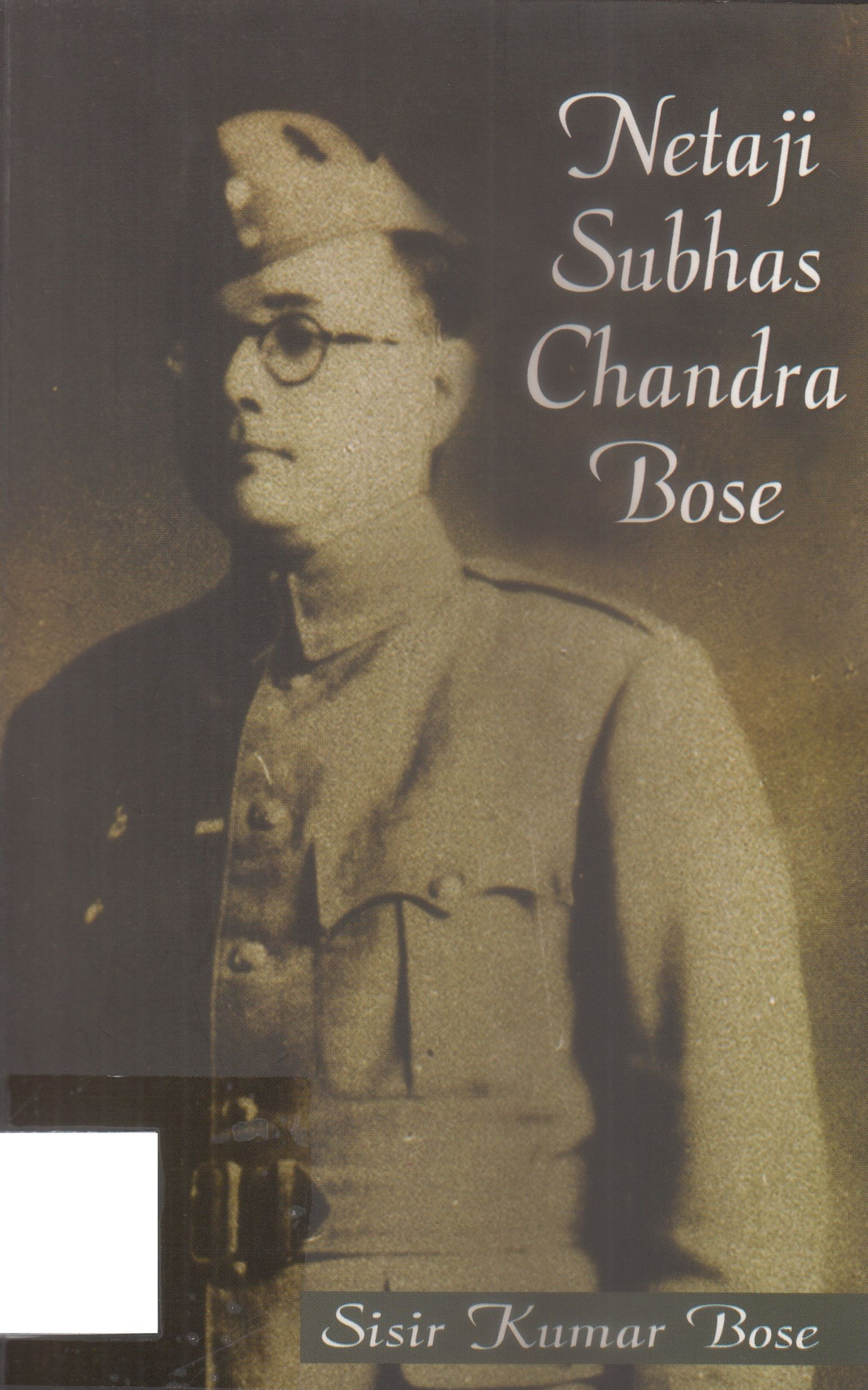
Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose



Sisir Kumar Bose

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National Biography

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

SISIR KUMAR BOSE

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Introduction

This work was first published in Calcutta in 1986. Even though the edition had an enthusiastic readership, it was not possible to get it across to the much wider circle of potential readers around the country who were looking for a concise and authentic biography of Netaji in the English language. Thanks to the National Book Trust, India, this will now be possible. Translations of this work in major Indian languages have already been published by the Trust during the last years.

The biography is meant for the general reader with an inquiring mind, particularly of the new generation who have no direct knowledge or experience of the national struggle for freedom. Even for those interested in advanced studies and research on Netaji and his times, the book may well serve as a guide and a source of reliable information.

In around only one hundred and thirty nine pages, I have endeavoured to present in broad outline, but taking care not to omit any important event or circumstance, the lineaments of the life and work of a unique personality in contemporary Indian history. I have also endeavoured to be entirely faithful to historical events and record Netaji's reactions to and interpretations of them, instead of imposing on the reader my own opinions and interpretations. There is a very special and pressing reason why this work should be brought to the notice of readers in India and abroad. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose has not been a favourite with the Indian Establishment at any point of

time since independence. The academia in India and the captive bureaucracy found it convenient in their own interest to come to terms with the Establishment and overlook and ignore the only alternative leadership to Mahatma Gandhi in the crucial last twenty five years of our freedom struggle. Regardless, Subhas Chandra Bose has been the most popular national hero in the minds and hearts of Indian masses through several generations since independence. Being an advocate of freedom of thought, judgement and expression, I do believe, however, that scholars and readers should be free to have their own perceptions of historical events and controversies of the time including the one involving Mahatma Gandhi and Netaji over Tripuri and its aftermath.

For the convenience of the reader, the account has been split up on a thematic basis into sixteen sections and the short bibliography of the first edition updated. The Index is the other useful addition to this edition.

I sincerely thank the National Book Trust, India, for their interest and cooperation. I have no doubt the book will be welcomed in India and abroad by all those interested in the true story of the Indian independence movement.

9th December, 1999

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1

FAMILY HISTORY AND EARLY EDUCATION

After their first defeat at the hands of the British invaders in 1757 in Bengal, the people of India fought a series of hard and bitter battles for their lost liberty over a period of one hundred years. They fought their last battle as free men in 1857 under the flag of the last Moghul Emperor Bahadur Shah. All their heroism and self-sacrifice were, however, of no avail and bad luck and faulty leadership eventually brought about their final collapse and subjugation. After their defeat in this First War of Independence, the governance of India was taken over directly by the British Crown in 1858. British imperialism set out in a systematic manner to cast its stranglehold over India and a new era in the contemporary history of India began. The year of birth of Subhas Chandra Bose – 1897 – has a significance of its own in the history of the critical ninety years that followed 1857. It was forty years earlier that the Indian people fought their first war of independence and it was forty five years later that Subhas Chandra Bose led the final armed battle for India's freedom. In 1897, as the British Empire was celebrating the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria's rule, the intrepid and legendary freedom fighter of India, who was to challenge the very basis of that Empire forty five years later, took birth in a small town in Orissa. In fact, Bose's birth marked the mid-point of the great crusade of the Indian people for their emancipation.

Subhas Chandra's father Janakinath Bose hailed from a small village in 24-Parganas district of Bengal but had settled down in Cuttack for legal practice. Cuttack, which

later became the capital city of Orissa, was then a small town in a remote corner of the Bengal Presidency and did not even have rail connection with Calcutta. For Janakinath, to set out for Cuttack in search of a career was by itself an adventure. Fortune favours the brave and by the time Subhas was born, Janakinath had reached the top of the legal profession in his new domicile. He became Government Pleader and was elected the first non-official chairman of Cuttack Municipality. In 1912, he was a member of the Bengal Legislative Council. Even during the time that he was Government Pleader, he attended sessions of the Indian National Congress on account of which he incurred the displeasure of the authorities from time to time. In 1930, when Mahatma Gandhi launched the Civil Disobedience Movement and the British Government let loose a reign of terror and repression, Janakinath renounced the title of 'Rai Bahadur' in protest. He was a great philanthropist, deeply religious and a patron of *khadi*, Swadeshi and national educational institutions. When two of his sons, Sarat and Subhas, devoted themselves to Congress and national work, he supported them with all his heart.

Subhas's mother Prabhabati belonged to the traditional Dutt family of Hatkhola of North Calcutta. She had eight sons and six daughters, Subhas being the ninth child. She was a woman of strong will and at the same time possessed a keen sense of reality and sound common sense. She dominated the entire domestic scene and ran a large household with exemplary competence. Both she and her husband put up with great fortitude with all the suffering and sacrifices that their two sons Sarat and Subhas had to undergo in the cause of country's freedom. When the news of the first arrest of Subhas in December 1921 reached his parents, his father said in a letter to the elder son, Sarat that they were "proud of Subhas and proud of you all". The mother commented that she was expecting the event any day because she believed in "Mahatma Gandhi's

doctrine of self-sacrifice" and which, she believed, would bring our country Swaraj.

The history of the family can be traced back to about twenty-seven generations, the founder of the lineage being one Dasaratha Bose. His descendants came to reside in a village called Mahinagar about fourteen miles to the south of Calcutta. Hence, the family was known as the Boses of Mahinagar. Eleventh in descent from Dasaratha, Mahipati Bose was an extraordinary person and attracted the attention of the then Nawab of Bengal who appointed him Minister of Finance and War. Mahipati was also given the title of 'Subuddhi Khan' and presented with a landed 'jaigir' as a mark of royal recognition. The village still carries the name of Subuddhipur. Mahipati's great great grandson Gopinath Bose was a person of exceptional ability and power and became the Finance Minister and Naval Commander under Sultan Hussain Shah towards the end of the fifteenth century. His honorific title was Purandar Khan and his 'jaigir' is still known as Purandarpur, not far from Mahinagar. As Purandar and his forbears functioned as ministers for generations, they wielded great influence and prestige as a family. And because Purander was a resident of Mahinagar, the place became the nerve centre of the *Kayasthas* of South Bengal. Purandar has also left his mark as a great social reformer. He convened a conference of more than a hundred thousand persons to deliberate over out-moded social customs among the Kayasthas and to take corrective measures for the social unification of the entire clan. For the purpose of providing pure water for this vast concourse of people, Purandar engaged a large number of workers to dig up a large tank. The workers used to pile up their spades, called *Kodal* in Bengali, after their day's work at a place adjoining Mahinagar. At this place grew up the village Kodalia where Janakinath was born and which eventually became the abode of his family. Janakinath and his children including Subhas Chandra were deeply attached to Kodalia. Till the

end of his days, Janakinath maintained close links with the village and worked for its social upliftment. He made the Durga Puja an occasion to fraternise with his fellowmen and in this his children also participated every year. Even as a mere boy of fifteen, Subhas Chandra wrote moving letters to his mother Prabhabati about his experiences in their native village. Moving in the footsteps of his father, Sarat Chandra went out of his way to promote village reconstruction work in Kodalia.

Besides the Boses, the tiny village of Kodalia produced a band of dedicated patriots and revolutionaries who sacrificed their all in the cause of India's freedom. Among them was M.N. Roy.

Subhas Chandra wrote in his autobiography: "The earliest recollection I have of myself is that I used to feel like a thoroughly insignificant being". In his early years, he yearned for a more intimate relationship with his parents which was denied to him because of the largeness of the family and the awe-inspiring personalities of his parents. It is interesting to trace the significant steps in the evolution of the personality of one who considered himself in the beginning to be so thoroughly insignificant.

Subhas was sent, as others before him, to the Protestant European School in Cuttack in 1902 for his primary education. The school was based on the English model and run on English lines. Thus, Subhas and those who studied there gained a superiority in the knowledge of English and English-oriented education compared to their peers in Indian-run schools. The other gains in being in such a school were that it inculcated a sense of discipline, correct conduct and deportment, neatness in work and punctuality. Although Subhas was not unhappy at the school, as his consciousness developed he began to realise that they were living in two distinct worlds which did not always match. In studies, he was always at the top though he did badly in sports. When the time came in 1909 to leave the European missionary school, he did so without any regret.

Thereafter, when he moved to the Ravenshaw Collegiate School, a complete mental and psychological change came upon him. The Indian atmosphere which prevailed in the school made him think better of himself and gave him new self-confidence. He was expected to do well in studies except, in the beginning, in his mother-tongue Bengali which he had not been taught at the primary stage. But he made good this deficiency by working hard and eventually scoring the highest marks in Bengali in the first annual examination. What is more, he started learning Sanskrit with zest. But sports still remained the neglected area of his activity, a fact which he regretted for the rest of his life. In the Ravenshaw Collegiate School, there were both Oriyas and Bengalis among the teachers and students and the relationship among them was extremely cordial. The same cordiality prevailed in the Bose household where a number of Oriyas, both Hindus and Muslims, were in domestic service. Subhas Chandra's parents were known for their liberality of mind and compassion and they directly influenced the entire family. Thus, Subhas and his generation could never think or feel in terms of parochialism or provincialism.

Of the teachers, the one who left a permanent impression on the youthful mind of Subhas, was the Headmaster of Ravenshaw Collegiate School, Benimadhab Das. The latter instilled into his pupil's growing mind "aesthetic and ethical values". The teacher told his pupil that in human life moral values counted for more than anything else. He asked him to surrender himself completely to Nature and let Nature speak to him. Subhas would seek out beauty spots on the river bank or on a hill or in a lonely meadow in the midst of enchanting sunset glow and practise contemplation. Benimadhab's teachings revealed to him the indissoluble ties between Nature and Man and helped him to concentrate his mind.

Subhas Chandra was around fifteen years old when he entered one of the stormiest periods in his mental and

psychical life. He felt within him acute mental conflict and suffering. The conflict was between the natural attraction of worldly life, worldly pursuits and mundane physical desires and his higher self trying to assert itself. Nature-worship helped him but was not enough to resolve the conflict. It was at this point, when he was barely fifteen, that Swami Vivekananda entered his life. He had by a chance of circumstance stumbled upon the Swami's works. He devoured them avidly and a mental revolution took place. He found what he was groping for--a central principle on which he could hang his whole life. His study of Vivekananda led him to the decision that life's goal must be to work out one's own salvation and dedicate one's entire being to the service of humanity. He believed as Sister Nivedita believed that service to humanity included service to one's country because, to Swami Vivekananda "the queen of his adoration was his motherland". He accepted the Swami's dictum that every Indian was his brother and further that India's salvation depended upon the rise of the "power of the people'. Subhas accepted the modern interpretation given to the ancient scriptures by the Swami that faith and strength alone could lead to salvation.

From Vivekananda, Subhas turned to his master Ramakrishna Paramhansa, the essence of whose teachings was that only through renunciation was realistion or salvation possible. He got together a Ramakrishna-Vivekananda group of young people. Both inside the family and outside, the group aroused concern and opposition but to no avail. In defiance of family constraints, Subhas Chandra went ahead. As he fought contrary forces in the family and society, a battle royal was also in progress with inner forces of his lower self. At this most critical period, Subhas felt more at home when away from home. He eagerly read all kinds of books on yogic practices, thinking that all that mattered was mental and spiritual exercise. He experimented with such practices on the sly. Whenever a monk

of any description came their way, Subhas and his group would rush to him. After some months of such experimentation, he realised the futility of such practices and returned to the precepts of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. Before he was sixteen, Subhas had direct experience of rural reconstruction work and was convinced that religious life did not merely consist of individualistic yoga but of service to humanity which included service to the motherland. Vivekananda was also of great help to him in freeing his mind at an early age of superstitions because the Swami's mission was based on a rational philosophy, a reconciliation between science and religion.

The first political impetus Subhas received was at the very end of his school career when an emissary of a Calcutta-based group met him at Cuttack. The twin aims of the group led by a medical student was spiritual uplift and national service which were quite consistent with the ideological direction that Subhas's mind was then taking. This connection was to last several years.

As the Matriculation Examination drew near, his parents and others were genuinely concerned that a boy of such promise and brilliance had turned wayward, eccentric and obstinate. However, when results were published, it was found that Subhas Chandra had secured the second rank in the whole university. Happy with the thought that a change of environment in the realistic atmosphere of Calcutta would do Subhas good, the family packed him off to Calcutta for further studies.

2

LIFE IN COLLEGE: 1913-1919

The family could hardly anticipate what was in store for Subhas in Calcutta. For a young student coming from a mofussil town, life in Calcutta was not necessarily a welcome change. In fact, it had been the ruin of many promising souls. However, Subhas came to Calcutta with certain ideas and principles fixed in his mind. He had decided not to follow the beaten track but lead a life conducive to his own spiritual advancement and the uplift of his fellowmen. He had already learnt to take life seriously and on the threshold of his college career, he felt convinced that life had a meaning and a purpose.

He joined Presidency College, the premier college of Calcutta University in 1913. Before the college opened, he lost no time in establishing contact with the idealistic group, an emissary of which had met him at Cuttack a year ago. In the college, apart from some neo-aristocrats and parasites of the Establishment and a group of goody goody bookworms, there was the group to which Subhas Chandra belonged, who considered themselves spiritual heirs of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, and lastly, there was a secret group of revolutionaries.

When Subhas left Cuttack, his ideas were still nebulous--consisting of a spiritual urge and a vague idea of social service. In Calcutta, he learnt that social service was an integral part of Yoga and it encompassed national reconstruction on modern lines. The group to which he belonged was not merely interested in recruiting new members but also in making contacts with leading person-

alities and visiting holy and historical places in India for knowledge and inspiration. The leader who captured their imagination at the time was Aurobindo Ghose. What appealed to Subhas and his group was that from the platform of the Indian National Congress, Aurobindo championed left-wing thoughts and advocated independence when most other leaders would be satisfied with colonial self-government. His close associate Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak also commanded great prestige. It was freely rumoured then that Aurobindo Ghose had retired to Pondicherry for meditation and would return after twelve years as an enlightened man to bring about India's political salvation. However, what appealed to Subhas was not the mysticism around Aurobindo, but his writings and philosophy and his conception of the synthesis of Yoga.

So long as politics did not interest Subhas directly, he continued to meet religious teachers and involved himself in all kinds of social service. At college, he began to neglect his studies because most of the lectures he found uninteresting. He was more interested in organising debates, collecting funds for flood and famine relief, going out on excursions etc. Such activities helped him to shed his introvert tendencies. He became increasingly aware of the inequity of the existing social system with affluence on the one hand and stark misery on the other. Such awareness made him a rebel against the system and led him to ponder deeply over the fundamentals of social relations. During a vacation in Cuttack, he came face to face with grim realities of India's countryside when he, together with a band of dedicated boys, defied all inhibitions and undertook a nursing expedition during a cholera epidemic. He says in his autobiography: "A week's experience opened a new world before my eyes and unfolded a picture of real India, the India of the villages--where poverty stalks over the land, men die like flies and illiteracy is the prevailing order."

As in Cuttack during his late school years, so in Calcutta during his early college career, Subhas continued with 'Sadhu'--hunting. The motivation was to find a preceptor or 'Guru' in life. He went out of his way to meet ascetics some of whom impressed him by their plain living and high thinking. Finally, in the summer vacation of 1914, he quietly left home with a friend without telling anybody. They toured various places of pilgrimage in upper India, places of historical interest and also traditional educational institutions. They visited many 'Ashramas' and met many 'Sadhus'. What disillusioned him was that in most of these places superstition and meaningless rituals rather than the basic tenets of Hindu religion were the order of the day. What shocked young Subhas was the casteism and sectarianism practised by protagonists of religion at such holy places. In the course of his tour, he met Swami Brahmananda at the Ramakrishna Mission at Benares who knew the family quite well. After discussions with such men and as a result of his first-hand experiences of so-called holy men and holy places, a balance was restored in Subhas's mind with regard to his religious beliefs. His parents and others in the family had spent the few weeks of his truancy in great anxiety. Eventually, he returned home one morning as quietly as he had left it. A few days later, he was down in bed with typhoid fever. As he lay in bed, the first world war broke out.

In spite of the propaganda carried on by the revolutionaries among the student community of Calcutta, politics had not till then entered Subhas's life in a big way. He still believed in a spiritual revival and national reconstruction on non-political lines. The principal reason was that in a far away town like Cuttack, direct British presence was not that evident as in Calcutta. The British rulers who dominated the Calcutta scene not only made their presence felt but humiliated Indians at every step and at every level. They exhibited racial arrogance and superiority in the streets, in railway trains, in public transport, etc. They

would not spare even the most eminent and accomplished Indians in society. In inter-racial conflicts, the law was of no avail to Indians. So a general impression gained ground that the Englishman understands physical force and nothing else. Such experiences helped to promote Subhas's political consciousness but it was not enough to give a definite turn to his political thinking. For that purpose, the experience of the world was necessary. As he studied world events through the papers, he re-examined and re-assessed all his accepted values. He came to the conclusion that "a nation's life could not be split up into compartments. We could not have one part of it for ourselves and leave the other part to the foreigner. If India was to be a modern civilised nation, Indians must work and fight for her emancipation in totality. Political freedom was indivisible and what is more, a liberated nation must have military strength to preserve its independence".

The next two years in college meant for Subhas rapid development in philosophic and political ideas and inwardly he changed a great deal. He spent most of the time with his group which was not only increasing numerically but also improving in quality. He neglected his studies. As a result, in the intermediate examination in 1915 he failed to secure a high rank. In the degree course, he took honours in philosophy--a long cherished desire and threw himself heart and soul into studies. Studies in philosophy gave him intellectual discipline and a critical frame of mind. He came to believe that a truly emancipated man could accept nothing without evidence and argument.

In the beginning of 1916, two incidents in Presidency College completely changed the course of Subhas Chandra's life and career. One morning in January, an English Professor E.F. Oaten manhandled some students, being annoyed at the disturbance they were creating in the corridor, in front of his classroom. The professor having refused to apologise as demanded by the students, there was a general strike in the college. A strike in Presidency

College was something unimaginable those days. As one of the strike leaders, Subhas was warned but he stood firm. Fortunately, good sense eventually dawned on the professor who settled the dispute amicably with the students. But very unfortunately, the Principal declined to withdraw the penal measure he had imposed on the students in the shape of a fine.

Next month, another incident took place; repitition of the same. The same professor again manhandled a student of first year class. Sensing that constitutional measures like protests and strikes would be futile, some students took the law into their own hands. Professor Oaten was beaten black and blue. Subhas Chandra, who was an eye-witness of the incident, has put it on record that the students faced the professor boldly and squarely and were on the same level with him.

The government closed the college immediately and set up an Enquiry Committee to go into the continued disturbances in that institution. In the confusion, the Principal fell out with the Government and was placed under suspension. But before giving up his charge, the Principal acted. He sent for all the students in his black list including Subhas. To the latter, he growled and said: "Bose, you are the most troublesome man in the college. I suspend you." Bose answered: "Thank you" and went home. The Governing Body confirmed the Principal's order and expelled him from the college. He appealed to the University for permission to study in some other college but was refused. He was, thus, virtually rusticated from the university.

The Enquiry Committee consisted of three Britishers and two Indians, Ashutosh Mookerjea and Heramba Chandra Moitra. Subhas represented the students' case before the committee. He made a reasoned and forthright statement and said that although he could not justify the assault, he knew that students had acted under great provocation. He narrated in detail the misdeeds of the Britishers in Presidency College. In the report of the Com-

mittee, there was not a single word in favour of the students and Subhas Chandra Bose was the only name singled out for mentioning. His fate, therefore, was sealed.

During this time, the political climate of Calcutta was deteriorating. Large-scale arrests were made; among them were some expelled students of Presidency College. The family, therefore, thought it prudent to send Subhas back to Cuttack where, they thought, there was comparative safety.

There was not a trace of regret in Subhas's mind for what he had done. In fact, there was satisfaction and joy that he had stood up for national honour at some personal sacrifice. He did not immediately realise the significance of the tragic event. His expulsion from college had, in fact, made his future career. He had stood up with courage in a crisis and did his duty. That gave him self-confidence as well as initiative. What is more, for the first time he had a foretaste of leadership based on character and sacrifice.

The change that came upon Subhas as a result of the Oaten incident came like a storm and turned everything upside down inside him. He derived much comfort that his parents and others in the family sympathised with him in his trials and believed that he was in the right. Strangely, some members of the group with whom he worked thought he had gone too far. But he stood firm, determined to face the consequences. He had shed much of his shyness and diffidence.

With no hope of continuing with his studies in the near future, he again took to social service with passionate zeal. He realised that as a schooling for the future, voluntary work had great value. He would not, therefore, shirk it whatever the danger or risks involved. He also tried his hand at youth organisation for their physical, intellectual and moral advancement. He campaigned against untouchability. In the case of a sick Santhal student whom nobody would nurse because of his caste, he was overjoyed when his mother Prabhabati joined him in nursing

him back to health. He again went out with friends on long excursions to places of religious or historical interest. He took active part in organising social events during religious ceremonies and pujas. During this time, he also practised, as never before, searching self-analysis. Firstly, to know about his own mind and also discover any ignoble impulses which he wanted to conquer including disturbing dreams. After a year, he returned to Calcutta to try his luck with university authorities. While waiting for something to come up, he tried to get himself recruited to the 49th Bengal Regiment. He was disqualified because of defective vision. Eventually, he came to know that the university might be amenable to his re-admission provided he could find an alternative college. He directly approached the Principal of Scottish Church College Dr. Urquhart and told him that he wanted to go in for the honours course in philosophy. Professor Urquhard was favourably impressed and agreed to take him in provided a formal consent was obtained from the Principal of Presidency College. This was obtained by his brother Sarat and he was admitted to Scottish Church College in July 1917. Subhas found in Dr. Urquhart not only a tactful and considerate man but also a very able teacher of philosophy.

