. I knocked at the door and knocked hard. I was impatient and felt that we were losing precious time. My brother was somewhat surprised to see me although he had some warning of a visit. I conveyed to him as clearly and as quickly as possible uncle's instructions about what we had to do. I told him that I had brought uncle who was in disguise and had set out on a top secret mission. I had left him on the way so as to give everybody the impression that his coming had nothing to do with mine. He would arrive in a few minutes and want to see my brother on the plea of insurance business. My brother was to tell him that as it was already time for him to go to work he had no time to spare then. Then uncle would say that as he had come a long way, he would not mind waiting for an opportunity to talk to my brother later on. Uncle would also ask for my brother's hospitality for the day. All the talk would be in English and as far as possible, within the hearing of the servants. Plans for the evening and the departure would be made later.

I had hardly finished talking to my brother when a servant announced that a stranger had come and wanted to see my brother. I pretended to be completely disinterested and sought out my sister-in-law inside the house. The stage-acting that we carried on that day, the 17th January 1941, until we came home in the early hours of the next morning after seeing uncle off, would be a story by itself.

My brother went out to the verandah and had a talk with the stranger in the prearranged pattern. He brought the visitor into the sitting room, called his bearer and instructed him to make arrangements for the visitor's stay for the day in the spare bedroom. His meal was to be served separately in his room. As my brother was giving instructions to his servant, I casually strolled into the room and my brother introduced me to uncle in English. Breakfast was served to uncle in the sitting room. I had mine with my brother and sister-in-law in the dining room inside.

My brother soon left for his place of work. I spent some time chatting with my sister-in-law and then had a good wash and rest. Uncle had the same in his room.

My brother came home for lunch. I had a hearty meal with my brother and sister-in-law while uncle ate his in his room as an unknown visitor would. My brother went back to work without seeing uncle. I drove down to the town to fill my petrol tank.

Uncle slept soundly and comfortably in the afternoon as I could make out from the heavy breathing I heard from the other side of the house. He did not stir out of the room till late in the afternoon.

When my brother came home from work uncle sent word by a bearer that he would like to have a word with my brother. Uncle and brother had a conference in the outside verandah as I sat unconcerned glancing over periodicals inside. After a discussion with my brother, uncle finally decided upon Gomoh and not Asansol where he would take the train. When I was told of it, I frankly confessed that I was not sure of the particular route to Gomoh and said that things would be all the more difficult for me at night and that I would like my brother to be my guide for the drive. Uncle agreed. But my brother said that he would not like to leave my sister-in-law alone in the house in that lonely locality at night. Uncle thereupon decided that my sister-in-law should also be in the party.

Instructions were given to the servants to serve dinner to the guest early as he had a train to catch. We had also an early dinner on the pretext that my brother and sister-in-law were taking me out to visit friends. When all of us were more or less ready and the evening was well advanced, uncle made a demon-

stration of bidding goodbye to me and my brother in English in the presence of the servants in the verandah and walked out of the house. He was to go along the road by which we had come in and wait for us at a distance. The three of us went out after a while in my car. We found uncle on the roadside and and picked him up.

## XVI

With my brother acting as the guide, we drove in the direction of Gomoh. Uncle, my brother and sister-in-law all sat in the rear while I had uncle's bedroll by my side to keep company. We had more than enough time on our hands. The Delhi-Kalka Mail, the train uncle would board, was due at Gomoh well after midnight. And the distance we had to cover was only about thirty miles. So we took it easy. The road was narrow and the surface was not as good at all places as on the G. T. Road. We made two long stops on the way. At one of the stops we sat and watched from under the cover of a tree a long procession of bullock-carts pass by. The music created by the jingling bells on the necks of the animals provided a strange background to what was perhaps the greatest adventure in our contemporary national history. We had our second stop nearer our destination among flowing rice fields, bathed in bright moonlight with the silhouette of the hill of Pareshnath in the distance. As we moved closer to the Gomoh railway station the road became rather difficult and when we entered the station yard it was about time for the train to arrive. My brother and I got the three pieces of luggage out and shouted for a porter. One sleepy fellow eventually came out of the porters' sheds and picked up the things.

"I am off; you go back", was all that he said at the end.

(*Translated from a Bengali article which appeard in* Desh (*Calcutta*), *pujah special,* 1974)