In 1916, Subhas had met a demobilised officer of the Bengal Ambulance Corps that was sent to Mesopotamia during the war and had been taken prisoner in Turkey. He was greatly excited by the tales of adventure of this officer and wanted to join the army. The Government of India had agreed to start a university unit of India Defence Force or Territorial Army. Physical tests for admission to this were not so tough as for the army and Subhas was able to get in. The experience that he gained added a new dimension to his life. A rough Scotsman Captain Gray was the training officer. In the beginning, staff officers in Fort William thought that Bengali boys would be utter failures as soldiers. But after camp life of four months and musketry practice for three weeks, these boys could beat even

their instructors. The training gave Subhas a new feeling of strength and self-confidence. When he marched into the Fort William with his company, he felt as if they were taking possession of something to which they had an inherent right, but of which they had been unjustly deprived.

Third year in college was given to soldiery. In the fourth year, Subhas studied in right earnest and in 1919 took his B.A. degree with first class honours in philosophy and was placed second in order of merit. By this time, he had, to certain extent, been disillusioned by philosophy and had developed a new interest in experimental psychology. He, therefore, decided to take up this new subject in his M.A. course.

One evening his father called him to his room where he also found his elder brother Sarat Chandra. Janakinath asked him if he would like to proceed to England to qualify for the Indian Civil Service. He gave Subhas only twenty-four hours' notice to make up his mind. Subhas was utterly surprised. He took counsel with himself and within a few hours made up his mind to accept the offer. Once again, his plans had been upset by the superior force of circumstances. He could not even dream of passing the Indian Civil Service Examination and accepting a job under the British Government. But, that was a matter for the future! A berth was somehow secured in a boat leaving Calcutta for England in a week's time and a passport quickly obtained.

He had taken a fateful decision relying entirely on his own intuition. He did not consult his group this time as he had not when he joined the India Defence Force which they had disapproved. His decision to go abroad was entirely his own. It meant a break with the past and surging forward.

He set sail for England on the 15th September, 1919.

3

IN CAMBRIDGE AND RESIGNATION FROM I.C.S. - 1921

When Subhas Chandra left for England, he knew that he would get barely eight months to prepare for the Indian Civil Service Examination. Moreover, because of his age that would be his first and last chance. There was also great uncertainty about his admission to a good college in Cambridge. It was because by the time he reached England, the academic year would have already started. Disappointed in his talks with the adviser to Indian students at India House, he proceeded straight to Cambridge to try his luck. There the Censor of Fitzwilliam Hall took a very sympathetic view of his case and agreed to admit him straightaway and also allowed him to take the degree examination in June 1921. However, the Civil Service Examination being so near, he devoted practically his whole time to preparing for that. For the Mental and Moral Sciences Tripos in Cambridge, he did not do much beyond attending lectures. As to extra-curricular activities, he participated in the Indian Majlis and the Union Society.

What greatly impressed him in England was the freedom, respect and prestige enjoyed by the student community. This, he thought, had a very salutary effect on their character. The position was in sharp contrast to the status of students in India where they were suspects, objects of compassion and neglect or hunted by the police as potential revolutionaries. At the debates of the Union Society in Cambridge, students had perfect freedom to express their

views without fear or favour even when members of Parliament or ministers were present. There were certain qualities of Englishmen which he admitted and about which he wrote back to friends at home. First, they worked strictly to time and with clock-work precision; second, they possessed a sense of robust optimism and thought more in terms of the brighter side of life rather than brood over the sorrows which those in India were apt to do; third, they possessed a strong commonsense and so were able to judge situations realistically; finally, they placed their national interest above everything else under all circumstances and never let their country down.

During the time that Subhas was in Cambridge, relations between British and Indian students were, on the whole, good. But, they did not ripen into real and lasting friendship. In the average Britisher, there was a feeling of superiority and on the Indian side, the post-war events in India and particularly the Jallianwala Bagh massacre rankled in their hearts. It pained Indian students that in a section of the English middleclass, there was even sympathy for General Dyer, the master killer of Jallianwala Bagh. It was, therefore, natural for Subhas and his friends to assume that in the prevailing situation, there was no basis for real friendship between Britishers and Indians with some rare exceptions. Among the political parties, only the Labourites expressed sympathy for Indian aspirations. But, regardless of the lack of political rapport, even Subhas could count among his friends Britishers holding conservative views. One glaring instance of injustice to Indian students on racial grounds became very apparent when they responded to a notice inviting applications for enlistment in the University Officers' Training Corps. The matter was passed back and forth between the India Office and the War Office, the one blaming the other for objecting to the enlistment of the Indians. Subhas took a leading part in representing their case before the Under-Secretary of

State for India. The crux of the matter was that members of the Officers' Training Corps once qualified would be entitled to commissions in the British Army. But, even after Indian students gave the assurance that they would not ask for such commissions and that all that they were interested in was the training, their demands were not met by the authorities.

The life that Subhas led in England appeared to his peers to be puritanic. The two assignments, working simultaneously for the Civil Service Examination and the Cambridge Tripos left him without any time for relaxation. Moreover, Subhas's mental constitution was totally averse to the trivialities and frivolities of life which characterised the pattern of living and, eventually, destroyed the careers of many Indian students abroad. It was said that Subhas's physical presence would bring about sobriety among even the most wayward among them. He carried on regular correspondence with his friends at home, narrating his experiences and giving them information about life and conditions in England.

Whenever any eminent Indian visited England and lectured at the universities or the Indian Majlis, Subhas was an enthusiastic organiser. He felt very proud when any Indian visiting lecturer distinguished himself. For instance, in a letter to a friend in India, he very proudly mentioned a speech by Sarojini Naidu, and also how overwhelmed he was by her erudition, inspiration, intellectual qualities and character and to see that an Indian lady could hold her own in the western world.

For the Civil Service, one had to study a large number of subjects so that in actual life they might be well equipped in administering the country. There were nine major subjects including political science, economics, English, history and modern European history. Only after he made a deep study of modern European history in England while working for the Civil Service, did he acquire a clear concept of the politics of the European continent. For a

long time, Subhas felt, Indians had been taught to look at the continent through British eyes. Having studied the original sources of continental history, Subhas Chandra acquired a proper and new appreciation of the inner currents of international politics. This stood him in good stead in later life.

The Indian Civil Service open competitive examination started early in July 1920 and dragged on for a month. Subhas informed his family in Calcutta that he could not hope to pass the examination. He, therefore, planned to continue his work for the Cambridge Tripos Examination next year. He was greatly surprised when late one night in mid-September, he received a telegram from a friend congratulating him on his success. Next morning, he found his name in the newspapers in the list of successful candidates for the Indian Civil Service. He had come fourth in order of merit. The mark-sheet later revealed that he came first in English composition. Thus, the so-called 'heaven-born' service, the ultimate dream of so many ambitious Indian young men of those days and the heart-throb of their families, was within his grasp.

Ironically, Subhas's success at the Civil Service Examination brought him face to face with the greatest crisis of his life. He realised that he was up against first real test of whether he truly stood by the ideals and principles he had made his own or whether he would succumb to the temptations of the 'heaven-born' service. He carried on a long correspondence with his second elder brother Sarat Chandra, poured out his heart to him and sought his counsel. He also wrote to Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das after he had decided to resign from the Service offering his services in the national cause under his leadership.

His letters to his brother from September 1920 till March 1921 revealed that he was finding it tough to resolve the tussle between the highest ideals of one's life involving endless suffering and a life of poverty and the acceptance of a comfortable job in the Civil Service.

During these seven long months, he considered and weighed every possible aspect of the matter including family responsibilities and monetary considerations. He knew that most members of the family would not take kindly to his resignation. His father Janakinath thought that Indians were well on the way to Home Rule which should come in about ten years. He, therefore, thought that the life of a self-respecting Indian Civil Servant should not be intolerable under the new regime. Subhas said in reply that Indians would get Home Rule in ten years, or even earlier, only if they were prepared to pay the price. The price, according to him, was service, sacrifice and suffering. Therefore, in the circumstances, if we swore allegiance to a foreign bureaucracy and sold ourselves for a mess of pottage, Indian independence would recede rather than come nearer. To him, therefore, it was a fundamental question—embarking on the road to freedom which meant a life of service, struggle and sacrifice or surrendering to the alien power holding India in thraldom.

Subhas knew that most members of the family considered him to be an 'eccentric' person. He could, therefore, well imagine the hue and cry that would be raised at home on his decision to give up the Service. But, he was not particularly concerned about such family or social opposition. He was confident that his brother Sarat would respond favourably to whatever decision he might take as he had always done at every moment of crisis, even though "hardly anyone else among our relatives will approve of my eccentric plans". What caused him deep concern was that his decision to resign would hurt his ageing and ailing parents. He depended on his brother Sarat to convince his parents that the interest of the country demanded that their son came forward with this little offering of sacrifice at the altar of India's freedom and that the sacrifice had to be made consciously and deliberately. He put it to his brother that the money he had spent for his education abroad might be looked upon also as a

gift laid at the feet of the Mother without any expectation of any return in any shape or form. Writing to his brother in April 1921 about three weeks before formally sending in his resignation, he summed up why the inner struggle in him between principle and expediency could not be reconciled or resolved. He said: "We who have grown up under the influence of Swami Vivekananda on one side and Aurobindo Ghose on the other have, fortunately or unfortunately developed a mentality which does not accept a compromise between points of view so diametrically opposed." He felt sorry that he had been instrumental in introducing discord into an otherwise harmonious family. The reason was that certain ideas had taken possession of him which were unfortunately unacceptable to others.

On the 22nd April 1921, Subhas Chandra Bose wrote to the Secretary of State for India, E.S. Montague, from Cambridge withdrawing his name from the list of probationers in the Indian Civil Service selected in an open competitive examination in August 1920.

After he had more or less made up his mind to give up the Service, Subhas Chandra wrote two historic letters to Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das in February and March 1921. He had met Das previously very briefly, only once, after the Oaten incident in 1916. Now, Subhas hailed Deshbandhu as "the high priest of the festival of national service in Bengal" and placed his services unreservedly at his disposal in the national cause. He expressed in clear terms his ideas about the organisation of the Indian National Congress. He said that first, the Congress must have a house of its own; second, the Congress must have a band of research students carrying on investigations on various national problems. The Congress must spell out its policies relating even to currency and exchange; third, the Congress must define its ultimate attitude towards the native states; fourth, the Congress must clearly make known its stand regarding universal franchise for men as well as

women; fifth, the Congress must declare what it plans to do for the upliftment of the Depressed Classes. Finally, Subhas told Deshbandhu that in order to fulfil the above tasks, the Congress must maintain a permanent staff and arrange for compilation and preservation of data on the basis of which its policy on every individual problem would be formulated. Subhas wanted the Congress to open an Intelligence Department and a Propaganda Department. Booklets were to be published in all the languages of India on each and every question of Indian national life.

Subhas offered his personal services to Deshbandhu in three fields: first, teaching at National College started by Deshbandhu; second, journalism, particularly for the English edition of his newspaper *Swaraj;* and third, research for the Congress organisation. Finally, he wrote to Deshbandhu that the Congress must have a determined policy as to the future Constitution of India. He, therefore, emphasized that they must proceed to frame the new Constitution of India on the basis of Swaraj.

Subhas's resignation from the Indian Civil Service created a sensation among the Indian community in England. The news also travelled fast to India and the subject became one of the excited discussions throughout the country. Subhas himself wanted to avoid both sensation and public applause--evidently he wanted it to be a quiet act of self-abnegation. Even to his brother Sarat, he said: "You have said too many kind words about me in your letter which I know how little I deserve....all that I say is--I am proud of you." However, he added: "I know how many hearts I have grieved, how many superiors of mine I have disobeyed but on the eve of this hazardous undertaking, my only prayer is--may it be for the good our dear country." He felt greatly comforted when he finally received a letter from his mother, in which she said that in spite of what others might think, "she prefers the ideals for which Mahatma Gandhi stands."

The die was cast. Subhas Chandra Bose set his face irrevocably against any compromise with expediency and opted for the path of idealism and moral action. He was never to look back again.

APPRENTICE IN PUBLIC SERVICE AND NON-COOPERATION

Soon after passing the Mental and Moral Sciences Tripos examination in Cambridge, Subhas hurried back to India in June 1921 to take plunge into the national struggle which was then in full swing. He landed in Bombay on the 16th July and called upon Mahatma Gandhi the same afternoon. He wanted to obtain from the supreme leader of the movement a clear conception of his complete programme of action. Subhas had, during the preceding few years, made a deep study of national revolutionary movements in other parts of the world and he sought to understand the Mahatma's mind and objectives in the light of his studies and thinking.

The first thing that Subhas did on meeting Gandhiji was to apologise for his foreign costume. The Mahatma, however, soon put him at ease and an interesting conversation followed. Subhas's desire was to understand the successive stages of the struggle that the leader had planned which would step by step lead the country to usurp power from the unwilling hands of the British Government. He flooded Gandhiji with questions which the latter answered with his usual patience. The questions related to the campaign of non-payment of taxes, civil disobedience, boycott of foreign cloth, propagation of Khadi, the Mahatma's promise of Swaraj within one year, mass marching to prison by disobeying governmental decrees, etc. Some of Mahatmaji's answers satisfied him, particularly those relating to non-payment of taxes, but others did not. Subhas

got the impression that either Gandhiji did not want to show all his cards prematurely or he did not have a clear conception of the tactics and methods whereby actual seizure of state power would be effected.

Disappointed with his first meeting with the Mahatma, he left for Calcutta with the intention of reporting to Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das as early as possible. Gandhiji also wanted him to do the same. On arrival in Calcutta, Subhas found that Deshbandhu was on tour and he had to wait for a while. The first meeting between these two men was decisive. Subhas immediately felt that here was a man who knew what he was about, who was prepared to sacrifice all that he possessed for the cause and could, therefore, demand of others all that they could offer. He felt convinced that he had found a leader and meant to follow him. Deshbandhu welcomed his new youthful lieutenant with open arms and entrusted him with a number of responsibilities. The country was then convulsing with patriotic fervour and there was unparalled popular enthusiasm. There was the "triple boycott"--Congressmen shunned the legislatures, lawyers left the law courts and students came out of educational institutions to take part in the national movement. Deshbandhu put Subhas in charge of publicity for the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and the National Volunteer Corps. He also became the Principal of the newly-started National College. The competence and dedication with which Subhas discharged various duties assigned to him won the admiration of all.

In the teeth of popular opposition, the British Government sought to prepare the ground for the inauguration of constitutional reforms recommended in 1919 and later embodied in an Act by the Secretary of State for India, Montagu and the Viceroy Chelmsford. A visit to India of the Prince of Wales was announced for November 1921. The Congress called upon the people to observe a total "hartal" on the day scheduled for the Prince's landing in

Bombay. Like other Indian cities, Calcutta rose to the occasion and it looked as if Congress volunteers under Subhas Chandra Bose had taken charge of the city. The organisation was declared illegal by the Government but that added more fuel to the fire. The Congress Committee vested all its powers in the President Chittaranjan Das who, in turn, put Subhas Chandra in charge of the movement. The campaign gathered great momentum when Basanti Devi, wife of the Deshbandhu, was arrested together with a band of defiant lady volunteers who broke the law in the streets. Thousands of young men and women surged forward and jails were filled to the brim. In the second week of December 1921, Subhas Chandra was taken into custody along with Deshbandhu and other leaders and later sentenced to six month's imprisonment. Eight months in prison together with Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das was, for Subhas, one of the most moving and educative experiences of his life.

As a fellow-prisoner with Deshbandhu in the Alipore Central Jail, Calcutta, Subhas Chandra analysed his mentor's leadership qualities and tried to discover the secret of his tremendous hold on the people in general and his followers in particular. This experience proved very useful to Subhas in the time to come; first, when the mantle of leadership of Bengal fell on him, secondly, when he was called upon to provide an alternative leadership in all-India politics and finally when he led the Azad Hind Movement in Europe and East Asia.

According to Subhas, the secret of Deshbandhu's success as a leader of men depended largely on the following factors. First, Deshbandhu loved his followers with all his heart regardless of their status, quality or failings. His first appeal was to the heart and people from all walks of life were drawn to him irresistibly because, to Deshbandhu, the heart took precedence over everything else. Secondly, Deshbandhu was always prepared and would go to any length to help his fellowmen in need or in distress regard-

less of their party affiliations or the antecedents. In return, his followers and his countrymen were prepared to do everything possible, to undergo any suffering or sacrifice, to fulfil his wishes or to carry out his instructions. The absolute loyalty of his following was, therefore, a matter of heart-burning and jealousy to his political opponents. Thirdly, Subhas was deeply impressed with Deshbandhu's superb organising ability. He set up an organisation of such human quality that it could withstand successfully all kinds of contrary forces whether they be his own countrymen or the British Government. There was, however, complete freedom of expression and debate inside his own party organisation which was tempered with commendable restraint, discipline and unity of action. Fourthly, Deshbandhu was a great lover of youth and identified himself completely with their sufferings, hopes and aspirations.

During the eight months in prison together, Subhas tended and cared for Deshbandhu with all the warmth and devotion of which he was capable. He would not only look after his creature comforts to the minutest detail--he would even cook for him. It, therefore, became a joke how lucky Deshbandhu was to have an "I.C.S. cook" at his disposal! Such closeness gave Subhas the unique opportunity of knowing Deshbandhu, a man deeply immersed in politics but in whom even the least traces of small-mindedness were not to be found. He learnt from his leader a dictum which he believed in and practised through all the vicissitudes of his career—that life is larger than politics.

Thanks to his close association with Deshbandhu, Subhas had the opportunity of coming into contact with some of the outstanding leaders of India soon after his return to India. In September 1921, the Congress Working Committee met in Calcutta at Deshbandhu's residence. At that time, Subhas came to know Pandit Motilal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai and Moulana Mohammed Ali, the three intellectual giants who stood by the Mahatma together with Deshbandhu in his national campaign.

An interesting and historically significant experience that Subhas had encountered even before he landed in India vis-a-vis the ideology of the non-cooperation movement is worthy of mention here. India's national poet Rabindra Nath Tagore was travelling in the same boat with him. Contrary to widely-held belief, Subhas got the impression that Tagore was not fundamentally opposed to the concept of non-cooperation but had important reservations. Tagore particularly wanted that there should be more constructive activities by the Congress so that ultimately a state within the state could be built up with the active cooperation and support of the people. What Tagore suggested was similar to what Subhas had read about the constructive side of the Irish Sinn Fein Movement and was completely in accord with his views. Subhas accepted Tagore's concept of unity and synthesis of world culture and also that India's liberation movement must not shut out western science, culture and civilisation as some votaries of non-cooperation were apt to demand.

Since the middle of 1921, the political situation in India was growing more and more tense and the storm broke towards its end. The storm centre of the non-cooperation movement was Calcutta. Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience under the overall leadership of Gandhiji was supplemented by the no-tax campaign in Midnapore district of Bengal, the Akali Movement in the Punjab and Moplah Rebellion in Malabar. The tie-up between non-cooperation and the Khilafat Movement created an awkward situation for the British Government. Although, the promise of Swaraj within the year, that is, the 31st December 1921, was not in sight, nationalist forces were so confident of their strength that the Mahatma was in a position to send an ultimatum to the new Viceroy Lord Reading that if the rulers did not show a change of heart, he would proceed to the final item of his plan of action, namely, non-payment of taxes. Arrangements were made all over the country including Bengal to start the campaign

when the bugle was sounded. The international situation was also favourable to India's cause. Deshbandhu Das with his close followers including Subhas Chandra had been in prison since early December 1921.

In the circumstances, the new British Viceroy sent a peace-maker in the person of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya to see Deshbandhu in prison to work out the terms of a settlement. Chittaranjan Das entered into an elaborate discussion with his colleagues including Subhas and argued in support of his view that a settlement at that point would advance their cause. A joint telegram was sent by Deshbandhu and Moulana Abul Kalam Azad to Gandhiji recommending acceptance of the terms of settlement. Many telegrams passed between Calcutta and Sabarmati. While Deshbandhu thought that the British offer was a god-send, the Mahatma was not satisfied with all the terms. The result was a stalemate.

The latter half of 1921, marked a great advance for the Congress in Bengal in which Subhas Chandra played a very significant role. Gandhiji had given to the party a new constitution under which the organisation acquired a mass base. The tricolour truly became a national flag, the same slogans were chanted everywhere, *khadi* became the national uniform and one uniform policy and ideology gained currency as much in Bengal as in Maharashtra, Punjab, Madras or elsewhere. In this transformation in Bengal, the handsome youngman of twenty four with Indo-European features,--remarkable fair complexion, broad forehead and dark brown penetrating eyes, dressed invariably in austere *khadi* was singled out by Deshbandhu for special tasks. He was no small-time politician--his countrymen knew of his high academic achievements and mental powers and he had already demonstrated his capacity for sacrifice by renouncing the I.C.S. Taking into consideration his organisational skill in raising the national volunteer corps and the important role played by him in building national educational institutions, his leader

assigned him special duties in promoting the nationalist press; first the *Banglar Katha* in 1921, followed successively by *Atma Sakti* in 1922 and the *Forward* in 1923. In his own area in South Calcutta, he continued to participate actively in social upliftment work through agencies like the Dakshin Kalikata Seva Samity and the Dakshin Kalikata Sevasram.

The year 1922 began in an uncertain but excited mood. On the one hand, the Viceroy had withdrawn his offer of a settlement and the Mahatma came up with his ultimatum to start his no-tax campaign in Bardoli in Gujarat. Suddenly, there came a bolt from the blue. In early February 1922 at Chauri Chaura in United Provinces, villagers in a fit of wild excitement set fire to a police station and killed some policemen. Gandhiji was shocked at this turn of events and at his instance the Congress Working Committee suspended the civil disobedience movement. Subhas was with Deshbandhu at the time in prison. On receipt of the news of termination of the campaign, they were overwhelmed with sorrow and resentment. Congressmen were bewildered at the sudden retreat and the general mood changed from one of bouyant optimism to depression.

Lord Reading, the Viceroy, took advantage of the situation and went on the offensive. Mahatma Gandhi was arrested and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment on charges of sedition.

Deshbandhu took the suspension of the mass movement as a fait accompli and while in prison devoted himself to devising a new plan of non-cooperation and struggle inside the legislatures on the principles of capturing all points of vantage in a revolutionary struggle. The Congress Working Committee appointed an Enquiry Committee on Civil Disobedience and members were equally divided between those in favour of Deshbandhu's plan and 'no-changers' plan to keep out of legislatures. Subhas stood loyally by his leader.

In September 1922, there were devastating floods in the northern districts of Bengal. The Congress rose to the occasion and rushed to the succour of stricken humanity with Subhas Chandra Bose leading the first batch of volunteers. The relief operations directed by Subhas were so successful that they enhanced substantially the prestige of the Congress, while government efforts were niggardly and half-hearted.

There were two most important political events in the latter half of 1922 which, for Subhas Chandra as the principal lieutenant of Deshbandhu, were of far-reaching significance. The first was the session of the All India Trade Union Congress in Lahore at which Deshbandhu presided. It was at this conference that Deshbandhu declared in no uncertain terms that the Swaraj they were striving to win was for the masses who formed ninety eight per cent of the population. Subhas was, thus, initiated into the trade union movement of India and followed in the footsteps of his leader in not only becoming the President of All India Trade Union Congress in 1931 but also the President of the Labour Association of the Tata Iron and Steel Company of Jamshedpur, a position his leader had occupied a decade earlier. The second event was the Young Men's Conference in Calcutta which was the precursor of the new youth movement in Bengal, of which Subhas Chandra Bose emerged soon thereafter as the undisputed, charismatic leader. Towards the end of the decade, the youth movement in India became a strong force with Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru as its two guiding stars.

Before the end of 1922, there was a meeting of the All India Congress Committee in Calcutta which was a prelude to the annual session in Gaya in December for which Deshbandhu was the chosen President. At the Calcutta meeting, there was a trial of strength between the pro-changers, viz., Deshbandhu's followers and the no-changers, viz., Gandhiji's adherents who opposed council-entry

under any circumstances. At the Gaya Congress, which Subhas attended, Deshbandhu's proposal was defeated. His position as the President, therefore, became rather anomalous. When the time came for drawing up the programme of the Congress for the next year, Pandit Motilal Nehru took the house by surprise by announcing the formation of the Swaraj Party, independently of the Congress, for carrying forward the President's programme. Deshbandhu, thereupon, resigned as the President since he wanted to work in opposition to the official resolutions of the party. The Swarajists, Subhas Chandra has recorded, "parted with a sense of defeat, but with the determination to fight and win."

SWARAJIST REVOLT AND EXILE IN BURMA

Subhas and other adherents of Deshbandhu returned to Bengal from the Gaya Congress in a rather depressed mood. They found their position considerably weakened because the party machinery in Bengal had passed into the hands of 'no-changers' who were in the majority at the time. They also had no funds at all. But, the Swarajists made steady headway by sheer determination, hard work and campaigning among Congressmen. While Subhas and other lieutenants functioned at the grassroots, the leaders Deshbandhu and Pandit Motilal toured the country. By the middle of 1923, the Swarajists were on level with the 'no-changers'. Finally at a special session of the Congress held in Delhi in September, they won the day and a resolution was passed permitting Congressmen to take part in elections and carry on a continuous and consistent opposition to the Government from inside the legislatures. In the elections, the Swarajists achieved remarkable success. Pandit Motilal led the party in the Central Assembly while Deshbandhu did the same in the Bengal Council. In Calcutta, Deshbandhu launched his English daily paper *Forward* after the Delhi Congress and entrusted Subhas with its organisation. Within a short time, *Forward* became one of the leading nationalist dailies of the country.

On the one hand Subhas took a vigorous role in all the activities of the Swaraj party, on the other he pushed forward with his plan of a youth organisation. He formed the All Bengal Youth League of which he was chosen the President. The League served as a model for similar youth

organisations throughout the country. Youth organisation as conceived by Subhas Chandra Bose was, however, not formed with the purpose of merely using youth power as an adjunct to a political party or use the youth only for agitational politics. The principal aim was to prepare and build the youth of the country physically, mentally, spiritually, intellectually and psychologically for the ultimate task of bringing about a revolutionary transformation of Indian society and to build a new India which may in the fulness of time "deliver to the world the message that has been her heritage through the past ages." Subhas encouraged the formation of clubs and associations in every district and locality of Bengal of young men and young women for building youth power, according to these ideals.

Towards the end of 1923, Subhas was given the key position in the party organisation when he became the General Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee.

The year 1924 opened with a hopeful outlook for the Swarajists. Elections to the Calcutta Municipal Corporation were announced and the party decided to contest. The Swaraj Party won a comfortable majority both in Hindu and Muslim seats. Deshbandhu was elected the first Mayor of Calcutta and Mr. Shaheed Suhrawardy, the Deputy Mayor. At the instance of Deshbandhu, Subhas Chandra was appointed the Chief Executive Officer,--that is, the head of the municipal administration. His appointment caused much annoyance to the Government and they gave their approval after a great deal of hesitation.

The capture of the Calcutta Corporation by the Swarajists with Deshbandhu as Mayor and Subhas as Chief Executive Officer marked the beginning of a new era in civic progress in India. Deshbandhu's mayoral address was in the nature of a charter of civic rights, civic progress and civic freedom. Subhas Chandra's task was to convert the programme into concrete action. For the first time,

khadi became the official uniform of civic employees and many streets and parks named after Britishers were re-named after India's greatest men. For the first time, the Education Department was started in the Corporation under a competent Education Officer. Free primary schools both for boys and girls were started all over the city. Health associations run by the Corporation were started in every ward with the cooperation of public-spirited citizens for carrying out health propaganda. Free dispensaries were opened in different districts of the city for medical treatment of the poor. Even children's clinics were started in different parts of Calcutta from where free milk was distributed to needy children. The Chief Executive Officer showed remarkable agility in his work schedule. He was here, there and everywhere at all hours of the day or night to guide, supervise services in conservancy, water supply, lighting, road repairs and so on. Within a few months, Subhas was able to give a new orientation and momentum to the administration of the Corporation. The practice of giving civic reception to British dignitaries was given up and instead the same was given to nationalist leaders when they visited the city. To promote civic consciousness among citizens, a weekly journal, the Calcutta Municipal Gazette, was started. A commercial museum was established with the purpose of promoting Indian goods. Subhas Chandra accepted half his salary as the Chief Executive and gave the other half to charity.

While the Swarjists were forging ahead in the Calcutta Corporation and successfully carrying out their obstructive tactics in the Bengal Council and the Indian Legislative Assembly, Deshbandhu called upon the Bengal Congress Committee, of which Subhas was the General Secretary, to organise and launch a Satyagraha movement to clean up and democratise the Tarakeswara temple in the Hooghly district of Bengal. The movement was on the lines of the Akali movement in the Punjab for democratisation of the Sikh holy shrines. As Congress volunteers moved on

Tarakeswar, the Government came out heavily on the side of autocratic Mohant and attacked them mercilessly. The movement evoked tremendous public response in Bengal.

At the Sirajganj conference of the Bengal Congress held in May 1924, Deshbandhu submitted, what was known as the Bengal Pact, an agreement between Hindus and Muslims covering religious as well as political questions and giving a large measure of concessions to the Muslim community in the matter of services and other privileges of which they had long been deprived. In spite of serious opposition, Deshbandhu was able to carry the day and have Bengal Pact ratified. It is noteworthy that Subhas Chandra throughout his political career carried this tradition set up by his leader to settle all inter-communal questions on the basis of justice and generosity. There was another very important resolution at this conference on the martyrdom of Gopinath Saha, a young student revolutionary, who had attempted to assassinate Calcutta's Police Commissioner. Deshbandhu and Subhas had similar views on revolutionary terrorism and violence. They did not approve of terrorism in any form as a weapon in the national struggle. But, they accepted the historical truth that in the course of a national liberation struggle some idealistic youth have often been found to be drawn to the path of terrorism motivated by sacrificial patriotism. Thus, such acts were inevitable explosions in the course of a national liberation struggle. Therefore, Deshbandhu and Subhas, though disapproved their method, had still profound respect for the patriotism, idealism and spirit of sacrifice of such revolutionaries.

In the middle of 1924, the influence and prestige of the Swaraj Party and its leader Deshbandhu reached new heights. When the annual conference of the party was held in Calcutta in August, there was a large attendance and great enthusiasm. The British Government could no longer wait and watch as the Swaraj Party went on scoring success after success. In sheer desperation, they

decided to strike at the root of the organisation. In the early hours of the morning of 25th October 1924, Subhas Chandra was roused from his sleep as he was wanted by the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Calcutta. On meeting Subhas, he said, "Mr. Bose, I have a warrant for your arrest under the Regulation III of 1818." Among those arrested with Subhas Chandra were two prominent Swarajist members of the Bengal Council.

The British Government justified the large-scale arrests in Bengal in October 1924 on the plea that a revolutionary conspiracy was afoot. Two Anglo-Indian newspapers of Calcutta went further to allege that Subhas Chandra Bose was "the brain of the revolutionary conspiracy." They had to face legal proceedings for defamation on Subhas Chandra's behalf on this account. Neither the Government nor their controlled press were able to produce a shred of documentary evidence to establish their charges. However, detention without trial of Subhas Chandra and other promising up-coming leaders of Bengal continued for nearly three years.

As Mayor of Calcutta, Deshbandhu made a significant speech in the Corporation in protest against Subhas's arrest. He accepted full responsibility for whatever his Chief Executive Officer had done and declared in ringing tones: "If love of country is a crime I am a criminal..... not only the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation but the Mayor of the Corporation is equally guilty."

For about six weeks, Subhas was permitted to attend to his official duties in prison in the presence of a police officer and a jail official. He had frequent trouble with these officers and had often to take them severely to task. As a punishment, he was transferred to Berhampore Jail away from Calcutta. After a couple of months, he was suddenly brought back to Calcutta and taken to the Lalbazar police lock-up which was verily a hell on earth. In the early hours of the morning, when it was still dark, Subhas Chandra together with seven other fellow

prisoners were taken out of the police station, put into two prison vans and driven to the river bank at top speed. After a cruise up and down the river in a motor-boat for three hours, they were put on ship bound for Burma.

After a voyage of four days, the state prisoners were landed in Rangoon. A full day's journey by train under strong armed police guard brought them to Mandalay. As they were being driven to Mandalay prison, Subhas recalled with poignant pride that Lokmanya Tilak had spent six years there as a prisoner and Lala Lajpat Rai for about a year. The interior of the jail in Mandalay was quite different from that of Indian prisons. They were made of wooden palisading and prisoners had nothing to protect them from the biting cold of winter, the intense heat and dust of summer or the tropical rains of Mandalay. Although, the Superintendent of the jail and most of the other local officials were reasonable and avoided giving trouble, the Bengal Government who were ultimately responsible for the prisoners were extremely vindictive and the Government of India entirely indifferent.

Subhas Chandra served the first phase of his apprenticeship for public service under Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. The second phase of this preparation for his future role in India took place inside the prison walls of Burma. In a letter to a friend from his prison cell in Burma, Subhas described his life, thus, in the words of Rabindra Nath Tagore:

"I still reside in the world of imagination,
The forest (prison) is the seat of my kingdom,
Only the silent contemplation is still my refuge,

I am growing up to be a Man nursed by the rocks,

I am building my mind all by myself
and growing worthier for the tasks ahead.
Who knows when shall I be able to declare with all my heart:

I have reached my Realisation,
Come all, follow me,
The Master is calling you all
May my life bring forth new life in you all
And thus may my country awake!"

Subhas Chandra went through intense and deep self-introspection and concentrated on studies in the midst of the rigours of a hard and difficult life in exile. Even a cursory glance at the prison note-books is enough to convince one of the wide range of subjects he studied and wrote about in his lonely cell in Mandalay. They included philosophy and religion, history and political science, economics, sociology, arts and culture including the music of Tagore, education, public health, prison reform, civic progress and so on. What is more, he made a deep study of Burmese history, politics and people. During his long incarceration, Subhas Chandra carried on extensive correspondence with members of his family, particularly with his brother Sarat, friends and fellow-workers back home as well as the Government. In his letters*, he deals with and discusses almost an infinite variety of subjects. In his letters to colleagues in social organisations, he gave detailed instructions and advice as to how they should be run and developed. His letters to the Government reveal the continuous struggle that he carried on with alien bureaucracy on the rights and privileges of political prisoners in a subject country.

In October 1925, Subhas Chandra and his fellow prisoners demanded facilities and funds to perform Durga Puja in jail. Although the Superintendent of the jail accorded permission in anticipation of government sanction, the latter refused. Thereupon, Subhas and his co-prisoners went on hunger strike in February 1926. After they had fasted for fifteen days, the government yielded and

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* Published in his collected works by the Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta.

conceded their demands.

Towards the end of 1926, the legislatures were dissolved and fresh elections announced. The Bengal Congress set up Subhas Chandra as their candidate from a north Calcutta constituency. He had a strong opponent in the leader of the Liberals in Bengal who had defeated the Swarajist candidate in the previous election. The contest evoked great excitement and Subhas became the symbol of returning tide of nationalism after a period of political slump in the country. Subhas won the election with a thumping majority. Nevertheless, his detention continued.

Adverse conditions of prison life and unfavourable climate together with the hunger strike of 1926 led to rapid deterioration in Subhas Chandra's health. He could not shake off persistent temperature following an attack of pneumonia and lost weight rapidly. He was taken to Rangoon for examination by a medical board which recommended that he should not be kept in prison. He was subsequently shifted to Insein jail from where the Superintendent sent an urgent message to government but the latter would not relent. They offered to release him if he would board a ship bound for Europe from Rangoon without touching Indian shores. Subhas rejected the offer outright. In a letter to the Inspector-General of Prisons, Burma, he said: "Much as I value my life-I love honour more and I cannot for the life of me barter away those sacred and inviolable rights which will form the basis of the future body-politic of India." Thereafter, the Government ordered his transfer to Almora jail in the United Provinces. He was put on a boat sailing from Rangoon and reached Diamond Harbour at the mouth of the river Hooghly on the fourth day. Before the ship reached Calcutta, he was transferred to the Bengal Governor's launch where a medical board including Dr. Nil Ratan Sircer, Dr. B.C. Roy and the Governor's physician examined him. Next morning, he was released. That was in May 1927.

CALCUTTA CONGRESS - 1928

During the period from October 1924 to May 1927 when Subhas Chandra Bose was languishing in Burmese prisons, the political situation in India took a downward course. There was a general state of slump and disintegration. One of the principal causes of this situation was the premature death of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das in June 1925. Deshbandhu reached the pinnacle of his power in 1924 and 1925 and held a commanding position in Indian politics. To Subhas Chandra, his closest disciple, his passing was more than a national calamity--it was indeed a deep personal tragedy. There can be no doubt that this personal bereavement also contributed to a rapid deterioration in Subhas's health. The letters he wrote to Deshbandhu's widow Basanti Devi and to others after his leader's death bear testimony to the deep wound in his heart. He implored Basanti Devi to come forward and take her husband's place in the public life of Bengal to keep up the morale of his countrymen--particularly the youth who felt orphaned and desolate.

Another major cause of the political slump in India in 1925-27 was the virtual retirement of Mahatma Gandhi from active politics. He confined himself to the propagation of *khadi* and constructive work among the depressed classes.

The Swaraj Party disintegrated steadily after Deshbandhu's death. Deshbandhu's dynamic leadership had brought together diverse elements--rightist, centrist and leftist--under the banner of the party. His death led the

dissimilar elements to seek new moorings according to ideological inclinations.

Subhas Chandra returned from Burma completely broken in health. His first task was to get well as quickly as possible and return to active public life. He spent some months in Shillong in the latter half of 1927 with his family for recuperation. Although he was a member of the Legislative Council, his main concern then was the Congress Party, the all India base for political action. Jatindra Mohan Sengupta had, after Deshbandhu's death, been chosen by the Mahatma as his successor. But the party was ridden with internecine conflict. Communalist forces were again on the ascendant. Labour unrest was spreading and new forces with novel ideas were entering the political arena. It was at this point towards the end of 1927 that Subhas was elected President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee.

In the midst of a generally depressing situation, an act on the part of the British Government just at that time gave fresh boost to the Indian nationalist movement. The Viceroy Lord Irwin announced the appointment of an all-white Commission headed by Sir John Simon to review the political situation in India and recommend necessary constitutional reforms. The Tories were then in power in Britain. They wanted to dispose of the Indian question before a Labour Government came into power. The Indian National Congress reacted sharply to the appointment of the Simon Commission. The people of India had already been prepared not to recognise the right of the British Parliament to be the arbiter of India's destiny. It was, therefore, natural that the Congress decided, without any hesitation and without losing any time, to declare its boycott of the Simon Commission.

In 1926, there was much of inter-communal tensions and strifes in India. The trend, however, changed for the better. A Unity Conference met in November followed by a session of the All India Muslim League in Calcutta and

the annual session of the Congress in Madras in December 1927. The Madras Congress adopted a resolution boycotting the Simon Commission "at every stage and in every form". A proposal to convene an All Parties Conference was also adopted to draw up a Constitution for free India. What is more, the Congress defined the goal of the Indian people to be complete national independence. The newly emerging youth movement in India exercised a definite influence on Congress policy from this point onwards. The Congress appointed representatives of the rising left wing to the Working Committee and gave a new orientation to the organisation by appointing Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and Shuaib Quereshi as General Secretaries.

When the Simon Commission arrived in India in February 1928, there was an All-India hartal under the direction of the Congress Working Committee. In Bengal, the Congress under Subhas's leadership went a step further by organising an intensive campaign for boycott of British goods. In May, Subhas met Mahatma Gandhi at Sabarmati and begged of him to come out of retirement, assume the leadership of the country and lead it on the road to a struggle on the widest possible scale. But Gandhiji did not respond.

As the Simon Commission toured the country in the teeth of popular opposition, the All Parties Conference met in March 1928 and again in May and set up a smaller committee under the chairmanship of Pandit Motilal Nehru which included Subhas. As to the fundamental basis of the Constitution, there was divergence of opinion as a minority section in the committee including Subhas Chandra demanded complete independence as against Dominion Status. While the Nehru Committee was busy thrashing out the principles of the new Constitution, Subhas embarked on an extensive tour which took him to Poona. Presiding over a political conference there, Subhas Chandra went ahead with preaching his own ideas on political organisation, programme and plan of action for

the Congress. He advocated that the Congress should take up the organisation of labour directly and also that women, youth and students should have organisations of their own to advance their own cause and that of the country as a whole.

The Nehru Committee had been able to settle the communal question with limited success. But, its recommendation on Dominion Status was not acceptable to Jawaharlal, Subhas Chandra and other younger left nationalists. However, in order that forces of national unity might not be weakened, they decided not to divide the national forum openly but set up their own forum for campaigning for complete independence. Accordingly, in November 1928 in Delhi, the Independence of India League was inaugurated with branches in different parts of India under the joint leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. They continued to be General Secretaries of the Congress.

The Independence of India League had its echo in a very important area of national life, viz, the students' movement. Students had played a very significant role all over Bengal and particularly in Calcutta in the agitation against the Simon Commission and they had suffered and sacrificed a lot in the struggle. The need was, therefore, felt for an organisation of students themselves that would fight for and defend their rights. The All Bengal Students' Conference in August 1928 in Calcutta was presided over by Subhas. Thereafter, students' organisations grew up all over Bengal and in due course in other provinces of the country as well.

As the year progressed, the political barometer continued to rise in India and it affected the world of labour also. There was already a strike among railway workers at Kharagpur near Calcutta, the year before. In 1928, a strike broke out in the Tata Steel Works at Jamshedpur. Subhas Chandra took up the leadership of the workers' cause and the strike served to initiate him into the workers'

movement. This was followed by large-scale strikes in the textile industry in Bombay, among railwaymen in Lilooah near Calcutta and a number of other places.

Organisation of youth engaged Subhas's equal attention. The first session of the All India Youth Congress was held in Calcutta in December 1928 with Subhas as the Chairman of the Reception Committee and K.F. Nariman of Bombay as President. In his addresses to students and the youth, Subhas Chandra preached the philosophy of Activism and Modernism as opposed to that of passivism and obscurantism. He pleaded to them again and again for the adoption of modern ideas and methods in building the new India of their dreams.

The annual session of the Indian National Congress of 1928 was held in Calcutta under the presidentship of Pandit Motilal Nehru. The attendance at this session was the largest since the inception of the Congress and all arrangements were made on a colossal scale. Subhas Chandra Bose emerged at this session as the principal spokesman of the younger and leftist forces in the national movement. He was also the General Officer Commanding of the Congress Volunteer Corps which was raised and trained by him on semi-military lines and were held together by military discipline. The Corps consisted of various formations including a motorcycle unit, a cavalry unit and Women's Corps. All wore semi-military uniform. When the General Officer Commanding in full military uniform inspected the parade of the volunteers, it was a magnificent spectacle. Subhas Chandra, thus, introduced a new element in the national movement, viz., military discipline among national workers. What was in 1928 merely a vision came true in practical shape and form on the battlefields of South-east Asia during World War II.

At the Congress session, a cleavage appeared between the elders and the young leaders of the party over the main political resolution. Subhas Chandra Bose moved an amendment at the open session advocating complete national

independence as the goal of the Congress in opposition to Mahatma Gandhi's resolution demanding Dominion Status and giving the British Government twelve months to fulfil the demand. Subhas defended his amendment saying that the main resolution amounted to lowering of the flag of independence raised the previous year at the Madras Congress and that a declaration on full and complete independence was necessary to create a new mentality and new consciousness among the countrymen and particularly the new generation. He added that he was moving the amendment with complete responsibility because the new generation of young leaders represented by him was prepared to face the consequences of a division in the Congress on the issue of independence. He also referred to the international situation. He said that the Madras resolution had given new prestige to India in international politics which they could not afford to lose. Secondly, politics of Europe and Asia and the race for armaments amongst the imperialist powers were all pointing to an approaching world conflagration. In this overall situation, India must stand out boldly for immediate and complete national independence. Subhas Chandra's amendment was defeated by 973 votes to 1350.

Subhas Chandra was of the opinion that the temporising resolution of the Calcutta Congress killed precious time and demoralised the people who were expecting a call to go forward. The only silver lining, according to Subhas, was that the left wing had gained enough strength in the Congress.

Following the Calcutta Congress, Mahatma Gandhi declared that if the British Government did not concede Dominion Home Rule by 31st December 1929, he would become an "Independence-walla" on 1st January 1930. Evidently, he was playing for time and preparing himself for the fight ahead. On the other hand, during 1929 new developments took place in three definite directions which helped to maintain the morale of the people. The first of

these was an outburst of revolutionary activities in Northern India--assassination of a British police officer who was responsible for the attack on Lala Lajpat Rai in 1928 and the throwing of a bomb inside the Assembly Chamber in Delhi by Bhagat Singh and Batukeswar Dutt. Following these events, the so called Lahore conspiracy case was started by the government which not only created great public interest but also public sympathy for the revolutionary patriots throughout India. Sardar Bhagat Singh was the leader of the youth movement in Punjab carried on under the banner of Nawjawan Bharat Sabha with which Subhas Chandra associated himself closely at a later stage. Among the accused in the Lahore Conspiracy Case was a young man from Bengal, Jatindra Nath Das, who was a Major in the Congress Volunteer Corps in Calcutta commanded by Subhas Chandra. Das undertook a fast unto death demanding treatment of revolutionary prisoners as political prisoners under trial. The government having declined to fulfil the demand, he continued his fast till the bitter end and died in prison on 13th September 1929. Subhas was deeply moved by Jatin Das's martyrdom and took charge of his funeral rights. Das's martyrdom profoundly inspired the youth of India and further stimulated the development of students' and youth organisations. The second remarkable development was a series of students' and youth conferences in different districts of Bengal and also in other provinces. Most of these conferences, namely, the first session of the Punjab Students Conference, Central Provinces Youth Conference and Bihar Students' Conference were presided over by Subhas Chandra. Others who took a leading part in such conferences were Jawaharlal Nehru, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay, Sarojini Naidu and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. In his addresses to students and the youth, Subhas Chandra placed the accent on patriotism, integrity, sacrifice, courage and an uncompromising adherence to the cause of complete national independence. He told his youthful audiences that

they must take the responsibility of creating public opinion because it was the youth who must solve the fundamental problems of India and must, therefore, look miles ahead of their contemporaries. The third important development in the Indian situation during 1929 was the increasing unrest among the working class which had already started in the preceding year. A batch of trade union leaders including three Englishmen were rounded up in March 1929 and put on trial in what came to be known as the Meerut Conspiracy Case. Subhas Chandra, who was closely associated with the Defence Committee, actively assisted in the defence of the prisoners.

Subhas Chandra was of the view that a political campaign on a wide scale should have been launched in 1929 synchronising with the other developments in the Indian situation. In Bengal, the position was particularly favourable for the Congress which had been able to throw out the ministers repeatedly in the Legislative Council. When the Governor dissolved the Council and ordered fresh elections, the Congress party returned with added strength. The remarkable organising ability of Subhas and his associates in the Congress party was also seen in the field of journalism. The nationalist newspaper--*Forward* was penalised so heavily by the court for defamation of the government-owned East Indian Railway that it was forced to closed down. But the following day, a new newspaper called *Liberty* was born and the Congress party did not, therefore, lose its principal medium of publicity.

In the latter half of 1929, at the instance of Mahatma Gandhi, a resolution was passed calling upon Congressmen to resign from the legislatures. Even though Pandit Motilal Nehru had, a couple of months earlier, encouraged the Bengal Congress to fight the elections, he supported the move. But owing to the opposition of Jatindra Mohan Sengupta and Subhas Chandra, the resolution was rescinded and the matter adjourned till the Lahore Congress in December.

When the time came for choosing the President of the Lahore Congress, a vast majority of Provincial Congress Committees nominated Gandhiji, but the Mahatma stepped down in favour of Jawaharlal Nehru.

In October 1929, the Viceroy Lord Irwin announced at the instance of Labour Prime Minister Ramsay McDonald that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress was the attainment of Dominion Status and that a Round Table Conference would be held in London after publication of the report of the Simon Commission. A conference of leaders of all parties met in November and by an overwhelming majority issued a manifesto offering cooperation with the British government to evolve a Dominion Constitution for India. The statement was signed, among others, by Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Rt.Hon'ble V.S. Shastri, Sri Tej Bahadur Sapru and others. Subhas Chandra Bose joined by Saifuddin Kitchlu and Abdul Bari issued a separate manifesto opposing the acceptance of Dominion Status and participation in the so-called Round Table Conference. They demanded that in a real Round Table Conference, India's representatives must not be selected by the British government but by the Indian people. They also warned the people that the British proposal was a trap and reminiscent of a similar move in Ireland which the Sinn Fein party had seen through and rightly rejected.

Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Motilal met the British Viceroy in December and sought an assurance that Dominion Status would be granted to India, but it was not forthcoming. They, therefore, returned disappointed and came to the Lahore Congress empty-handed.

7

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT - I

The historic Lahore Congress met under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru at the end of December 1929. Mahatma Gandhi himself came forward to move the resolution on the national demand of complete independence. At the stroke of midnight of the 31st December 1929, the youthful Congress President unfurled the flag of independence on the banks of the Ravi in the presence of a mammoth gathering. To the masses of India, the event was one of the great inspiration and brought forth a new message.

Subhas Chandra Bose went a step further from the position he had taken at the Calcutta Congress. He urged that a positive programme of action be adopted to enforce the national demand. He moved a resolution that the Congress should aim at setting up a parallel government in the country and to that end should undertake the task of organising workers, peasants and youths. In his opinion, merely taking a negative stand by asking Congressmen to resign from the legislatures was not enough. Another resolution was moved by the left wing that the social constructive programme as presented by Gandhiji should be in the hands of Congressmen and Congress organisations rather than in those of autonomous bodies as proposed by him. Both the resolutions were defeated.

In the course of his address to the Lahore Congress, Subhas Chandra said: "Mine is a programme of all-round boycott....If you are not prepared to go in for total boycott, it will be no use your boycotting Councils only....

"I am an extremist and my principle is--all or none'.

"A round table conference is a conference between two belligerent parties, between plenipotentiaries representing opposite sides. I ask you whether the people of India are invited to send any of their representatives with full powers to negotiate with the representatives of the British Government?....

"I submit that civil disobedience will never come until we can organise the workers and peasants and depressed classes..."

At the Lahore Congress, Subhas Chandra Bose together with Srinivas Iyengar and others of the leftist camp were excluded from the Congress Working Committee. Mahatma Gandhi wanted the supreme body in the party to be a homogeneous one so that he could proceed with his plans unchallenged from inside the High Command.

A breach in the Bengal Congress had manifested itself at the Calcutta Congress in 1928 when J.M. Sengupta came out in unqualified support of Gandhiji's policies whereas Subhas Chandra declined to do so and boldly moved an amendment to Gandhiji's resolution on Dominion Home Rule in favour of complete independence. Differences came to a head a month before the Lahore Congress when elections to the Bengal Congress Committee were held. There was a keen contest and the group led by Bose won. This resulted in a split in the party on the basis of political principles and policy. And, the inner conflict continued till the death of Sengupta in 1933. By and large, however, the majority in the Bengal Congress backed by strong revolutionary elements supported Subhas throughout his political career.

Early in January 1930, the Congress Working Committee announced that *26th January* was to be observed as Independence Day throughout the country. The Committee also issued a manifesto in the form of a declaration and a pledge on Indian independence. The first Independence Day was observed by the entire nation with unprecedented enthusiasm. Before launching his campaign, Mahatma

Gandhi, on the one hand, allayed the fears of moderate elements by declaring that he would be satisfied with what he called, the "substance of independence" and on the other reassured the leftist elements by saying that "civil disobedience once begun this time cannot be stopped so long as there is a single civil resister left free or alive."

Subhas formed a Congress Democratic party to promote his militant programme. But before he could proceed with his plans, he was placed under arrest as soon as he returned to Calcutta from Lahore and sentenced to a year's rigorous imprisonment. Like a caged tiger, he watched the stormy events which followed under Gandhiji's leadership.

Early in March, the Mahatma served his historic notice on the British Viceroy Lord Irwin announcing his intention to defy the Salt Law together with a band of his chosen followers. Subhas has said in his book 'The Indian Struggle' that "the next moves taken by Gandhiji would stand out for all time as some of the most brilliant achievements of his leadership and they show the heights to which his statesmanship would ascend in times of crisis". To Gandhiji's letter, the Viceroy gave terse reply regretting that he desired to defy the law. Thereupon, the Mahatma began his three weeks' historic march from Ahmedabad to Dandi, a sea-coast village, where civil disobedience was to be inaugurated. The march not only roused the entire countryside through which the Mahatma passed, but also the entire country to new heights of patriotism and determination.

On the 6th April, Gandhiji launched the campaign by picking up pieces of salt lying on the beach. Simultaneously, a wave of civil resistance to unjust laws swept the country. With civil disobedience came boycott of British goods, disobedience of the law of sedition, picketing of liquor shops, etc. Responding to a special appeal of Mahatma Gandhi, women in their hundreds and thousands joined the campaign and their enthusiasm stirred the men

to greater efforts and sacrifice. Towards the end of April, the British Government let loose a reign of terror throughout India, issued ordinance after ordinance and declared Congress to be an unlawful organisation. Special prisons were established to accommodate the thousands of prisoners. In many provinces, non-payment of taxes was launched. Hundreds of people were shot and killed.

While the country was going through a great upheaval, a sensational revolutionary action took place in Chittagong in April. A band of death-defying youngmen under the leadership of Surya Sen attacked the armoury, took possession of the weapons and then retired to the hills. They continued guerilla warfare for days together and British rule ceased to exist in the area. The majority of them were called in action and the rest went underground. The British military carried on an orgy of repression throughout Bengal. This episode, though not in line with Gandhiji's movement, shook the entire country and brought a new message of active resistance and open confrontation with the enemy in the battle for freedom. It remains in the history of our struggle as an immortal saga of patriotism, heroism and sacrifice.

Mahatma Gandhi was arrested on the 5th May and put into prison. From inside jail, Subhas Chandra watched the progress of the movement with great joy. In an altercation with jail authorities in Calcutta, Subhas Chandra, J.M. Sengupta and their fellow-prisoners were lathi-charged so severely that many of them were grievously injured and rendered unconscious.

The report of the Simon Commission was published in June 1930. It was so unsatisfactory that all political parties of India rejected it. During the next few months, efforts were made by intermediaries for a settlement between the Congress and the British. But such negotiations broke down.

While in prison, Subhas was elected Mayor of Calcutta, but he could assume office only after his release later in the year. In his Mayoral address, Subhas Chandra

movingly recalled Deshbandhu's leadership in the field of civic progress. During the period from the year 1924 to 1930 that Swarajist Congressmen were in power in the Corporation, various progammes for betterment of Calcutta's civic life were launched and carried out. Subhas Chandra announced further plans of progress.

On the second Independence Day, 26th January 1931, Subhas Chandra Bose as Calcutta's Mayor accompanied by senior officers and followed by a large procession advanced from the municipal headquarters towards the maidan in defiance of a police ban. As they crossed Esplanade, a strong contingent of mounted police made a ruthless attack on them. Subhas was severely injured and taken into custody. Another of his total of eleven imprisonments began in this cruel fashion. Subhas's blood-soaked clothes were exhibited the following day at a public meeting.

The First Round Table Conference was held in London towards the end of 1930 without the participation of the Congress. The net result of the conference was to offer to India two bitter pills--safeguards and federation. But it was not clear whether, given all the safeguards, a truly responsible government would come into existence. The fact was that in the absence of the Indian National Congress, no progress towards a settlement between India and Britain was possible. In January 1931 as the Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald was winding up the Round Table Conference in London, the Viceroy Lord Irwin made a public appeal for cooperation to the Congress. Mahatma Gandhi and members of the Working Committee were released soon thereafter. A series of parleys were held between Indian liberals and Gandhiji. Eventually, the latter met the Viceroy in mid-February in Delhi. After protracted negotiations, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was drawn up in the first week of March and placed before the Working Committee of the Congress under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru. It was approved. Subhas

Chandra was then in jail in Calcutta. According to his analysis and judgement, the terms of the pact were a great disappointment. Of all the provinces, Bengal was the most hostile to the pact except the group led by Jatindra Mohan Sengupta.

Subhas Chandra was released early in March. Although, he shared the disillusionment of his fellow-prisoners in Bengal in regard to the Pact, he decided not to come to a final decision regarding future policy without a full and frank discussion with Mahatma Gandhi. He, therefore, journeyed to Bombay and had a long conversation with him. The Mahatma gave Subhas a number of assurances. He told him that the mandate to the Congress delegation to the Second Round Table Conference would contain nothing that was not consistent with independence and that the Mahatma would do everything possible to secure the release of the political prisoners who had been left out of the terms of the Pact. From Bombay, Subhas travelled with the Mahatma to Delhi and continued his discussions during the journey. He was highly impressed with the ovation that Gandhiji received all along the way. But no sooner had they reached Delhi, they received a bombshell in the shape of the news that the government had decided to hang Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru. In response to a mass petition and at Gandhiji's intervention, the Viceroy agreed only to postpone the execution. It was hoped that the postponement would ultimately result in the cancellation of the death sentence. But as delegates from all over India were converging on Karachi for the annual Congress session in the last week of March, news was suddenly flashed across the country that Bhagat Singh and his comrades had been hanged. Intense grief and anguish gripped the entire nation.

The Karachi Congress met under the presidentship of Vallabhbhai Patel. The left wing to which Subhas belonged decided to consider the situation objectively and then take

a realistic policy vis-a-vis the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Eventually, they declared that although they did not approve of the Pact, they would not divide the party at that critical hour. Subhas made a statement to this effect before the Subjects Committee. The mandate to the Congress delegation to the Round Table Conference was in line with the assurance given by Gandhiji to Subhas in Bombay. Subhas Chandra welcomed the Karachi resolution on Fundamental Rights which gave some content to the socio-economic objectives of the party. As at Lahore so at Karachi, Subhas Chandra and others having leftist leanings were excluded from the Congress Working Committee.

Side by side with the Congress session in Karachi, the All India Nawjawan Bharat Sabha, founded by Bhagat Singh, held its session under the presidentship of Subhas Chandra Bose. In his address, Subhas Chandra made a critical analysis of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and a resolution was adopted condemning the Pact.

Ever since Subhas delivered his first thrust at the Calcutta Congress in 1928 with his independence resolution in opposition to Gandhiji's on Dominion Home Rule, he had been addressing student, youth and political conferences across the country. He had been preaching that the ultimate objective of our anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle was the establishment of a socialist order of truly Indian conception and Indian making.

At the Karachi session of the Nawjawan Bharat Sabha, he spelt out in clear and forthright terms the ultimate objective and the means leading to that goal. He declared that the "socio-economic" structure and the body politic of the future must help "to foster manhood and develop character and the will to translate into reality the highest ideals of collective humanity".... "the principles which should form the basis of our collective life are: justice, equality, freedom, discipline and love...in order to ensure the equality we must get rid of bondage of every kind--social, economic and political...". Subhas



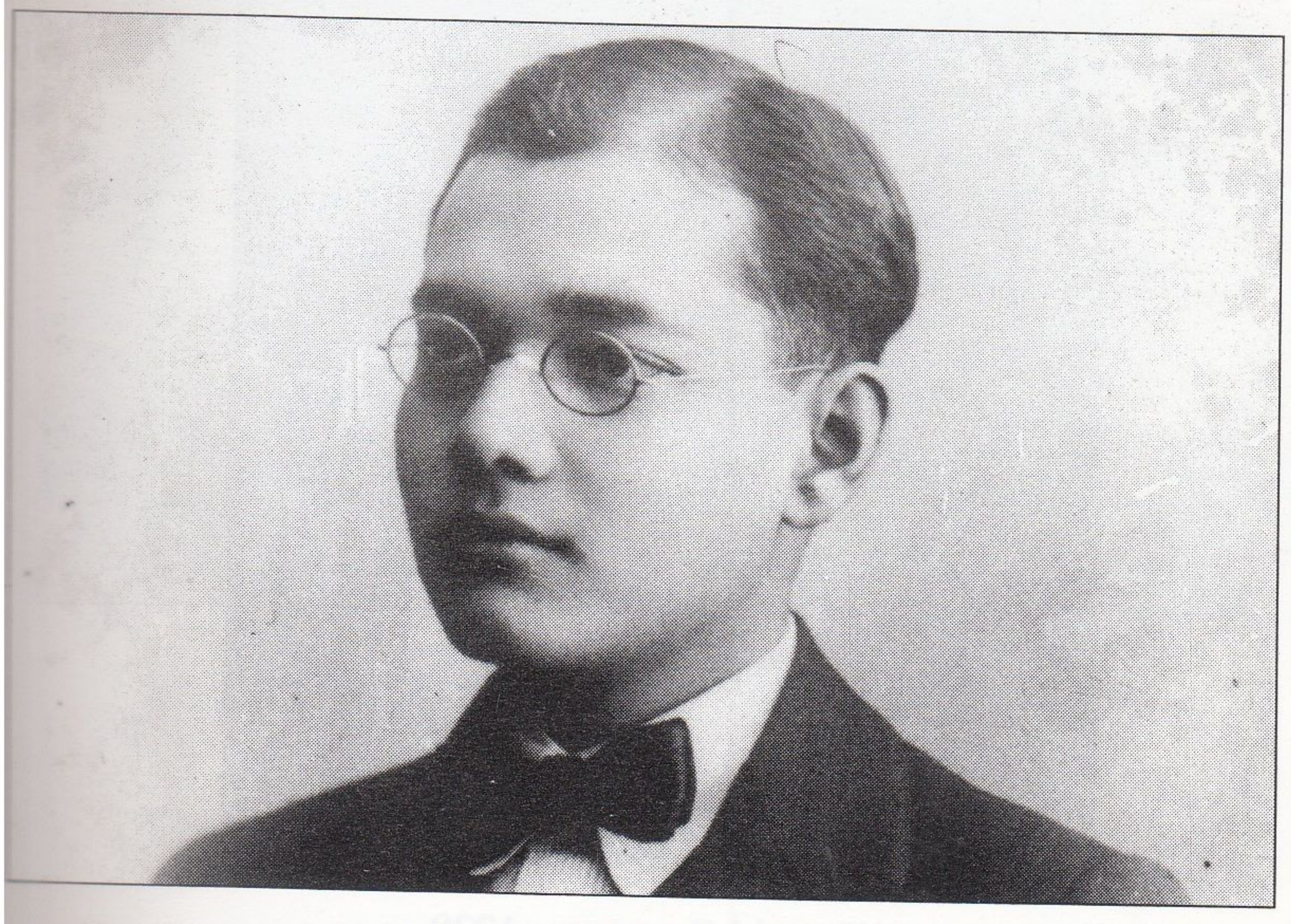
Janakinath Bose, father of Netaji Subhas Bose - 1905



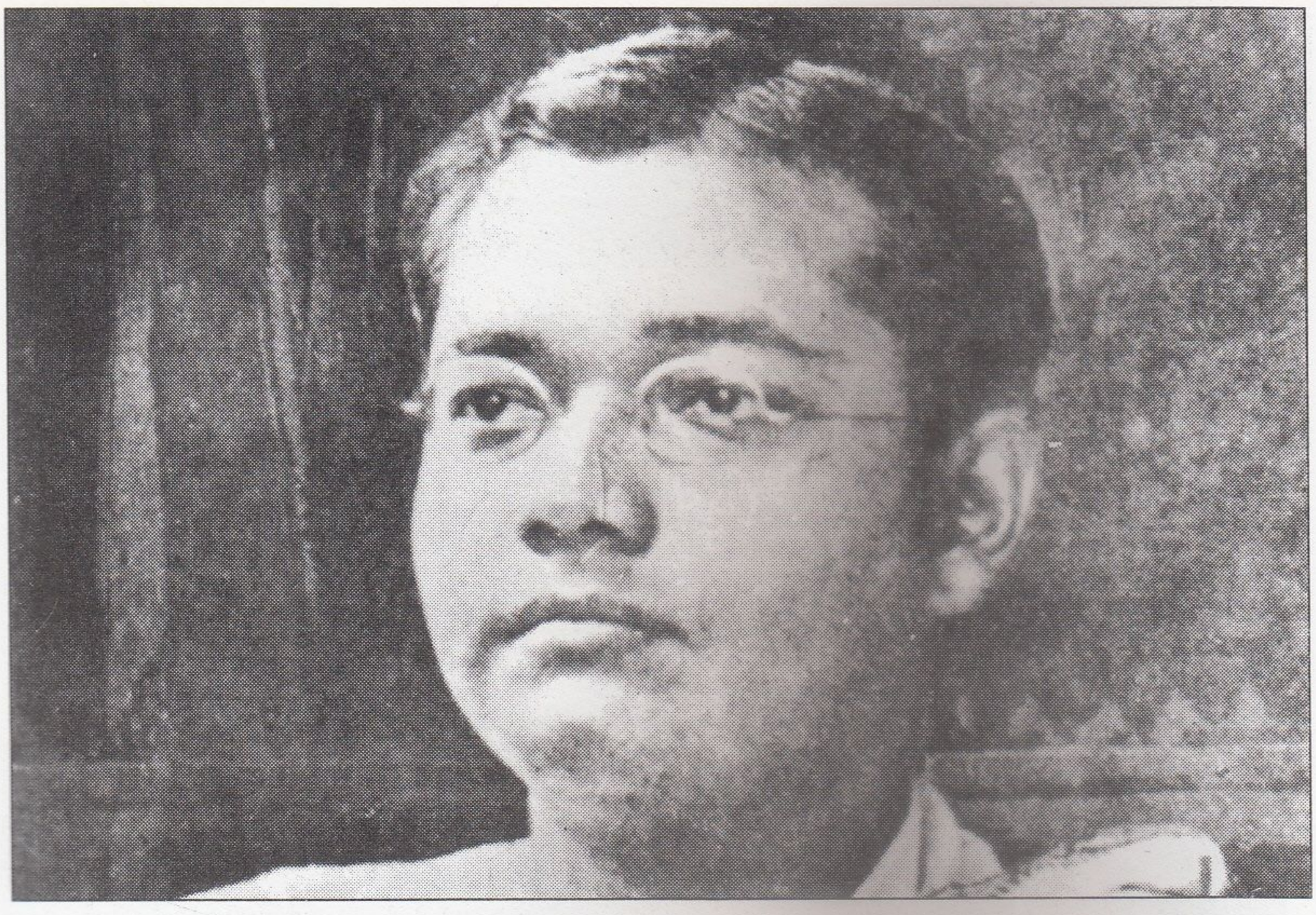
Prabhabati Bose, mother of Netaji Subhas Bose - 1905



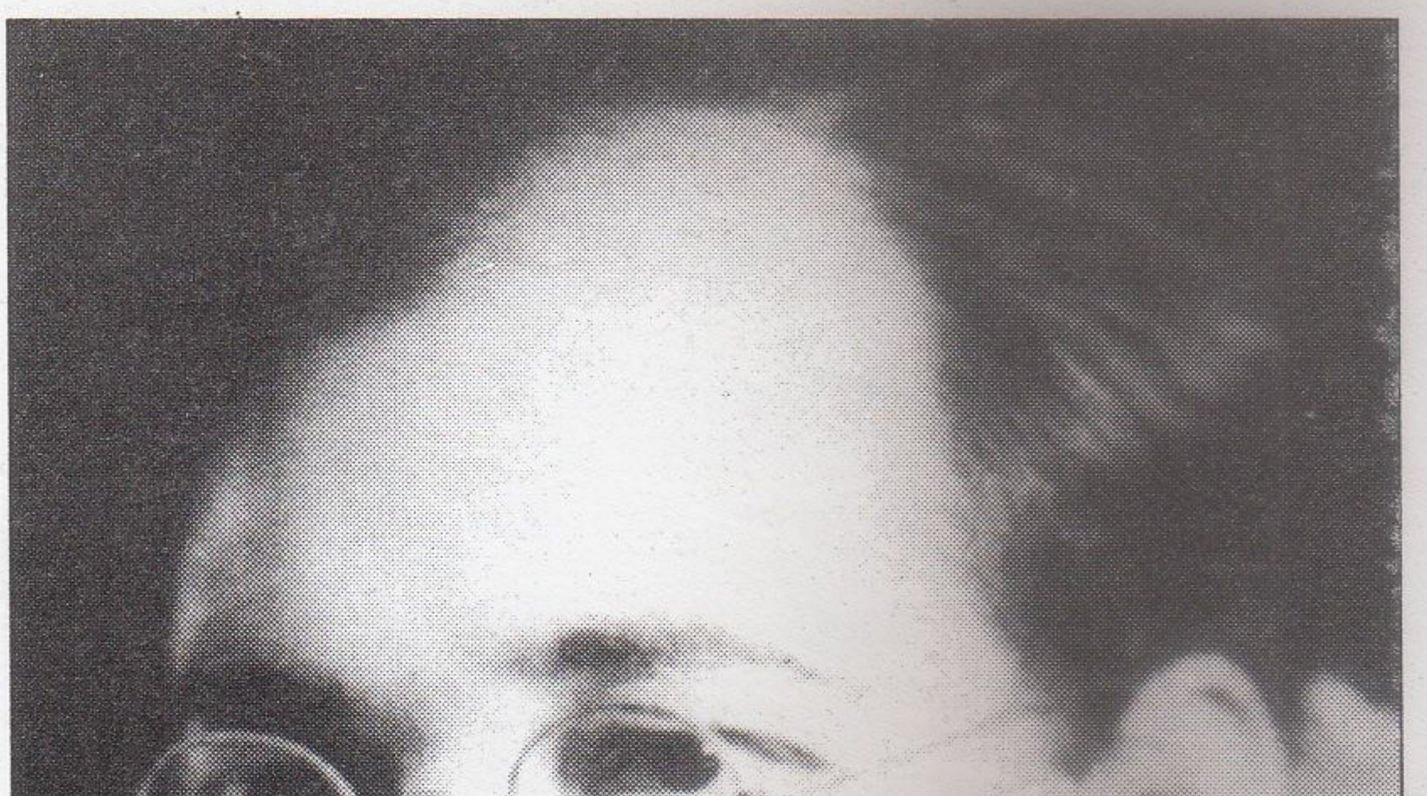
Netaji as a boy - 1905



4- In Cambridge - 1920



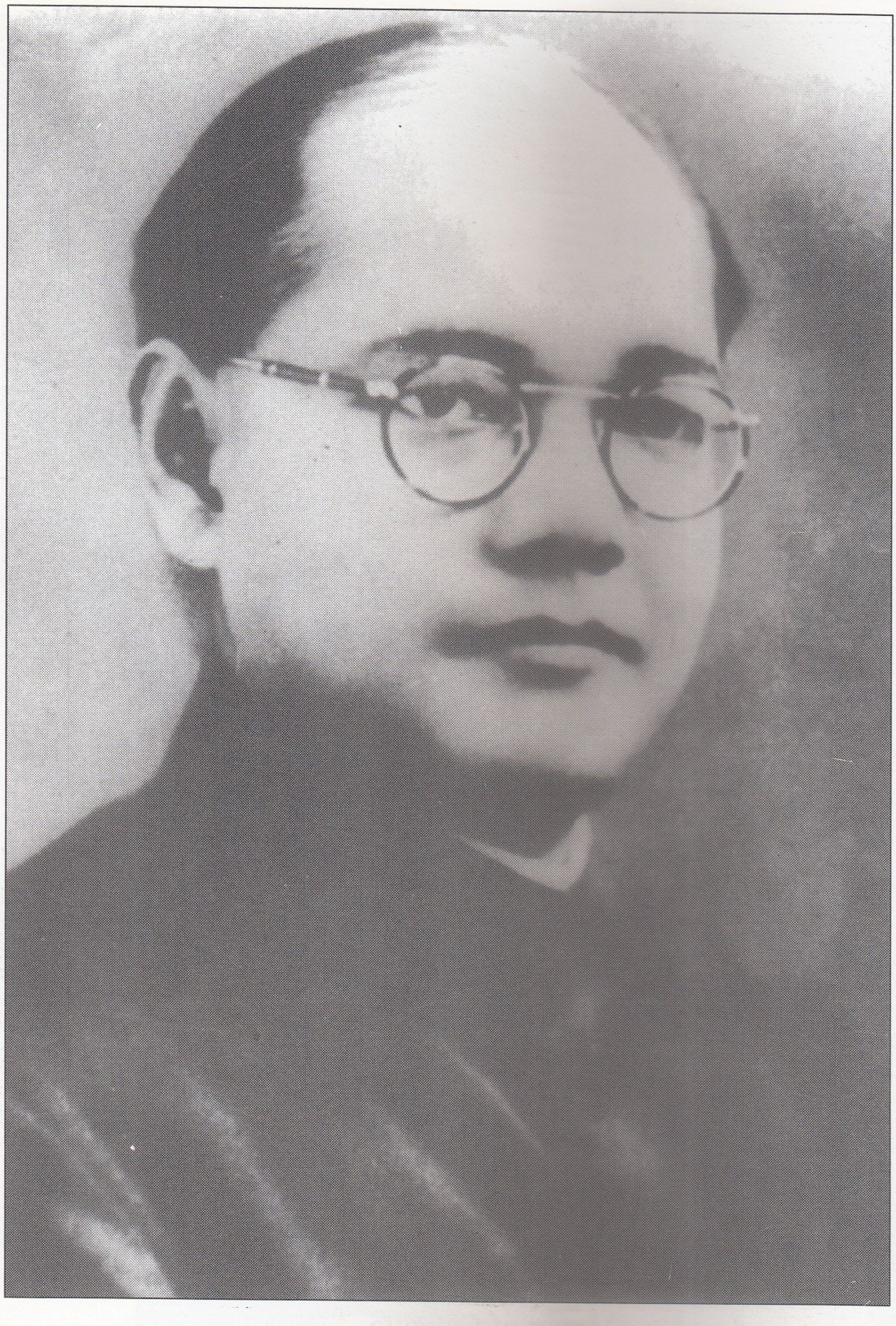
Chief Executive Officer, Calcutta Corporation - 1924



At Karachi Congress - 1929



Mayor of Calcutta - 1931



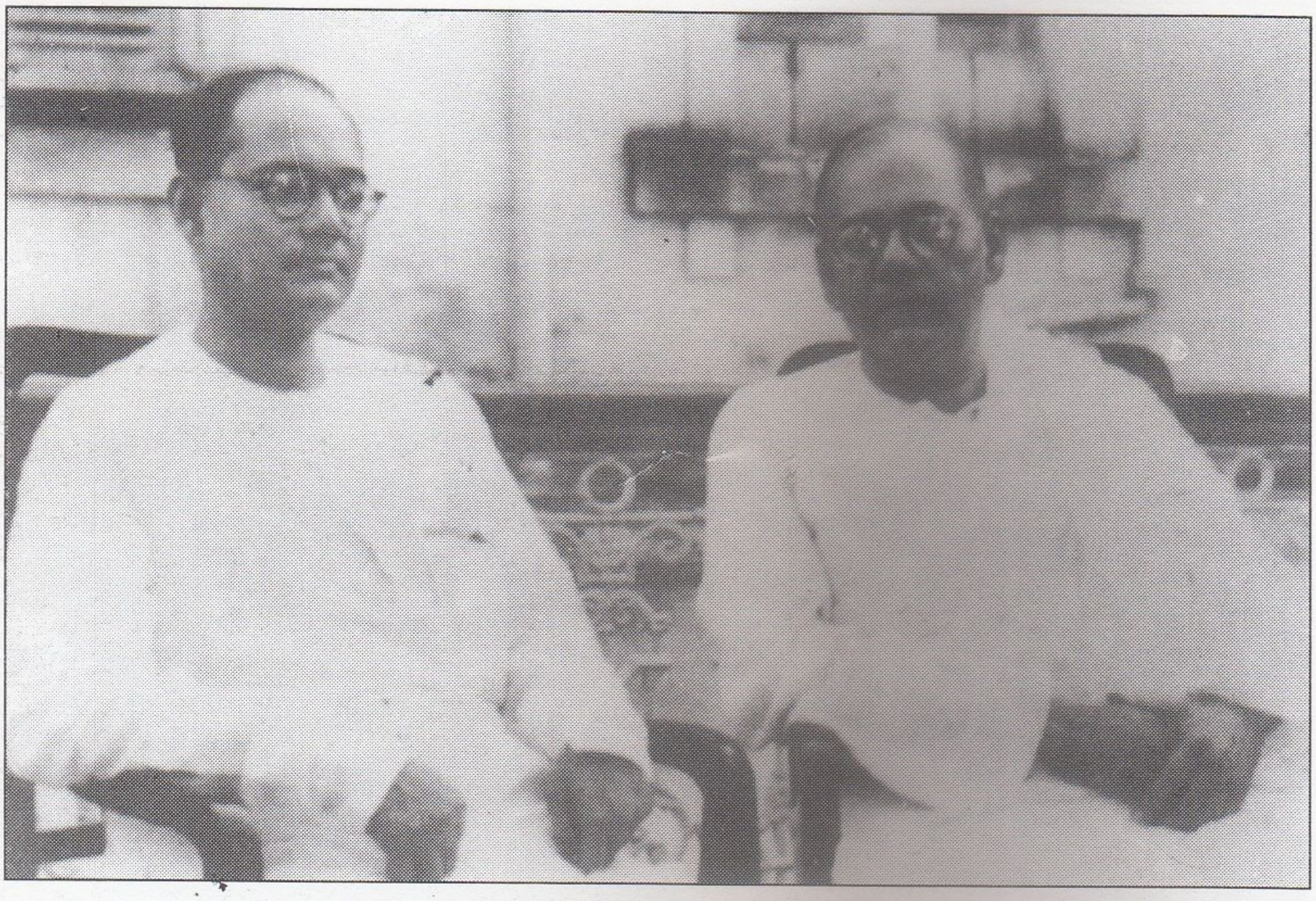
In Europe - 1934



Netaji with his wife Emilie - 1936



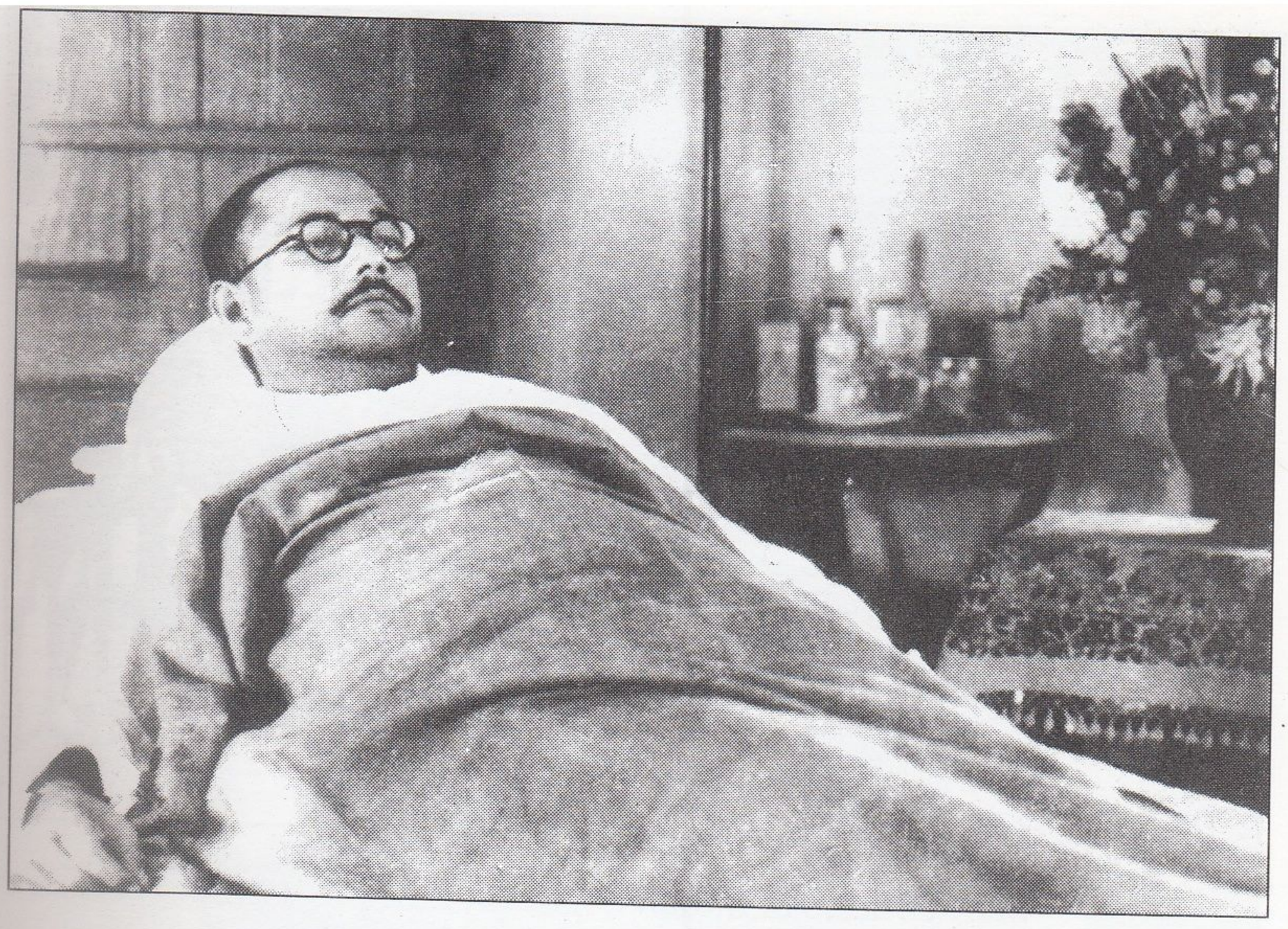
With nephews Amiya and Sisir at Kurseong - 1936



Bose brothers: Subhas and Sarat - 1937



With Gandhi, Patel, Nehru and Azad during Haripura Congress - 1938



In his house before Escape - December 1940



In Berlin - 1941



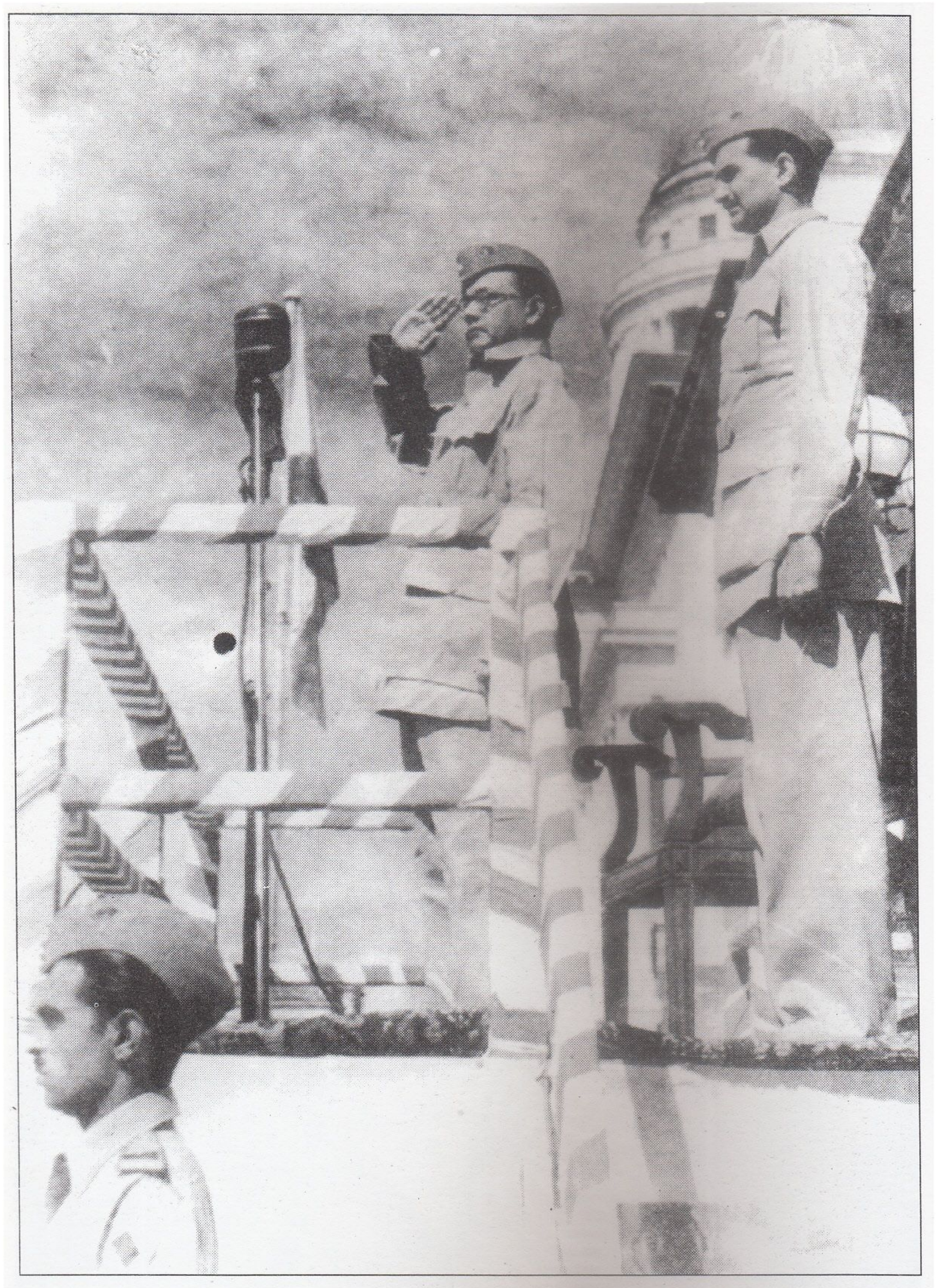
Staff Officers of Indian Legion in Europe - 1942



On the German Submarine with Captain Musenberg - 1943



In Tokyo - 1943



Taking Salute at first parade of INA



An INA troop marching past in Singapore - July 1943



Supreme Commander, INA



At the front - 1944



The last available photograph of Netaji - 17 Aug. 1945

Chandra proclaimed without any hesitation: "I want a Socialist Republic in India...until the radical or revolutionary elements are stirred up we cannot get freedom and we cannot stir up the revolutionary elements among us except by inspiring them with a new message...". Subhas regretted that there was a great deal of vagueness and reservation in the Congress policy and programme. It was, he said, based not on radicalism but on adjustments--adjustments between the landlord and tenant, between the capitalist and the wage earner, between the so-called upper classes and the so-called depressed classes, between men and women. Subhas Chandra, therefore, proposed the following programmes for winning freedom for India: (i) Organisation of peasants and workers on a socialistic programme; (ii) organisation of youth into volunteer corps under strict discipline; (iii) abolition of the caste system and the eradication of the social and religious superstitions of all kinds; (iv) organisation of women's associations for getting our womenfolk to accept the gospel and work out the new programme; (v) intensive programme for boycott of British goods and (vi) creation of literature for propagating the new cult and programme.

Although Subhas Chandra said categorically that the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was extremely unsatisfactory and disappointing, he did not wish, even for one moment, to question the patriotism of those responsible for the truce terms. In the circumstances, he called upon the youth to do positive work according to the programme outlined by him in order to strengthen the nation and the national demand avoiding unnecessary conflict with Congress leaders which might weaken the nation and strengthen the opponent. He asked the youthful assembly to exercise restraint and self-control even while criticising others because they had nothing to lose but everything to gain by being courteous and restrained.

Subhas Chandra summed up this significant address

to the youth of India by reminding them of the historical fact that India was the key-stone to the world edifice and a free India would spell destruction of Imperialism throughout the world.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT - II

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact appeared to the masses of India to be a victory for the Mahatma although it caused considerable disappointment among the youth and the left wing generally and also the revolutionaries and trade union circles. The revolutionary prisoners in Bengal and elsewhere who were not included in the general amnesty granted to satyagrahi prisoners as a result of the Delhi Pact went so far as to write to the Governor saying that the settlement with Gandhiji would not necessarily be binding on them. Subhas Chandra came to know of this development after his release from prison in March 1931. A few months later, the then Governor of Bengal, Stanley Jackson tried to come to an understanding with the revolutionaries through the good offices of J.M. Sengupta. However, the negotiations proved to be abortive.

Subhas Chandra travelled with Gandhiji again after the Karachi Congress and observed that the Mahatma was then at the pinnacle of popularity and prestige. In April, the Congress Working Committee selected Mahatma Gandhi as the sole representative of the Congress to the Round Table Conference. Subhas Chandra thought this was an error. Because, in London Gandhiji would be alone in an assembly of all kinds of non-descripts, self-appointed leaders and sectarian elements chosen by the British arrayed against him with nobody at his side to back him up. Soon after the decision was made, Gandhiji announced that his participation in the Round Table Conference depended on his ability to solve the Hindu-Muslim question. The

communal elements took advantage of the announcement and M.A. Jinnah placed his 'fourteen points' before him. Subhas met Gandhiji the same evening and found him in a depressed mood as he felt that an agreement was not possible on the basis of Jinnah's demands. Thereupon, Subhas Chandra told Gandhiji that the Congress should aim at an agreement between nationalist Hindus and nationalist Muslims and their agreement should be placed before the British governments as the national demand regardless of what anti-national elements thought or said. Gandhiji pointedly asked Subhas if he had any objection to separate electorates. To this, Subhas categorically replied that separate electorates were against the fundamental principles of nationalism and that even Swaraj, on the basis of separate electorate was not worth having.

In April, Subhas Chandra received reliable information that the British government would make every effort to drag Gandhiji at the very outset of the Round Table Conference, into minor and controversial issues while side-tracking the major issue of complete independence. By such means, the British government expected to get the Indians to go on fighting amongst themselves instead of presenting a united front. Subhas conveyed this information to the Mahatma. The Mahatma said in reply that immediately upon his arrival in London, he would try to obtain satisfaction from the British on the major issues. If he did not feel satisfied, his work in England would end then and there. In April, Lord Irwin was replaced as the Viceroy by Lord Willingdon, a hard-core imperialist. With his arrival, the official attitude began to stiffen and officials began to violate the terms of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. In Gujarat, the United Provinces and Bengal, the situation was particularly unsatisfactory. In Bengal, imprisonment without trial continued and not a single soul was released. Conspiracy cases continued as usual. Mahatma Gandhi personally handed over a charge-sheet containing details of breaches of the Delhi pact to the Home Secretary,

Government of India. He also had long talks with the new Viceroy. But, there was no appreciable improvement in the general situation. A half-hearted eleventh hour agreement between Gandhiji and the Viceroy was somehow worked out in August and Gandhiji sailed for England.

Mahatma Gandhi stayed in England for about two and a half months. The British Government sought to turn the tables on him by bringing into focus the problem of minorities and also the question of the nature of the future federal structure of India. No wonder that all attempts to arrive at a settlement of the communal question ended in failure when the members of the Minorities Committee were all chosen by the British Government. This result was clearly anticipated by Subhas Chandra Bose and his associates in the manifesto they issued in November 1929 in opposition to the Delhi manifesto of the senior leaders. It was Subhas's view that a world of difference would have come about if the Mahatma had gone to London with a full contingent of nationalist representatives of Muslims and other minority communities to counteract the mischievous moves of those hand-picked by the British. With the blessings of the British government, a Minorities Pact was concluded by the so-called representatives of the minorities. The Pact not only assured a number of seats for the depressed classes but even separate electorates for them. The British Prime Minister claimed that the Minorities Pact was acceptable to 115 million people of India and countered Gandhiji's stand by saying that their failure to solve the communal question was hampering the progress towards an agreed constitution for India. The Mahatma emphatically challenged such assertions claiming that Congress represented 85 per cent of India's population. He made a great speech at the plenary session of the conference in November which, however, showed that his disillusionment was complete.

It was Subhas Chandras's view that the Mahatama's London visit was badly planned and his entourage did not

include good and proper advisers. He was also of the view that he should have gone there in 1930 when he could have secured better terms from the British. The last flicker of hope of settlement disappeared in October when the Tories returned to power in England.

Subhas Chandra regretted that Gandhiji's trip abroad was not utilised to raise the issue of Indian independence as an international political question. No attempt was made, Subhas thought, to put Gandhiji in touch with people who really counted in European politics and he spent very little time on the continent.

Gandhiji returned to India on the last day of 1931 and was given a warm and cordial welcome home. While he was away, the Government had perfected its plans to start a policy of ruthless repression. On the other hand, youth and working class organisations who disapproved of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in the first instance, went ahead with their campaign and preparations for the coming struggle. Subhas Chandra presided over the provincial conference of Naujawan Bharat Sabha in the United Provinces in May. In July, he presided over the Calcutta session of the All India Trade Union Congress where the Delhi Pact was also disapproved. The revolutionaries of Bengal, exasperated by governmental repression, followed up the Chittagong Armoury Raid by a series of terroristic acts in retaliation. The Government, in turn, stepped up their policy of terror including the imposition of a veiled form of martial law in many districts. Thus, the vicious cycle of governmental repression, revolutionary terrorism and official counter-terrorism went on. Even during the period of the Gandhi-Irwin truce, some revolutionary prisoners were sentenced to death and hanged. The Bengal Political Conference held in December upheld the leftist view that the government had violated the terms of the truce and the Congress should, therefore, revive civil disobedience. In the North West Frontier Province, the Government came down with a heavy hand on the 'Khudai Khidmadgars' or

Red Shirt volunteers led by Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. A British Socialist writer Brailsford told Subhas Chandra after a visit that the situation in the United Provinces was verging on an agrarian revolution.

Soon after his arrival, Mahatma Gandhi wrote to Lord Willingdon seeking clarification of the real attitude of the Government. The Viceroy sent a negative and unfriendly reply. The Congress Working Committee, thereupon, adopted a resolution which the Viceroy found unacceptable and declined to see Gandhiji. The stage was, thus, set for the resumption of the second civil disobedience movement.

In the first week of January 1932, the British Government launched its offensive against the Congress and nationalist organisations throughout India. Leaders were arrested in mass including Gandhiji, Jawaharlal and Subhas Chandra. In 1930, the government was taken by surprise by Gandhiji's novel method of civil resistance. But in the course of 1931, the government had perfected its machinery to deal with civil disobedience. During the first four months of the year, over eighty thousand people had been arrested. Congress organisations were declared unlawful and ruthless measures of repression undertaken, viz., lathi charges, indiscriminate firing, imposition of collective fines, confiscation of property, gagging the nationalist press, widespread searches and harassment, etc., Even inside jails, political prisoners were subjected to cruel punishment like bar-fetters, night hand-cuffing, gunny clothing etc. The people of India fought back heroically. But, this time they were at a disadvantage because the enemy was totally prepared and utterly ruthless.

After his arrest in January 1932, Subhas Chandra was lodged in a small jail in Seoni, an obscure place in Central Provinces. He was joined soon by his elder brother Sarat Chandra, a leading lawyer of Calcutta, front-rank Congressman and Alderman of Calcutta Corporation. Ever since his childhood, Subhas held a special position in the affections of this brother and his wife Bivabati. At every

crisis in his life, Subhas sought Sarat's counsel, guidance and support. Now the time had arrived for the brothers to suffer together and in comradeship in the cause of India's freedom. Such comradeship of brothers, in ideology, service and suffering is a unique phenomenon in the history of nations.

In August 1932, the British Government announced the so-called Communal Award providing for reservation of seats for the depressed classes and other national minorities in the legislatures and, what was worse, separate electorates. The Mahatma addressed a letter to the British Prime Minister informing him that in keeping with his stand on the question of communal electorates, he would undertake a fast unto death against a measure calculated to tear away the depressed classes from the Hindu mainstream. The entire nation was seized with anxiety and alarm at the news. As Gandhiji fasted in his prison cell in Poona, frantic appeals were sent to him from all quarters to desist. A conference of Hindu leaders of diverse views met in Bombay. After prolonged discussions, an agreement was reached at doing away with separate electorates. The Poona Pact was conveyed to the British Government which found no alternative other than to recommend its endorsement to Parliament. Thereupon, the Mahatma broke his fast.

As in 1930, Subhas Chandra watched the march of events in 1932 from behind the prison bars. He was not impressed with the fact that the important issue of Indian independence should once again be side-tracked by the emotional upsurge over Gandhiji's fast and the natural anxiety of his countrymen to save his life. He felt strongly that the British Government had this time definitely got the better of the Congress. As the year drew to a close, Congressmen became more interested in the anti-untouchability campaign and Temple Entry Bills rather than in civil disobedience. He deplored this anti-climax.

In the sub-jail in Seoni, the health of the Bose brothers

rapidly deteriorated. They were first shifted to Jabalpur Central Jail. From there, Subhas was shifted from place to place ostensibly for medical diagnosis and treatment--first to Madras, then to Bhowali and then to Lucknow. But neither was a proper diagnosis made of his ailments nor was any treatment of any avail. As during his exile in Burma, he was reduced to a skeleton. In the enforced absence of Sarat Chandra, his wife Bivabati carried on negotiations on Subhas's behalf with the government in Delhi. She found the attitude of the powers that be extremely unfriendly. Eventually, it was decided to send Subhas to Europe for treatment and cure. The British Government would not agree to release him under any circumstances, even for the purpose of visiting his old and ailing parents. They would also not be responsible for expenses on account of his travel and treatment abroad.

Before his departure for Europe, Subhas Chandra was brought back for a while to Jabalpur jail where his brother was held. Some members of the family and Deshbandhu's widow Basanti Devi came to Jabalpur to bid him farewell. On 13th February 1933, Subhas sailed for Europe on board the Italian ship S.S. Gange on another forced exile.

In March 1933, Subhas reached Vienna. There, he found very good physicians and received satisfactory medical treatment. As soon as he felt a little better, he began to take active interest in European politics and established contacts at every level to further the cause of Indian independence. He found a kindred spirit in Vithalbhai Patel who shared his interest in securing international support for Indian nationalist aspirations.

Back home in India, efforts were being made by Congressmen in different parts of the country to reactivate the civil disobedience campaign. The Independence Day was observed in January in many places with great enthusiasm. The British Government published a White Paper in the middle of March embodying its proposals for constitutional reforms. Soon thereafter, the annual session of the

Congress was called in Calcutta for April. The Government immediately arrested all the leaders who were still at liberty including the President-elect Madan Mohan Malaviya. Mrs. J.M. Sengupta who deputised for him was arrested on the spot. The most important resolution of the Congress was the one condemning and rejecting the White Paper. The feeling of the country was aptly summed up by the President-elect Malaviya when he said that fifteen months had not enabled the government to crush the Congress and twice fifteen months would not enable it to do so. Nevertheless, the country was startled one morning in May to hear that the Mahatma had suspended the civil disobedience movement. He was on a fast at that time and all calm and dispassionate judgement was, therefore, suspended for the time being. The British Government, however, did not reciprocate. They refused to withdraw the repressive ordinances or release political prisoners. Subhas Chandra Bose and Vithalbhai Patel issued a strongly worded joint statement in Vienna disapproving of Gandhiji's decision. They said that the decision virtually undid the work and sacrifice of the last thirteen years. They called for a more radical policy and leadership. In matters of national policy, Subhas Chandra had always been absolutely frank and forthright regardless of the esteem and admiration in which he held Gandhiji and other senior leaders. Many people, however, thought that it was outrageous to criticise Gandhiji openly while he was on a fast.

Soon after the suspension of the civil disobedience movement, Subhas Chandra was invited to preside over an Indian Political Conference in London. The British Government by a clever design had endorsed his passport only for two European countries Italy and Austria. This was to create the impression that he could not travel to other countries including Britain. He, therefore, sent his presidential address to London to be read in absentia. That speech is regarded as one of his fundamental writings and

showed that his own political preparation was already far advanced, both in respect of the strategy of the fight against Britain and the ultimate objectives of Indian Revolution which, he defined, as *Samyavada*.* He set out his faith in India's destiny in the following words:

".....In the seventeenth century England made a remarkable contribution to world civilisation through her ideas of constitutional and democratic government. Similarly, in the eighteenth century France made the most wonderful contribution to the culture of the world through her ideas of 'liberty, equality and fraternity'. During the nineteenth century Germany made the most remarkable gift through her Marxian philosophy. During the twentieth century Russia has enriched the culture and civilisation of the world through her achievements in proletarian revolution, proletarian government and proletarian culture. The next remarkable contribution to the culture and civilisation of the world India will be called upon to make".

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* An old Indian expression conveying a state of harmony after the removal of social contradictions.

INDIA'S AMBASSADOR ABROAD: 1933-36

During his sojourn in Europe, Subhas Chandra took upon himself the role of the unofficial Ambassador of Indian Nationalism. Though his work started in Austria, he extended his activities to other countries in Europe, namely Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and France. The British government particularly wanted to keep him out of Germany and England because in the thirties a large number of Indian students were studying or undergoing higher technological training in those countries. They feared that Subhas Chandra Bose would influence the student communities there, with his radical and militant views and draw them into the national movement.

Subhas Chandra established and developed contacts in these European countries not only in political circles but also among intellectuals --litteratures, economists, sociologists, scientists and men and women of the cultural world. He also corresponded with many European scholars and writers. He lectured at many places on the Indian national movement, Indian history, civilization and culture. He sought the moral support of all classes of people in these countries for India's struggle against British imperialism. In Vienna, he established the Austria-India Society. In Czechoslovakia, on the one hand he received medical treatment at the spas of Karlsbad and on the other, he established important political and cultural contacts. In Prague, he held important political discussions with Eduard Benes, the then Czech Foreign Minister. He took

particular interest in the organisation of the Czechoslovak Legion during the first world war outside the country to fight and win freedom for Czechoslovakia. He also took a leading part in the formation of the Czechoslovak-Indian Association and addressed its inaugural ceremony in 1934. He found a great deal of sympathy for India's cause in Poland and stimulated the interest of Polish friends in India's struggle. He carefully studied about the military training of the Polish Legion in Japan during the first world war for liberating Poland from Russian domination.

During Subhas Chandra's stay at Europe, the storm-centre of European politics shifted to Germany following the seizure of state power by Hitler and the National Socialist Party. In the south, Italy under Mussolini's leadership was getting stronger and threatening British hegemony in the Mediterranean region. Mussolini had given Mahatma Gandhi a warm and enthusiastic reception in Rome during his journey back to India after attending the .nd Table Conference in England. In Berlin, the Indo-erman Society made arrangements for Subhas Chandra to have discussions with officials of the German Foreign Office. But such discussions did not make much headway because the dominant section of the National Socialist Party chose to remain neutral in the fight between Indian nationalists and the British on account of Hitler's ambivalent attitude towards Britain and his reactionary views about colonial and subject peoples. There were, however, some dissident groups in the party who wanted to make common cause with colonial and subject peoples against Britain. Subhas Chandra was assured by such dissident groups that they would be prepared to secretly assist revolutionary organisations in Bengal. Subhas Chandra also got in touch with Indians working in Germany. Some of them were political exiles since the first world war who had worked with the German Foreign Office to organise a revolt in India. Others were working with German socialists, and finally there were young students who had

recently arrived from India. The last group was being guided by A.C.N. Nambiar, who had organised an Indian Information Bureau on behalf of the Indian National Congress in Berlin.

Political discussions with official circles having proved fruitless, Subhas Chandra paid more attention to propaganda on behalf of India through press statements and lectures and by promoting contacts in academic circles. Subhas Chandra became a close friend of Franz Thierfelder, Director of the German Academy in Munich and they drew up a programme of Indo-German collaboration which, however, did not evoke favourable response in government circles. In a letter to Thierfelder on the eve of his departure for India from Europe in March 1936, Subhas Chandra expressed his disgust and disappointment with the policy of Nazi Germany in the following terms:

"The recent speech of Herr Hitler in Munich gives the essence of Nazi philosophy....which had a very weak scientific foundation...I want to point out that it is historically false to say that Europe and Asia should not be at peace with one another. The new nationalism in Germany is inspired by selfishness and racial arrogance...when we are fighting the greatest empire of the world for our freedom and for our rights...we cannot brook any insult from any other nation or any attack on our race or culture".

Italy was a country of great interest to Subhas Chandra for valid historical reasons. How the divided people achieved national unity and finally national liberation leading to the establishment of a unified national state was of great significance to Indian freedom fighters. Subhas Chandra studied with great care the organisation of the underground revolutionary network in Italy known as 'Carbonieri' which was the precursor of the Italian freedom movement and of the "Risorgimento" which led to the establishment of the Italian State. In the course of his

conversations with his friends and Indian students in Europe, Subhas Chandra often referred to Mazzini, the creator of "Young Italy", who united all Italians for freedom and republican ideals of government. It is interesting that Subhas Chandra Bose provided in many ways a historical parallel to Mazzini in trying to build up a small but well-organised revolutionary vanguard to achieve national unity and freedom. He told his friends in Europe that the forerunners of a new strong national consciousness could only be youth--inspired and trained to sacrifice everything, when the call came, for India's cause. During one of his visits to Rome, Subhas Chandra had an interesting conversation with Mussolini. The latter asked him whether Subhas really and firmly believed that India would soon be free. Subhas replied with an emphatic 'yes'. Mussolini then asked whether he believed in reformist or revolutionary methods for achieving independence. Subhas answered by saying that he stood for revolutionary methods. Thereupon, Mussolini said, "Then indeed you have a chance".

The other country which interested Subhas Chandra greatly was Turkey where fundamental changes had been brought about and the country unified under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. He saw that India and Turkey had many problems in common and both needed several similar social reforms. He wanted to apply to India some of the cultural, social and administrative solutions which Turkey had found necessary for modernising the country. He was particularly interested to see how Kemal Ataturk modernised an oriental state by inducting technological and military skill from Germany. The other measure of linguistic reform which impressed him was the adoption of the Roman script instead of variety of existing indigenous scripts as a unifying link for the entire Turkish people. In the process of his investigations and study, Subhas became an ardent admirer of Kemal Ataturk.

Towards the end of 1934, Subhas Chandra received

news that his father Janakinath was critically ill. The family desired that he should fly to India to be at his father's bedside. He left for India soon but arrived late by a day and a half. His father had passed away and his last wish was not fulfilled. As soon as he arrived in Calcutta, Subhas was interned in his house on Elgin Road. He lived there for about a month virtually as a prisoner and returned to Europe early in January 1935 to resume his medical treatment and his work for India.

During his exile in Europe, Subhas Chandra wrote the first and major part of his substantive work *The Indian Struggle*. He wrote it in a little over a year when his health was far from satisfactory. Moreover, while writing what was essentially a historical narrative he had to draw largely from his memory in the absence of adequate reference material at his disposal. The book was published in London in January 1935. The British Government in India with the approval of the Secretary of State for India in London lost no time in banning its entry into India on the ground that the book "tended to encourage methods of terrorism and direct action".

It remains a matter of conjecture what would have been its impact then on the reading public in India. However, it was particularly well reviewed in the British press and warmly welcomed in European political and literary circles. 'The Manchester Guardian' of England wrote: "This is perhaps the most interesting book which has yet been written by an Indian politician on Indian politics...The importance of the book is of course immensely enhanced by the fact that the author is one of the youngest of the three most interesting figures in Indian politics....His history of the last fourteen years, though written avowedly from the standpoint of the Left Wing, is as nearly fair to all parties and everyone as can reasonably be expected of an active politician..." 'The Sunday Times' said "*The Indian Struggle* is a valuable book for the enlightenment of opinion". The diplomatic correspondent of the Daily Herald

expressed the following opinion: "It is calm, sane, dispassionate. I think it is the ablest work I have read on current Indian politics...This is the book of no fanatic, but of a singularly able mind...of an acute, thoughtful, constructive mind, of a man who while still under forty, would be an asset and an ornament to the political life of any country." 'The News Chronicle' observed: "...He is unusually clear-headed for a revolutionary...his evidence has the importance which attaches to the deposition of a very articulate first-hand witness." There was a stir among left wing British politicians and literary circles after the banning of the book in India. George Lansbury sent a message saying: "Thank him very much for his book which I am reading with great interest and from which I am learning a great deal..." The French savant Romain Rolland wrote in a letter: "It is indispensable work for the history of the Indian Movement. In it you show the best qualities of a historian: lucidity and high equity of mind...I am admiring your firm political sense..." President de Valera wrote: "I hope that in the near future freedom and happiness will come to the Indian people." In Rome, Subhas personally presented a copy to Mussolini who, in turn, expressed his sympathy for the Indian freedom movement.

Of all the European countries, Ireland was the one most interested in Indian independence. Conversely Indian nationalists, particularly Bengal revolutionaries had been greatly inspired by the Irish struggle against the common enemy. While in Europe, Subhas Chandra availed of the opportunity to study the Irish experience at close quarters. He carefully examined the methods adopted by Irish revolutionaries to secure support from abroad, particularly Germany, the traditional opponent of the British on the continent, during the First World War. On comparative study, Subhas discovered and confirmed interestingly similar political trends in the independence movements of Ireland and India. It was from Berlin that Subhas Chandra took the first steps to establish personal contact with de

Valera. The two leaders met in Dublin early in 1936 and held long conversations on a wide range of subjects of mutual interests. Subhas arranged the publication of bulletins on India in three languages, English, French and German, for distribution from Ireland to the international press. The Indo-Irish Independence League working under the leadership of the legendary Irish revolutionary Madame Maud Gonne MacBride received a lot of impetus in its activities by the visit of Subhas Chandra Bose to Ireland.

The Congress Socialist Party emerged on the national platform in India in 1934 when Subhas was in Europe. He welcomed the emergence of this left wing current in Indian politics because he was of the opinion that the instinct that had led to its formation was historically correct. But, according to Subhas, the Socialists lacked homogeneity, some of their ideas were outdated and they needed a clear ideology, programme and plan of action. In outline, Subhas Chandra said that India's party of the future must stand for the interests of the masses and not for the vested interests. It must stand for the complete political and economic liberation of the Indian people. It will stand for a Federal Government for India as the ultimate goal but for a strong central government with dictatorial powers for some years to put India on her feet. It must rely on a sound system of state planning and work for reorganisation of the agricultural and industrial life of the country. It will break down social barriers like caste and build a new social structure on the basis of village communities or village "panch" of the past. It will abolish landlordism and introduce a uniform system of land tenure for the whole of India. The party will not stand for a democracy in the mid-Victorian sense of the term but for government by a strong party held together by military discipline as the only means of holding India together and preventing chaos. The party will seek to unite all radical organisations under a national executive so that there is

united simultaneous activity on many fronts of the national scene.

Subhas Chandra expressed the view that there were several reasons why Communism would not be adopted in India. The Indian movement was essentially a nationalist movement--a movement for the national liberation of the Indian people. In his view, it would be India's task to work out "a doctrine of synthesis or equality" on which the Indian society will be based in future. He called this doctrine *"Samyavada"*.

In 1935, Subhas Chandra had to undergo a major surgical operation for the removal of a diseased gall-bladder. His doctors had finally found the root of his ailments. In those days, risks involved in major surgical procedures were much higher than at present. What is more, he was obliged to face the risks in a far-off country away from his near and dear ones. So, he was asked to put down in writing any last wish or message that he might like to leave in case anything unforeseen happened. He wrote on a small sheet of paper: "My assets to my countrymen, my debts to my brother Sarat."

In the course of his travels in Europe, Subhas Chandra also visited Switzerland. He went up and down the corridors of League of Nations in Geneva knocking from door to door pleading the case of his country and her right to freedom. He was greatly disappointed to see that at the League, might prevailed over right and the voice of subject peoples was not heard in its counsels.

Of the intellectuals Subhas met in Europe was Romain Rolland, the great French savant and friend of India. After his meeting with Subhas Chandra, Rolland made interesting entries in his diary about an unknown young traveller from a distant forgotten country. Rolland found Subhas "particularly serious and pre-occupied and intelligent--he has proved this by the book he has just published. He has judged events and men with the eye of a true statesman and with a remarkable effort at objectivity...he does not

regard terrorism as a healthy policy and he is in favour of organised resistance, not excluding violence (and definitely in favour of it if the struggle makes it necessary). Neither, naively does he hide the hopes he has in a European war which by keeping England occupied, will assure India's chances of victory...he would certainly not see any harm in the U.S.S.R. helping India gain her independence...."

CONGRESS PRESIDENT - I

In early 1936, Subhas Chandra felt that he had sufficiently recovered his health and planned to return home. He was particularly keen to attend the Congress session to be held a few months later in Lucknow under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru. When the British authorities came to know of his plans, they sent him a written warning through the British Consul in Vienna to the effect that if he returned to India, he could not expect to remain at liberty. Regardless of the warning, Subhas sailed for home in March. As soon as he set foot on Indian soil in Bombay, he was taken into custody and lodged in prison. Sometime later, he was transferred to Kurseong near Darjeeling and detained in his brother Sarat's bungalow there. The same house had served as the detention camp for Sarat Chandra himself earlier during the civil disobedience movement.

The author, then a young student, had the opportunity of spending a few weeks with Subhas Chandra at Kurseong by special permission of the government. During this time, he came to know for the first time at very close quarters not only the finer traits of Subhas Chandra's personality and character but also the latter's views on a wide range of national and international questions and character. It was clear that Subhas Chandra had by then reached the threshold of national leadership in India.

As during his previous jail terms, Subhas Chandra's health deteriorated again. Towards the end of the year, he was removed to Calcutta and admitted to the Calcutta Medical College as a security prisoner. A series of medical

examinations were carried out to determine the cause of the recurrence of his ailments. He felt extremely restive in not being able to participate in political activity when profound changes were about to take place in connection with and following elections under the new Government of India Act of 1935. In his absence, his elder brother Sarat Chandra who was released from prison a year earlier had been entrusted with the leadership of the Bengal Congress and was put in charge of the election campaign on behalf of the party.

The vindictive treatment of Subhas Chandra was widely condemned throughout the country. An adjournment motion in the Central Legislative Assembly moved by the opposition challenging the government to prove charges against him in a court of law was carried. In May, an all-India hartal was also observed to protest against his continuous detention. But all this had no effect on the alien government. Almost a year later, in March 1937, Subhas was released unconditionally for reasons of health. Dilip Kumar Roy, a life-long friend, after meeting him soon thereafter said that Subhas Chandra appeared to him "as more spiritual than ever in spite of the rings of shadow round his eyes. His eyes irradiated with a lustre that had not been there eight years ago."

Subhas Chandra was given a mammoth reception in Calcutta on his release. But he was not well. Therefore, under medical advice he spent a few months in Dalhousie, a health resort in north India as a guest of Dr. and Mrs. Dharamvir whom he had met in England while he was a student there. The Dharmvirs had become close friends of Subhas and took charge of nursing him back to health.

General elections had since been held and the Congress Party came out victorious with absolute majorities in six out of eleven provinces of British India. In provinces like Bengal and Assam, it emerged as the largest single party in the legislatures. In Bengal, Subhas's elder Sarat was elected leader of the Congress Party in the Assembly. The Bose

Brothers wanted to work out an alliance with the Krishak Praja Party led by A.K. Fazlul Huq, form a coalition government with them and isolate the communalist Muslim League. But the Congress High Command did not favour coalition governments and therefore the Boses' plan fell through.

Towards the end of 1937, when the All-India Congress Committee met it was widely rumoured that Subhas Chandra would be elected the next President of the Congress to be held at Haripura in Gujarat early in 1938. Subhas Chandra decided to undertake a short trip to Europe, firstly, as a health measure and secondly, to make a quick on-the-spot survey of the European situation before taking up the onerous office of Congress President. First, he went to Austria and stayed at his favourite resort Badgastein for a short rest and change. It was here that in about ten days, he wrote his unfinished autobiography *An Indian Pilgrim*. This was in part fulfilment of a contract that he had concluded with a British publishing firm. He wrote ten chapters bringing the narrative of his life upto his resignation from the Indian Civil Service in England in 1921. Unfortunately owing to the stress and strain of his hectic public life that followed soon thereafter, he never finished his autobiography. The most significant event in his personal life took place at Badgastein when he married Emile Schenkl, a Viennese lady who had worked with him in Europe since 1934. Before returning home, Subhas Chandra visited London in January 1938. While he was there, came his formal elections as Congress President. Subhas Chandra, however, made the forthright declaration in England that India's struggle for freedom would rely essentially on their own strength and not on the munificence of self-styled friends in that country. Of particular significance were his two meetings with Eamon de Valera of Ireland who was then conducting delicate negotiations with the British on behalf of the Irish Free State. After an interview with Subhas at this time, the

Manchester Guardian wrote, "English people who met Bose for the first time were impressed alike by his pleasant quiet manner and the decisiveness with which he discussed Indian affairs".

In a meeting with R. Palme Dutt of the British Communist Party in London, Subhas Chandra set forth clearly the role of the Indian National Congress in the next stage of the national struggle. He said that in the next stage there would be further growth of mass consciousness at an increasing tempo. It would be the task of the Congress to mobilise that strength and direct it along the right lines by building up the "party organisation on a broad anti-imperialist front". He elaborated this by saying that he was in favour of broadening the mass basis of the National Congress further as an all-inclusive National Front by the collective affiliation of labour and peasant organisations. He made it clear that "we in India wanted our national freedom and having won it we wanted to move in the direction of Socialism". He, therefore, reiterated his personal view that the Indian National Congress should be organised on the broadest anti-imperialist front and should have the two-fold objective of winning political freedom and the establishment of a Socialist regime.

Subhas Chandra returned to India in the last week of January 1938. In Calcutta, he was given a thunderous reception. His election as the Congress President changed the political temper and climate of Bengal and all sections of nationalist opinion and groups in the problem-ridden province received a tremendous boost. Nobody from Bengal had been elected President since Deshbandhu Chittaranjan at Gaya in 1922. The session at Haripura was to be the fifty first annual assembly of the Congress. This policy of holding the annual sessions in the countryside had a significance of its own. The leaders and cadres of the party were, thus, brought face to face with the impoverished and neglected rural masses of India.

The big task before Subhas Chandra was to write out

his presidential address for the Congress. This, he did at the very last moment, but with remarkable facility and in a single draft. He wrote page after page of the address sitting in his bedroom in his ancestral house on Elgin Road. A courier rushed the completed pages to his brother's house round the corner at Woodburn Park. There his brother Sarat's secretariat prepared the typescript which was, in turn, rushed to the press. The printed address was not ready when the President-elect left for Haripura with his mother and other members of the family. It was sent the next day to be in time for distribution at the open session of the Congress.

On his arrival at the Congress village of Haripura in February 1938, Subhas Chandra was given a classic reception. He was taken to the session site in a chariot pulled by 51 pairs of white bullocks to the accompaniment of brass bands while thousands of rural folk greeted him all along the way. At the flag hoisting ceremony attended by all the national leaders, the Rashtrapati, as the Congress President was then called, made the stirring declaration: "There is no power on earth that can keep India enslaved any longer".

In a mammoth presidential address which remains in history as the most precious document for future generations, Subhas Chandra first presented a panoramic view of human history with particular reference to the rise and fall of empires and the contradictions of imperialism. He said that the integral incongruities of the British Empire would inevitably lead to its breakdown under its own strain. He also reminded his audience of what Lenin had pointed out long ago that reaction in Britain was strengthened and fed by the enslavement of a number of nations. It was clear that Subhas Chandra wanted to emphasise strongly that the historic task and duty of the Indian people above everything else was to fight for the destruction of the British Empire in her own interest, in the interest of so many enslaved nations and in the interest of Britain herself.

The President drew pointed attention to the policy of divide and rule practised all over the world by British imperialists so skilfully, systematically and ruthlessly. He pointed out that the same principle of partition was present in the new Indian constitution introduced in India by the British government. There was not only the attempt to separate the different communities but in the Federal Scheme, by juxtaposition of autocratic princes and elected representatives, an attempt had been made to perpetuate the principle of divide and rule. He warned his countrymen that even if that constitution were rejected: "British ingenuity will seek some other constitutional device for partitioning India and thereby neutralising the transference of power to the Indian people."

Subhas Chandra struck an optimistic note by saying that the British Empire was at that time suffering from strain at a number of points--in Ireland, in India, in Palestine, in Egypt, and in Iraq. Outside the empire, there was pressure from Italy in the Mediterranean region and Japan in the Far East. And finally, there stood Soviet Russia whose very existence struck terror into the hearts of imperialist ruling classes. Moreover, Britain was no longer the Mistress of the Seas. The emergence of Air Force as a new factor in world history also posed a new challenge to the empire. The Rashtrapati declared with confidence that amid this interplay of world forces, India emerged much stronger than she had been ever before.

Talking of Indian unity, Subhas said that the time was opportune for the final solution of this problem, consistent with the fundamental principles of nationalism. He said that only by emphasising our common interests, economic and political, could 'we' cut across communal dissensions. He reiterated the Congress policy of live and let live--the policy of complete non-interference in matters of conscience, religion and cultural autonomy for the different linguistic areas.

As to the method of the Congress in the national

struggle for freedom, Subhas Chandra said that it would be Satyagraha or non-violent, non-cooperation in the widest sense of the term including civil disobedience. He categorically denied that Congress's method was one of passive resistance. Satyagraha, to him, was not merely passive resistance but active resistance as well. Subhas Chandra clarified without any shadow of a doubt his conception of the role of the Congress in the history of India's national struggle. He declared that the party that won freedom for India should also be the party that would put into effect the entire programme of post-war reconstruction. He gave this assurance that the democratic basis of the Congress Party would prevent the future Indian state from becoming a totalitarian one and would also ensure that leaders are not thrust upon the people from above but elected from below.

Regarding the post-war reconstruction, the Rashtrapati declared in no uncertain terms that the chief national problems relating to eradication of poverty, illiteracy and disease, scientific production and distribution could be effectively tackled only along socialistic lines. He emphasised that the very first thing that our national government would have to do is to set up a planning commission. The plan would have an immediate component and a long period programme. The immediate objectives would be, first, to prepare the country for self-sacrifice; second, to unify India and third, to ensure local and cultural autonomy. Unification on the above basis under a strong central government was necessary to withstand any possible foreign invasion. At the same time, he said that the congressmen must put all the minority communities and the provinces at their ease by allowing them a large measure of autonomy in cultural as well as governmental affairs. To promote national unity, he pleaded for the development of Hindustani in Roman script as the *lingua franca* of India, utilisation of modern scientific contrivances as aeroplanes, telephones, radio, films, television, etc. to bring different

parts of India closer. In regard to the long period programme for free India, Subhas Chandra said the first step would be to tackle India's increasing population because the country could not afford to have its population mounting by leaps and bounds.

Regarding reconstruction, the principal problem would be to eradicate poverty. That would require, he said, a radical reform of country's land system, liquidation of agricultural indebtedness and provision of cheap credit for the rural population, extension of cooperative movement and modernisation of agriculture. But, Subhas Chandra emphasised that agricultural improvement would not be enough. Industrial development under state ownership and state control would be indispensable and a new industrial system would have to be built. It would be the task of the Planning Commission to work out a harmonious development of Indian industries, in the best interest of the people. Finally, there must be a comprehensive scheme for gradually socialising country's entire agricultural and industrial system in the sphere of production and appropriation.

By the time Subhas Chandra became President, the Congress Party had accepted office in seven out of eleven provinces of British India. In his presidential address, Subhas said that the first task of Congress ministers should be to change the composition and character of the bureaucracy in order that party's policies and principles might be put into practice. Secondly, the Congress ministers must put through schemes of reconstruction in education, health, irrigation, land reform, industry, workers' welfare, prohibition, prison reforms etc. in accordance with the uniform policy laid down by the Congress Working Committee. In this context, he said that in his judgement the Congress Working Committee was not merely the directing brain of the national army of freedom fighters but also the shadow cabinet of independent India. Subhas Chandra laid great emphasis on a plan to oppose the

inauguration of the federal part of the British-made constitution because the federal scheme as envisaged in that constitution was really designed to dismember India politically and weaken her economically. It was Subhas Chandra's view that the Congress must fight 'federation' of the British model tooth and nail--not merely along constitutional lines but also, if necessary, by resorting to direct action including mass civil disobedience--both in British India and the Indian states.

CONGRESS PRESIDENT - II

After surveying the international and national scene in his presidential address to the Haripura Congress, Subhas Chandra made certain concrete proposals concerning the Congress Party organisation. His first proposal was that in order to mobilize the phenomenal mass energy and directing them along right lines, the Congress must have a well-disciplined volunteer corps. Secondly, he said, the party must have a cadre of officers for national service after independence. In other words, the Congress must provide training for its budding leaders of the future. Thirdly, he was of the opinion that trade unions and peasant organisations should be inspired by the ideals and methods of the Congress which was the supreme organ of mass struggle and they should be brought into the mainstream by granting collective affiliation. This would pave the way to the building up of a broad anti-imperialist front. Subhas Chandra expressed the opinion that leftist elements in the Congress should be consolidated into one bloc on the clear understanding that the leftist bloc must be socialist in character. Fifthly, he made a strong plea for developing international contacts and an independent foreign policy for India. In this connection, his first suggestion was that the party should not be influenced in the matter of foreign policy by the internal politics of any country or the form of its state. In the development of international relations, personal contacts were necessary and Indian students abroad could help in this work considerably. Promotion of cultural and educational contacts was another important

means of making India known throughout the world. Subhas Chandra proposed that the Indian National Congress should appoint its trusted agents in Europe, Asia, Africa and in North, Central and South America. He particularly stressed the need and desirability of developing close relations with the neighbouring countries, vis. Persia, Afghanistan, Nepal, China, Burma, Siam, Malay States, East Indies and Ceylon.

While concluding his address, Subhas Chandra made a fervent appeal to all to rally the whole country under the banner of the Congress which might have its right bloc and its left but which was the common platform of all anti-imperialist organisations striving for India's emancipation. He made a further appeal, especially to the leftist groups to pool all their strength and resources for democratising the Congress. He ended his address with these words; "Ours is a struggle not only against British imperialism but against world imperialism as well of which the former is the keystone. We are therefore fighting not for the cause of India alone but of humanity as well. India freed means humanity saved".

As Congress President Subhas Chandra toured the country extensively. The main burden of his campaign was that the Congress must finally and irrevocably set its face against any compromise with the British and that the Congress must prepare the Indian people for a national struggle on the widest possible scale which should synchronise with the impending war in Europe. As the president of the party, he presided over the deliberation of the Congress and the Working Committee with scrupulous fairness and cordiality towards all. He tackled a ministerial crisis in the Central Provinces skilfully. In Assam, his personal intervention led to the removal of the Muslim League Government and its replacement by a Congress Ministry. To find a solution for the vexed Hindu-Muslim question, Subhas Chandra as Congress President held a series of meetings with M.A. Jinnah, the Muslim League

leader, in the latter half of 1938 and also had extensive correspondence with him. But the negotiations broke down on Jinnah's insistence that the League must be recognised as the only authoritative and representative organisation of Indian Muslims. Interestingly, Subhas Chandra was able through patient persuasion and diplomacy to work out a working alliance with the Muslim League in Bengal in 1939 in the Calcutta Municipal Corporation which came to be known as the Bose-League Pact. Within three months of the Haripura session, he convened a conference of Congress Premiers in Delhi and later another conference of Industries Ministers where he dwelt on the pressing need of national planning to transform an impoverished country like India into an economically and industrially advanced state. By the middle of 1938, he had decided to set up a national planning committee under the aegis of the Congress and held extensive consultations with leading scientists, economists and others in this regard. He invited Jawaharlal Nehru to be its chairman. The President's proposal was approved by the Congress Working Committee and the formal inauguration of the Planning Committee took place in Bombay in December 1938.

Subhas Chandra had very clear and definite views regarding national reconstruction and he expressed them in no uncertain terms. He stated categorically that no industrial advancement was possible in India until the country passed through the throes of an industrial revolution. He admitted that all Congressmen did not hold similar views on this question. But the rising generation was in favour of industrialisation for three principal reasons: First, industrialisation was necessary for solving the problem of unemployment. Though scientific agriculture would increase production of the land, a good portion of the population would have to be transferred from land to industry if food was to be given to every man and woman in India. Secondly, the rising generation stood for Socialism as the basis of national reconstruction and Socialism

presupposes industrialisation. Lastly, industrialisation was necessary in order to compete successfully with foreign industries.

Subhas Chandra felt deeply that Congressmen must be fully conscious of their responsibility in the matter of achieving national unity and solidarity. He wanted India to go the way of Turkey, not of China. For promoting national unity and solidarity, he said, many things were needed, viz. a lingua franca, common dress, common diet, etc. But, according to Subhas, what was needed most of all was the will to be one nation and to hold together as one nation. Thus, to him, the problem of unity was largely a mass psychological problem. The people must be educated and drilled to feel they are one nation. In addition to this national will, what was needed was an all India party. That party was the Congress. It was for the Congressmen to determine whether industrialisation would be comparatively gradual one as in Britain or a forced march in India. "When we have a national government of our own", he said, "one of the first things we would have to do is to appoint a National Planning Commission for the whole country".

Subhas Chandra made it clear that while advocating industrialisation he was not ruling out cottage industries. In fact, he stood for their revival and strengthening with the aid of science as in Germany, Japan and other advanced countries.

Subhas put forward the following principles for national planning: First, India must aim at national autonomy with respect to her principal needs and requirements from the industrial point of view. Second, the policy should be aimed principally at the growth and development of mother industries, viz., power supply, metal production, machine and tools manufacture, manufacture of essential chemicals, transport and communication industries. Thirdly, in the field of technical education and technical research, Indian students should be sent abroad, if

necessary, for training in accordance with a clear and definite plan. Further, he was of the opinion that technical research should be free of governmental control of any kind. Fourthly, he advocated the setting up of a permanent National Research Council. What was needed, he said, was far-reaching cooperation between science and politics.

In the course of his work as Congress President and his extensive tours throughout the country, Subhas Chandra gathered fresh experience and new knowledge regarding the different trends at the leadership level as well as the psychology of the masses vis-a-vis Indian freedom struggle. The President himself represented the hard-core uncompromising national revolutionaries of India who were prepared for the final and major assault on imperialism and seizure of power when the right moment arrived. On the other hand, he discovered there were many at the highest leadership level who were tired of fighting and were prepared for a compromise with the British government and ready to bargain even on the basis of pernicious federal scheme the British wanted to impose on the country. Thirdly, there were doctrinaire groups of both rightist and leftist inclinations who were more interested in debating on philosophic and abstract political questions rather than in a straight fight with British imperialism. In such circumstances, Subhas Chandra was firmly of the view that an uncompromising national revolutionary like he should continue to be the Congress President next year when he expected the European war to break out.

There were three reasons why Subhas Chandra was unacceptable to the right wing of the Congress for a second term as President. The first was his unremitting campaign to stiffen the opposition to any compromise with Britain. He wanted downright rejection of the federal scheme as designed by the British and no bargaining at all on that score. Secondly, his advocacy of industrialisation and industrial planning under the National Planning

Committee alienated right-wing opinion. Thirdly, when in September 1938, the British concluded the unholy Munich Pact with Hitler, he became convinced about the inevitability of war in Europe. As Congress President, he began open propaganda throughout India to prepare the people for a national struggle synchronising with the outbreak of the European war. This move, though immensely popular among the people was not liked by right wing leadership who did not want to be disturbed in their ministerial and parliamentary work. Thus, towards the end of his term as President, the breach between Subhas Chandra and right-wing leaders of the party widened.

When Subhas Chandra announced his decision to contest for a second term, it was immediately disapproved by the majority of the then Congress leadership. Subhas Chandra emphasized that the contest was not a personal one. He wanted that in a democratic mass party like the Congress, the presidential election should be held on the basis of policies and programmes. He was prepared to step down provided another uncompromising national leader like Narendra Deva was chosen as the President. But that was not to be. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, a nominee of the right wing, was set up against Subhas Chandra with the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi. A heated debate went on prior to the election in the press between Subhas Chandra and right wing leaders like Vallabhbhai Patel and others, either side presenting and defending its point of view. Eventually, in the contest Subhas Chandra won with a comfortable majority of over two hundred votes. His election showed the vast and influential following that he had throughout the country. During the contest, Gandhiji remained silent. But after the results were announced, he acknowledged Sitaramayya's defeat as his own. Jawaharlal Nehru was evidently quite unhappy at the turn of events and remained more or less neutral although such neutrality, to Subhash Chandra, amounted to opposition.

Subhas Chandra met Mahatma Gandhi in mid-February 1939 at his Ashrama at Wardha, but the meeting proved infructuous. Upon his return to Calcutta, Subhas was taken seriously ill. He asked for a postponment of the next meeting of the Working Committee later that month. Most of the members responded to his request by resigning enbloc from the Working Committee. Jawaharlal Nehru issued a statement separately which amounted to resignation. Thus, the sick President was left with only his brother Sarat Chandra in the Working Committee to keep him company.

The Congress session was scheduled to be held at Tripuri near Jubbulpore in Madhya Pradesh early in March. Subhas Chandra's medical advisers were dead against his attending the session. He had developed pneumonia in both his lungs and no quick recovery was possible. But, the President-elect decided to defy doctors' orders and proceeded to Tripuri. He was taken in an ambulance to the train and also taken down at Jubbulpore on a stretcher to be taken in an ambulance to the President's camp at the Congress site. Members of his family and a team of doctors accompanied him. At Tripuri, his fever did not show any signs of abating. Even so, he insisted upon attending the meeting of the Subjects Committee and conducted its proceedings lying on the dais. There was hectic political activity and continuous and laboured negotiations among different groups with a view to resolving the impasse. But the majority of the old Working Committee was dead against any compromise or settlement with the President. Mahatma Gandhi was not available on the spot for consultations as he had chosen to be away in Rajkot and was fasting there on an entirely different political issue.

As the President was too ill, his address was read at the open session by his brother Sarat Chandra. In his address, the President first referred to the very unusual and extraordinary circumstances under which the Congress was being held. He welcomed the fraternal

delegation of the Wafd Party of Egypt who were attending the session as guests of the Indian National Congress. In regard to the international situation, he explained how due to recent developments in Europe as well as in Asia, British and French Imperialism had received a serious set-back in the matter of strength and prestige. In regard to home politics, he gave clear and unequivocal expression to his conviction that the time had come for us to raise the issue of Swaraj and submit party's national demand to the British government in the form of an ultimatum. He added that if no satisfactory reply was received within a certain time limit, the partymen should resort to such sanctions as Satyagraha or mass civil disobedience to enforce the national demand. He assured his countrymen and the party that the British government were at that time not in a position to face a major conflict like an all-India Satyagraha for a long period. He expressed his optimism that in the prevailing circumstances if "we only sank our differences, pooled all our resources and threw ourselves in the national struggle we could make our attack on British imperialism irresistible. In this connection, he also drew pointed attention of his countrymen to the unprecedented awakening in the Indian states and strongly pleaded for a firm alliance with freedom fighters in all such states. In conclusion, he referred to the necessity of adequate preparations for making contry's final advance in the direction of Swaraj. In this task, he asked not only for ruthlessly removing all corruption and weaknesses from the party but also close cooperation with all anti-imperialist organisations in the kisan and trade union movement.

The President's exhortations fell on deaf ears. A resolution was passed, thanks to the vacillation and weakness of even many so-called leftist groups, to the effect that it was imperative that the Congress Executive, should command Gandhiji's implicit confidence and, therefore, it enjoined on the President "to nominate the Working Committee in

accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji". Thus, the Congress right wing, regardless of whatever the President said to the contrary, made of vote of confidence in Mahatma Gandhi the principal issue before the Congress and restricted the powers of the President in such a way that he could not carry out his functions until and unless Mahatma Gandhi clearly and unequivocally indicated his wishes as to the constitution of the new Congress Working Committee.

12

THE ALTERNATIVE LEADERSHIP

The mental agony that Subhas Chandra experienced at Tripuri made his recovery all the more difficult. His medical advisers and members of the family, therefore, decided not to take him back to Calcutta but keep him at a relatively secluded place called Jamadoba near Dhanbad for some time for rest and cure. His mental state at this particular time can be assessed from what he himself wrote some time later: "Owing to the morally sickening atmosphere at Tripuri I left that place with such a loathing and disgust for politics as I have never felt before during the last nineteen years....I prayed for light in my dark mind. Then slowly a new vision dawned on me and I began to recover my mental balance, as well as my faith in man and in my countrymen. After all Tripuri was not India...in spite of what I had experienced in Tripuri, how could I lose my fundamental faith in man? To distrust man was to distrust the divinity in him--to distrust one's very existence."

In view of the resolution of the Tripuri Congress which enjoined the President to form his Working Committee which would have Mahatma Gandhi's implicit confidence and formed according to his wishes, Subhas Chandra carried on a long correspondence with Gandhiji from his sick-bed in Jamadoba. The bone of contention was whether the Congress Cabinet would be a composite or a homogeneous one. It was the President's view that in view of the critical national and international situation, the Congress should have a composite Cabinet representing all the

major points of view and sections in the party so that the Congress could face the British government unitedly. Gandhiji, however, insisted that the Working Committee should be homogeneous in character, that is to say, consisting of members subscribing to one point of view. He even advised the President to go ahead and form his Cabinet according to his own choice. This Subhas Chandra could not obviously do in the face of the Tripuri Congress resolution. Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajendra Prasad visited Subhas Chandra at Jamadoba and held talks with him with a view to finding a solution to the deadlock.

The All India Congress Committee was convened in Calcutta at the end of April 1939. On the eve of the meeting, a final round of direct negotiations took place between Mahatma Gandhi and Subhas Chandra at Sodepur near Calcutta. Both Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajendra Prasad assisted in these talks. Unfortunately, no agreement or settlement was possible. Eventually, Subhas Chandra tendered his resignation as President at the open session of the AICC. In doing so, he said, "....I would only repeat my request that he (Mahatmaji) should kindly shoulder the responsibility vested in him by the Tripuri Congress and nominate the Working Committee.... Unfortunately for us Mahatmaji felt unable to nominate the Working Committee... After mature deliberation, therefore, and in an entirely helpful spirit I am placing my resignation in your hands". The resignation marked the end of one very significant chapter in Subhas Chandra's life and the beginning of a new one in his quest for India's freedom.

Rabindra Nath Tagore sent the following message to Subhas Chandra on hearing of his resignation: "The dignity and forebearance which you have shown in the midst of a most aggravating situation has won my admiration and confidence in your leadership. The same perfect decorum has still to be maintained by Bengal for the sake of her self-respect and thereby to help to turn your apparent

defeat into a permanent victory". It is now known that Tagore had written to Gandhiji supporting Subhas Chandra's re-election for the second term as Congress President. In his view, there were two "modernists" in the Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose who should be at the helm of affairs in the national interest. And as Nehru was already the Chairman of the National Planning Committee, in Tagore's view, Subhas Chandra should continue to be the President.

Subhas Chandra's experience before, during and after the Tripuri Congress convinced him that India's primary political need in 1939 was an organised and disciplined left bloc in the Congress. He, therefore, proceeded to organise such a bloc within the Congress soon after his resignation as Congress president with a view to rallying all radical and progressive elements in the party. Long before 1939, Subhas Chandra was convinced that India should make the fullest use of an international war crisis which, he knew, was coming. The right wing in the Congress did not share his view although he had a very large measure of support among his countrymen in general. In organising the Forward Bloc, he had two expectations. First, he would be able to fight for his policies effectively and could hope one day to win the majority in the Congress over to his point of view. Second, even if his first expectation was not fulfilled he could act on his own in any major crisis. To the criticism that organisation of the Forward Bloc, created disunity in the Congress, Subhas Chandra's answer was that one should distinguish between superficial unity which resulted in inaction and the real unity of action. Subhas felt strongly that if the task of building a militant bloc in the National Congress was neglected or postponed, the partymen would be caught napping when an international war crisis actually overtook India. And the result would be that India would repeat her mistake of 1914 when the first world war broke out.

The propaganda offensive of the Forward Bloc, under Subhas Chandra's leadership was in full swing from May 1939 onwards. In July of the same year, at the call of the Forward Bloc, demonstrations were held throughout India demanding the democratic right of all Congressmen to criticise and publicly discuss policies followed by the Congress ministries and the Congress High Command. The new Congress President Rajendra Prasad asked Subhas Chandra not to proceed with such demonstrations. But Subhas Chandra having declined to obey the President's directive which he considered to be undemocratic, disciplinary action was taken against him debarring him from holding any elective post in the party for a period of three years.

The campaign of the Forward Bloc was essentially for an uncompromising struggle against British Imperialism as the immediate objective and for a post-war order in India on a Socialist basis. It was clear that the mass appeal of the campaign was tremendous as was evident from Subhas's increasing popularity as he toured round the country. Some months later, Gandhiji remarked that Subhas Chandra's public standing in the country had improved rather than decreased after he resigned the Congress presidentship.

On 3rd September 1939, Subhas Chandra was addressing a mammoth public meeting on the sea beach at Madras when the news was conveyed to him that war had broken out between Britain and Germany. Without mincing words, Subhas declared that India's golden opportunity had arrived and she must now strike for freedom.

Without even the pretence of consulting Indian leaders or Indian opinion, the British Viceroy Linlithgow declared India a belligerent and issued an ordinance containing the most stringent powers for suppression of internal disorder. Mahatma Gandhi who met the Viceroy soon thereafter made the declaration that in spite of differences on the issue of independence, India should cooperate with Britain

in her hour of danger. Subhas Chandra, however, contended that the policy of Indian National Congress as enunciated in resolutions adopted year after year since 1927 clearly called for resistance to war and to the exploitation of India in the interest of Britain's imperialist wars. Thus, two opposing viewpoints emerged out of the national mainstream at the most crucial moment of Indian history.

The first all India conference of the Forward Bloc was held in Bombay on the 22nd June, 1939. Subhas Chandra received enthusiastic response from all such Congressmen who stood for early resumption of the final struggle against Britain and who opposed India's involvement in an imperialist war. Thus, Forward Bloc was launched in an atmosphere of buoyant optimism. However, the other leftist parties did not respond to Subhas Chandra's appeal to dissolve their separate identities and merge in the Forward Bloc. In the circumstances, a left consolidation committee was formed with the Forward Bloc, the Congress Socialist Party, the Radical Democratic Party of M.N. Roy and National Front (as the Communists called themselves at that time) with Subhas Chandra as Chairman. It was resolved that the Left Consolidation Committee would function in the Congress as a unified force to balance rightist dominance in the party. But this expectation was not fulfilled. With the passage of time, disharmony and discord amongst the parties rendered the Left Consolidation Committee a rather weak alternative to the Congress right wing. It was, therefore, left largely to Subhas Chandra and the Forward Bloc to carry on the anti-war campaign and the propaganda for early resumption of the national struggle. The Congress Working Committee met on the 8th September 1939 to decide upon its attitude towards the war. Subhas Chandra was specially invited to this meeting. He gave expression to his view in a forthright manner that Congress should launch the struggle for independence at once and added that in case the Congress

High Command did not take necessary steps in that direction, the Forward Bloc would go ahead on its own. The Congress Working Committee ultimately adopted a resolution which was in substance an offer of cooperation in Britain's war effort under certain conditions. The British Viceroy, in his reply a month later, did not offer anything more than Dominion Status on some vague future date which had been made first by Lord Irwin ten years ago. At the end of October, the Congress Working Committee replied to the Viceroy's offer by asking the Congress Ministries to resign and by passing a resolution containing a veiled threat of civil disobedience. Subhas Chandra had expected that the resignation of Congress Ministers would be followed by civil disobedience and rejection of any policy of cooperation with Britain, direct or indirect. But, he was disappointed. He, therefore, stepped up the campaign against cooperation in the war and for an immediate national struggle for independence by oganising large public demonstrations in different parts of the country. An Anti-Imperialist Conference was held at Nagpur in October 1939. In March 1940, a massive demonstration was held at Ramgarh in Bihar, called the All-India Anti-Compromise Conference, organised by the Forward Bloc and the Kisan Sabha led by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. It was even bigger than the annual Congress session that was held at the same place and at the same time. In his address at the conference, Subhas Chandra said--"The crisis that has overtaken us may be rare in Indian history but it is nothing new in the history of the world....in India we are now ringing down the curtain on an age that is passing away, while we are at the same time ushering in the dawn of a new era. The age of Imperialism is drawing to a close and the era of freedom, democracy and socialism looms ahead of us...such crises constitute the supreme test of a nation's leadership....The present crisis has put our own leadership to the test and the latter has been unfortunately found wanting....In the present crisis the most

distressing phenomenon is the disruption within the ranks of those who were hitherto regarded as leftist. The immediate future will prove to be the acid test of leftism in India....The present age is the anti-imperialist phase of our movement. Our main task in this age is to end imperialism and win national independence for the Indian people. When freedom comes the age of national reconstruction will commence and that will be the socialist phase of our movement."

Subhas Chandra started a weekly journal, *Forward Bloc* in August 1939 of which he was the Editor. He wrote a series of signed editorials in the journal week after week. He utilised all his editorial skill and dialectical logical attack, repartee, thrust, irony and satire to project his political thinking before his readers. He also narrated in its columns his tour experiences and the enthusiastic response that he was receiving from the common people to his call for struggle and sacrifice. He opposed the proposal for a Constituent Assembly by saying that a real Constituent Assembly could come into existence only after the seizure of political power under the auspices of a provisional national government.

Soon after the Anti-Compromise Conference, the British Government came down heavily on members of the Forward Bloc all over the country and made widespread arrests. Regardless of the British onslaught and the antipathy of the Congress right wing, Subhas Chandra organised a second conference of the Forward Bloc in Nagpur in June 1940. At Nagpur, Subhas Chandra gave to the Forward Bloc and the people a new slogan, "All Power to the Indian people". The European war had then reached the most critical phase. Hitler had overrun almost the whole of Western Europe and Italy had joined the war. On his way back to Calcutta from Nagpur, Subhas called on Mahatma Gandhi at Sewagram and this was to be their last meeting. He appealed to Gandhiji once again to assume the leadership of the national struggle at that most opportune time.

Mahatma Gandhi disagreed with Subhas Chandra but told him that the latter was free to follow the course that his conscience and judgement dictated him to do. Gandhiji concluded by saying that if Subhas succeeded in achieving freedom for his country by methods he advocated, Mahatma Gandhi would be the first person to congratulate him.

Soon after Subhas Chandra's release from detention in 1937, Bengal Congressmen announced the formation of Subhas Congress Fund and presented the fund to Subhas Chandra for building a Congress House in Calcutta. Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Congress President, added his voice to the appeal to the people of Bengal for contributions. A year later, the Calcutta Corporation placed a plot of land in Subhas Chandra's hands. Subhas Chandra then proceeded to draw up plans for a building which would not only be the headquarters of the Congress but also an important centre of nation-building activities. He placed the proposal before the national poet Rabindra Nath Tagore and requested him to give a name to the proposed building. Tagore heartily approved of Subhas Chandra's plan and gave the name "Mahajati Sadan", in other words--House of the Nation. In spite of his ill health, Rabindra Nath Tagore travelled down to Calcutta from Santiniketna at Subhas's invitation and laid the foundation of Mahajati Sadan at an impressive ceremony in August 1939. Both Rabindra Nath and Subhas Chandra emphasised in their speeches at the ceremony that the house would be a living centre of all those beneficial activities which would bring about the emancipation of the individual and of the nation as well as all-round development of India's manhood and nationhood.

During 1938 and particularly since the beginning of 1939 when a bitter controversy was raging between the Congress right wing and Subhas Chandra, Rabindra Nath Tagore stood close to him both personally and ideologically. He gave Subhas a reception at Santiniketan in January 1939. Despite the controversy that was raging at the time,

Tagore wanted to make his position absolutely clear by himself giving a public reception to Subhas in Calcutta. He wrote out an address to Subhas Chandra entitled *Deshnayak* or Leader of the Nation. It is believed that Subhas Chandra himself dissuaded the poet from holding the reception to avoid any adverse repercussions on Tagore's institution Visva-Bharati. The address was released after the end of the Second World War in which Rabindra Nath said of Subhas Chandra, inter alia "I have watched the dawn that witnessed the beginning of your political "Sadhana". In that uncertain twilight, there had been misgivings in my heart and I had hesitated to accept you for what you are now....Today you are revealed in the pure light of midday sun which does not admit of apprehensions. You have come to absorb varied experience during these years. Today you bring your matured mind and irrepressible vitality to bear upon the work at hand. Your strength has sorely been taxed imprisonment, banishment and disease, but rather than impairing, these have helped to broaden your sympathies--enlarging your vision so as to embrace the vast perspectives of history beyond any narrow limits of territory....I feel that you have come with an errand to usher a new light of hope in your motherland...I am addressing at this meeting one who has come into the full light of recognition....I may not join him in the fight that is to come. I can only bless him and take my leave, knowing that he has made his country's burden of sorrow his own, that his final reward is fast coming as his country's freedom".

13

THE GREAT ESCAPE

Since early thirties, Subhas Chandra had been saying that the position of the British power in India vis-a-vis the Indian National Movement was like an armed fortress surrounded by an unarmed hostile population. In his view, the Indian people could achieve independence by either of two ways: first, by total economic blockade and total boycott of the fortress, in other words, mass civil disobedience on the widest possible scale and complete non-cooperation including non-payment of taxes and second, capture of the fortress by force of arms. In 1939, when Subhas Chandra was compelled to resign as Congress President, the situation in India from the national point of view appeared to him as follows: the Congress right wing and Mahatma Gandhi were totally averse to a confrontation with the British by launching a mass struggle; on the other hand, his efforts to rally and unify the leftist forces in the country had failed. He found that there were so many parties and groups who professed doctrinaire leftism but they were not prepared to back it up with resolute and concrete action in the form of a final, uncompromising and relentless struggle against British imperialism. Further, he found to his utter dismay that while the British government took full advantage of the situation, other sectarian parties like the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, oblivious of the national question of independence and the international situation, raised communal and secessionist demands. In the context of the prevailing situation, Subhas Chandra started deliberating on travelling abroad for the

ultimate purpose of organising an armed thrust from outside. The purpose of the thrust would be to destroy the last remaining element sustaining British power in India--the loyalty of the mercenary British Indian army to the British crown.

In the first half of 1939, Subhas Chandra planned a visit to China and asked for a passport from the British authorities which was refused. The then Government in Chungking also did not favour his becoming a political refugee in China in view of the existing Anglo-Chinese treaty obligations. Early in 1940, he had sounded a few close friends in Bengal and the Punjab about the possibility of his leaving the country secretly in the direction of Soviet Union and Europe. Meanwhile, a civil disobedience campaign launched by the Forward Bloc in April 1940 was gathering momentum. Subhas Chandra himself organised a campaign for the removal of the Hollwell Monument in Calcutta which was a standing slur on the last independent king of Bengal, Serajuddoula. Hindu and Muslim youths unitedly rallied to his call. On the 3rd July when Subhas Chandra himself was to lead a band of volunteers for offering satyagraha at the Hollwel monument, he was taken into custody under the Defence of India Rules and lodged in the Presidency Jail in Calcutta. Two court cases were also started against him on charges of sedition. While in prison, he was elected unopposed from a Dacca constituency in East Bengal to the Central Legislative Assembly.

It was in the Presidency Jail in Calcutta that Subhas Chandra made the greatest decision of his life. It was his firm conviction that the British Empire would break up as a result of the war, but the British imperialists would not hand over power to the Indian people without a fight. India could win independence only if she actively entered the field of international politics in the midst of the war crisis. He felt it would be a gross political blunder to remain inactive in prison while history was being made elsewhere.

He found no possibility of being released in the legal manner. He, therefore, sent an ultimatum to the government saying that as there was no moral or legal justification for his detention, he would fast unto death if he was not released forthwith. In this connection, he wrote a number of historic letters to the government, one of which he called his Political Testament. He wrote therein, inter alia:

"Though there may be no immediate, tangible gain, no suffering, no sacrifice is ever futile....

"In this mortal world everything perishes and will perish--but ideas, ideals and dreams do not. One individual may die for an idea, but that idea, after his death incarnates itself in a thousand lives...

"With greater solace can there be than the feeling that one has lived and died for a principle?....What higher consummation can life attain than peaceful self-immolation at the alter of one's Cause?....."

Subhas Chandra started his fast at the end of November 1940, on the day of Kali Puja. Initially, the government took a very stiff attitude and did not even care to reply to his ultimatum. The Central Government in Delhi had already told the Bengal Government very firmly that Subhas Chandra must be kept in custody for the duration of the war. The Bengal Government, therefore, requested his brother Sarat to convey to Subhas that the attitude of the government was very hostile and that he should, therefore, not proceed with the fast. However, after the fast had continued for about a week, the Bengal Government suddenly got frightened lest their prisoner should die in person. At a secret meeting of high officials, it was decided to release him with the intention of rearresting him when his health had improved. The Central Government took strong exception to this step. The Bengal Government assured the Centre that they were playing a "cat-and-mouse" policy with Subhas and that there was no cause for anxiety.

Subhas Chandra started planning his escape from India soon after his release. During this interlude, he had his last correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi. In his letters, Subhas Chandra for the last time offered his unconditional cooperation to Gandhiji in any movement launched by him on the issue of national independence-even in individual satyagraha. He also made a plea for restoring unity in the Bengal Congress which had split as a result of indiscriminate disciplinary action against committees and individuals owing allegiance to Subhas Chandra. Mahatma Gandhi said in reply that there were fundamental differences between them and till one of them was converted to the other's view, they must sail in different boats.

Soon after his release, with a view to planning the actual escape from his house in Calcutta and ultimately out of India through the tribal territories in the North-West Frontier, Subhas Chandra called two persons to his side. The first was his young nephew Sisir, Sarat Chandra's son, and other was Mian Akbar Shah, a close associate and Forward Bloc leader of Peshawar. The nephew was readily available and Subhas drew the young man into the plan. He started discussing in great detail with Sisir the possible methods of escaping from the house in utmost secrecy. It would be Sisir's job to drive him out of the house one night and take him to a railhead from where he could catch a train to Peshawar. A number of alternative plans were discussed with meticulous care by the uncle and the nephew and finally a reasonable fool-proof one emerged. Sisir was told that one other person, Subhas's young niece Ila would know about his secret departure. A game of deception would be played at his house saying that Subhas Chandra had gone into a religious exercise in seclusion for a certain period of time. Meanwhile, in response to a telegraphic message, Mian Akbar Shah had arrived from Peshawar. Sisir was introduced to Akbar Shah and according to Subhas's instructions, the two of them did

some marketing for certain items of his disguise. It was decided that Subhas Chandra would travel in the guise of an upcountry Muslim with the assumed name of Mohammad Ziauddin, the travelling inspector of an insurance company. Mian Akbar Shah would be in charge of arrangements for Subhas's journey across the tribal territories through Afghanistan. Sarat Chandra who was away from Calcutta for the better part of December, returned early in January and the two brothers immediately went into a top-secret conference. Sarat Chandra made certain changes in the overall plan and gave the final touches. The date of his departure was fixed between Subhas Chandra and Mian Akbar Shah but it was kept a closely-guarded secret.

A couple of days before the scheduled date of his secret departure from Calcutta, 16th January 1941, Subhas Chandra announced to the family that he would be going into seclusion for a few days. He would not be seeing anybody or talking to anybody even on the telephone. His room was curtained off into compartments. Arrangements were made for the cook to pass his food under the curtain and remove used utensils and crockery the next day. On the fateful evening, he had a ritualistic dinner in the presence of his mother and other members of the family. When most members of the family had retired to their rooms, Subhas Chandra made final preparations to leave. It had since been arranged that two other nephews residing in the same house would assist Ila in carrying out the deception story of seclusion. Sisir arrived around 9 p.m. He had in his car--a sturdy German vehicle Wanderer--Subhas's travel cases marked prominently with 'M.Z'. A long wait ensued as one or two members of the family had become rather suspicious about what was going on and were still around. At about 1.30 a.m. on the 17th January 1941, the coast was found to be clear and Subhas Chandra left the house in the car driven by Sisir. He was wearing a dark brown Sherwani, loose pyjamas, laced European shoes and a

black Astrakhan-type cap of fur.

After leaving the house, Sisir deliberately took a southerly direction just in case plainclothes police who were detailed to watch Subhas took notes about the movement of the car. Although, the government was compelled to release Subhas unconditionally, he was very closely watched day and night. It is now known that the police department even planted a number of agents inside the house although their identities are yet known. On the other hand, Subhas Chandra had earlier obtained through some of his very trusted men his own dossier from the police department, read through it overnight and returned it to its place the next day. Thus, he was aware of what the police department knew about him and from what sources.

The two travellers had a thrilling drive up the Grand Trunk Road in bright moonlight. At dawn, they reached Asansol where they refuelled the car. By 9 a.m. on the 17th January 1941, they had reached an out of the way place called Barari, a few miles away from Dhanbad. Sarat Chandra's eldest son Asoke lived at Barari with his family. Sisir dropped his uncle about half a mile away from Asoke's bungalow and drove nonchalantly into the house alone. He alerted his brother about the impending arrival of their uncle in disguise. Subhas Chandra arrived some time later alone and introduced himself as an insurance agent on business. A mock drama was enacted in the presence and within the hearing of Asoke's domestic servants. All conversation was in English and Asoke even formally introduced Sisir to the stranger. Apparently, at the visitor's request he was allowed to stay in the guest-room for the day. In the evening, Subhas Chandra demonstratively bade farewell and left on foot according to plan. After a while, Sisir, Asoke and his wife drove out in Sisir's car, picked up Subhas Chandra from the roadside and took the road to Gomoh. The Delhi-Kalka Mail arrived at Gomoh well past midnight. Subhas Chandra personally

purchased his ticket, boarded a first-class compartment and was on his way.

The arrangement was that Subhas would take the Frontier Mail from Delhi and arrive at Peshawar on 19th January 1941. As Akbar Shah watched passengers coming through the station gate, he spotted a distinguished-looking Muslim gentleman whom he recognised. He whispered to him to get into a tonga. He asked the tongawalla to take him to the Dean's Hotel while he followed in another tonga. On the way, they changed their mind and took him to Taj Mahal Hotel. Akbar Shah was walking back through the Peshawar city when he met an old trusted friend Abad Khan whom he took into confidence. Abad Khan had long previous experience of such secret journeys. At his suggestion, Subhas Chandra was shifted the same night from the hotel to Abad Khan's house where he stayed for six days. Akbar Shah had decided that one of two young men, Mahammad Shah and Bhagat Ram Talwar, would act as Subhas Chandra's escort across the tribal territory on his journey to Kabul. They were informed. Eventually, it was decided to give Bhagat Ram the responsibility.

At Peshawar, a transformation took place in Subhas Chandra's disguise. From then on, he was to be a Pathan. In Abad Khan's house, he was made conversant with the social habits and customs of Pathans so that his social and public behaviour was correct. He discarded his former attire and was given full-fledged Pathan dress including the headgear. The insurance agent became Bhagat Ram's deaf and dumb elder brother who was being taken to a shrine and ultimately to Kabul for treatment.

On the morning of the 26th January 1941, Subhas Chandra accompanied by Bhagat Ram, Mohammed Shah and a guide left for the border of Afridi tribal territory in a car arranged by Abad Khan. According to the plan, his disappearance from Calcutta was announced by the family the very day.

The three travellers started their trek only a furlong away from the actual tribal border. The route chosen for Subhas Chandra to Afghanistan was the shortest but the stiffest and was not the traditional one used by travellers or even by revolutionaries in the past. They had to scale stiff mountains, parts of which were covered with snow. They rested for the next two nights at small villages on the way. On the 28th January when it was well past midnight, they reached the first village in Afghan territory. To avoid fatigue, Subhas was provided with a mule to ride on during the latter part of the trek. But while coming down a slope slippery with snow, the mule slipped and he had a fall. After two days of cross-country walk and ride, they reached the village Gardi on the Peshawar-Kabul high-way. Abad Khan's guide had returned after reaching Afghan territory. Subhas Chandra and Bhagat Ram hitch-hiked on a truck loaded with tea-chests passing along the highway to Jalalabad and reached there at 10 p.m. on 28th January. On the 29th January, to keep up appearances, they went to the shrine of Adda Sharif near Jalalabad. There, they also established contact with an important political worker Hazi Mohammad Amin.

On 30th January, they set out for Kabul in a tonga. Changing over a truck on the way, they reached the check-post Bud Khak the next morning. From there, they reached Kabul by a tonga at 11 a.m. on 31st January.

In Kabul, both of them were complete strangers. They looked for a Serai and were guided to one near the Lahori Gate. The place was scarcely fit for human habitation but there was no alternative. For food, they had bread dipped in sweet tea.

Although Subhas Chandra was out of the direct clutches of the British police, he soon discovered that his ordeal had only begun and not ended. For the next forty five days, living in most inhospitable surroundings and always in fear of being spotted by Afghan's police or British agents, Subhas Chandra had the most trying time. The Soviet

Union lay between him and his destination--Central Europe. He had attempted through intermediaries of the Kirti Kisan Party of the Punjab who were already in Moscow to establish contacts and come to at least some tentative arrangements with the Soviet Government. But, he found that nothing had materialised. What actually happened is yet a closed book. The position was that Subhas Chandra had to start from scratch and find some means of leaving Kabul as speedily as possible to avoid capture.

AZAD HIND

In Kabul, Subhas Chandra carried on his deaf and dumb show in the serai near Lahori Gate. But one suspicious Afghan policeman became a frequent visitor. Even after Subhas Chandra had parted with his gold wristwatch to satisfy him, he returned again and again and insisted upon taking the two strangers to the Kotwali. Meanwhile, Bhagat Ram's efforts to establish contact with the Soviet Minister evoked no response. On the 6th February, Subhas Chandra himself gatecrashed into the German Legation and was able to meet the German Minister Pilger. The latter was personally friendly but could not take any action on his own and asked for time for necessary instructions from Berlin. A representative of Siemens Company in Kabul was to be the intermediary between Subhas Chandra and the German Legation.

Both Subhas Chandra and Bhagat Ram felt that it was becoming too risky to stay on in the serai. Bhagat Ram, therefore, traced out an old acquaintance from Peshawar, Uttam Chand Malhotra who was doing business in Kabul. Subhas Chandra shifted to Uttam Chand's residence in the middle of February and shut himself up in one room in Uttam Chand's house. Here, he found friendly and comfortable shelter. However, he was getting disgusted with his unending stay in Kabul. In desperation, he even planned to make an attempt to cross into the Soviet Union entirely on his own with the help of an absconder from Peshawar who was living on the Afghan-Russian frontier. While he was deliberating on such a plan, a message arrived from

the Siemens Office on the 23rd February to say that he was to get in touch with the Italian Minister Alberto Quaroni for further arrangements. Subhas Chandra's first meeting with Quaroni lasted a whole night. Subhas was absolutely clear in his own mind as to the technique of his future struggle. He told Quaroni of his plan to set up a Free India Government in Europe and form an Indian Liberation Army with the Indian prisoners-of-war in Germany and Italy. Quaroni sent a favourable report to Rome. Arrangements were made that Mrs. Quaroni would call at Uttam Chand's shop from time to time to exchange communications.

The German and Italian Governments took up the question of Subhas Chandra's journey to Europe with the Soviet Government in Moscow including the possibility of his transit through Russia. While secret negotiations were going on in Moscow, Subhas Chandra utilised his time in arranging reliable contacts for future work in Afghanistan and tribal territories. It took nearly four weeks to obtain a positive answer from the Soviet side. The agreed formula among the three governments was that Subhas would travel across Russia on an Italian diplomatic passport impersonating an officer of the Italian Legation in Kabul, Orlando Mazzotta. About a week before his actual departure from Kabul, Mrs. Quaroni brought the important message to Uttam Chand's shop. Subhas Chandra's photograph replaced Mazzotta's on the original passport. His clothings were ordered. Another transformation in his disguise was to take place from being a deaf and dumb Pathan to an Italian diplomat. On the 17th March, Subhas Chandra shifted to the private residence of Crescini of the Italian Legation. Next morning, Subhas Chandra left in a car for the Soviet frontier accompanied by three Germans. On the way, as he travelled through the high passes of the Hindu Kush and the expanse of the Afghan steppes, he spent two nights in German houses. They crossed the Oxus at the Afghan frontier post and drove along until they

reached Samarkhand. From Samarkhand, they travelled by rail to Moscow, from where they flew to Berlin reaching there on the 2nd April, 1941.

On the evening of the 31st March 1941, Bhagat Ram Talwar arrived at the Calcutta residence of Sarat Chandra Bose at 1 Woodburn Park and asked to see Sisir. The latter immediately fetched his father. Bhagat Ram was carrying three documents--a personal letter from Subhas to Sarat in Bengali, a political thesis--"Forward Bloc--its justification" and a "Message to my countrymen" from "Somewhere in Europe" dated 22nd March 1941. Subhas Chandra had written all these during his enforced stay in Kabul. The next morning Bhagat Ram joined Sarat Chandra at Victoria Memorial gardens and narrated to him the entire story from Peshawar to the Russian frontier. Sarat Chandra put Bhagat Ram in touch with Satya Ranjan Bakshi--a veteran Congressman, revolutionary and trusted lieutenant of Subhas for future work. The Bose brothers maintained contact with each other till November 1941 by means of wireless messages exchanged via Tokyo with the secret assistance of the Japanese Consulate General in Calcutta.

It is not known yet what exchanges, if any, took place between Subhas Chandra and the Soviet Government during his brief stay in Moscow on the way to Berlin. In his Kabul thesis, he referred to the Soviet Union as the greatest revolutionary force in the world and he had in the past sought active support from the Soviets, even to the point of actual intervention, to the Indian independence movement.

Subhas Chandra's activities in Europe and East Asia during World War II have to be understood in terms of three fundamentals--first, his ideological commitment; second, his strategic objectives in terms of that commitment; and the third, his tactics most suited to the attainment of the strategic objectives in the existing international situation. His ideological commitment consisted of two complementary elements, viz, complete national independence

and an uncompromising anti-imperialist struggle for attaining it paving the way to the establishment of a thoroughly modern and socialist state. The strategic objective that he set before himself was based on a scientific examination of the strong and weak points of the British position in India vis-a-vis the Indian national movement during World War II. He believed that India was ripe for revolution but the national leadership in India, which included the Right as well as the Left, were not ready for a struggle with the British. In the circumstances, Subhas Chandra seized upon the principal element which kept British rule going in India, viz. the loyalty of the mercenary British Indian army to the British Raj. His strategic objective was to destroy this element taking advantage of the international war crisis and supplant it with a new loyalty to India's freedom. His tactics consisted of utilising the territories controlled by the enemies of Britain and facilities offered by them to raise a revolutionary liberation army and enter into India by whatever means were available.

A week after his arrival in Germany, Subhas Chandra submitted a comprehensive memorandum to the German Government on India, on India's freedom movement and a plan of cooperation between India and Germany during World War II. In the first phase, he proposed the setting up of a Free Indian Government in Europe and a treaty between Germany and Italy on the one hand and the Free Indian Government on the other guaranteeing India's independence in the event of victory in the war. He also outlined the nature of the work that had to be organised in Afghanistan, in the tribal territories and inside India. As regards finances, he proposed that necessary assistance by foreign powers would be accepted in the form of a loan to be repaid by the independent government of India at the end of the war. He also proposed the raising of an armed force which would spearhead the revolt in the British Indian army and a mass rising at the critical hour. He also

asked for facilities for radio propaganda directed towards India. He submitted a supplementary note to his original memorandum three weeks later. He pointed out the importance of an open declaration of the German government on the question of India's independence. Subhas Chandra's memoranda did not evoke quick and favourable response from the German foreign office. He, therefore, devoted his time to organising a hard-core group of Indians from amongst those who were either living as exiles in Germany and other European countries or were students. He also undertook a tour of other countries like Italy, France and Austria with a view to establishing friendly contacts and gaining adherents.

Although Subhas Chandra's arrival in Berlin did not rouse much enthusiasm amongst members of the German Government or the higher echelons of the Nazi Party, the reaction was fortunately different among members of the newly-established Information Section of the German foreign office. In this department, in addition to career diplomats, there were a number of specialists who had been brought in for their special knowledge relating to Britain, British Empire, South-East Asia and the United States. The department was directed by Adam Von Trott who had been to Oxford as a student and was quite conversant with the Indian problem. His deputy was Alexander Werth who had qualified as a barrister in England and had deep and sympathetic interest in Indian affairs. These two men became close friends of Subhas, sympathised fully with his aspirations and tried their best to promote his cause in every possible way. It was their task to educate with Subhas Chandra's assistance, the higher officials of the German Government about the Indian freedom struggle and also deal with the racial prejudice which many of them harboured against Asian people. They also tactfully prevented any unpleasant encounter between Subhas Chandra and members of the Nazi Party. Their first task was to obtain for Subhas the rank and position which his

personality, prestige and standing in India demanded.

A new factor changed the situation favourably for Subhas Chandra from the middle of 1941 onwards. An increasing number of Indian exiles had been drifting into Germany and a large number of Indian war prisoners from North Africa were also being brought to Germany. The Germans found that these people were fundamentally anti-British in their attitudes. However, the Germans had not taken any steps on their own to utilise this factor in their favour. The arrival of Subhas Chandra and the persuasion of his friends in the Information Department created a new awareness among the German military leaders as well as the German foreign office as to the possibilities of the situation. Very soon a "Working Group India" was set up in the Information Department of the foreign office which eventually was turned into the "Special India Department" directly under Von Trott and Werth. Gradually, Subhas Chandra's circle of friends in the German foreign office and the German Military Command enlarged. They realised that he possessed an extraordinarily strong will and that his sincerity and integrity were beyond question. They also realised that he would never submit to any whims of so-called highly placed leaders of the Nazi Party and that he would never capitulate or compromise on the issue of Indian independence.

When Germany attacked Soviet Russia at the end of June 1941, Subhas Chandra was in Rome. He lost no time in informing the German foreign office that in Indian eyes Germany was the aggressor and Indian sympathies were with the Russians because they considered the Soviets to be an anti-Imperialist power. He had also clearly indicated to the Germans in his Memoranda that indirect help of Soviet Russia would be desirable for the realisation of his plans for India's freedom.

Subhas Chandra had made out his plans of an armed thrust into India from the North-west on the basis of the status-quo of non-aggression being maintained between

Germany and Soviet Russia. Nevertheless, in furtherance of his strategic objectives he wanted to make the best of a rather unfavourable situation. Towards the end of 1941, he was in a position to establish a Free India Centre in Berlin. He had as his associates a very competent and dedicated band of Indians including A.C.N. Nambiar, N.G. Ganpuley, Abid Hasan, N.G. Swami, M.R. Vyas, Girija Mookerji and others. The Free India Centre received the status of a foreign diplomatic mission and its members received all the corresponding privileges. Activities of the Centre were diversified along the following lines:--

(i) Organising broadcasts over the "Azad Hind Radio", "National Congress Radio" and "Azad Muslim Radio",

(ii) Editing and publishing "Azad Hind", a bi-lingual periodical in German and English; the periodical was circulated throughout Europe and carried reports and articles on every possible aspect of Indian politics, economics, culture, philosophy and arts;

(iii) Organising and looking after the Indian community in Germany;

(iv) Coordination of activities of Free India Centres in all countries of Europe.

(v) Coordinating and maintaining close liaison with the Indian Legion or Indian National Army being formed with former Indian war prisoners from North Africa and looking after its interests;

(vi) Creating a centre of coordination with the Indian Independence League, South-East Asia, which acquired special significance after the fall of Singapore in mid-February 1942.

The Free India Centre also set up a Planning Commission for social and economic reorganisation of India after attaining independence. The Centre designed its own insignia with the Congress tricolour, having the outline of a springing tiger embossed on it. It adopted Rabindra Nath Tagore's "Jana-Gana-Mana" as the National Anthem and

for the first time in modern Indian history a common and universal form of greeting "Jai-Hind" was introduced. Subhas Chandra was also accorded the appellation of "Netaji" which combined a sense of both affection and honour. Subhas Chandra started broadcasting to India in February 1942 soon after the fall of Singapore. He told his countrymen in his first broadcast: "The hour of India's salvation is at hand. India will now rise and break the chains of servitude that have bound her so long. Through India's liberation will Asia and the world move forward towards the larger goal of human emancipation".

The Indian Legion was an entirely volunteer army. They were recruited on the basis of patriotic inspiration and education often conducted by Netaji himself among Indian war prisoners. All communities, Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Punjabis, Marathas, Bengalis and others were welded into close units without any distinction in any form of class, creed or colour.

The Soviet-German war destroyed the possibility of the Indian Legion playing its revolutionary role in the North-West frontier of India. However, the Legion fought heroically against Anglo-American forces when they landed in France in 1944.

The outbreak of war in the Far East in December 1941 and the rapid and spectacular advance of Japanese forces resulting in the fall of Singapore in February 1942, opened a new horizon in India's freedom struggle. Netaji immediately started thinking in terms of coming over to the East and organising an armed thrust into India from the East. While Japanese forces were standing at the gates of India in Burma, he wrote to the German Foreign Minister in May 1942 in the following terms "....the time has come when the final efforts should be made for achieving India's political emancipation. For this purpose it is absolutely essential that I should be in the East."

Back in India, in April-May 1942, the Congress under Mahatma Gandhi's inspiration rejected the so-called Cripps

proposals for a wartime compromise without independence. What is more, to Subhas Chandra's satisfaction, Mahatma Gandhi was moving in the direction of a final struggle with the British. In his original draft resolution for the Congress, Gandhiji said: "The Indian Army is a segregated body, unrepresentative of the Indian people, who can in no sense regard it as their own. Japan's quarrel is not with India. If India were free the first step would probably be to negotiate with Japan". Thus, by the inexorable logic of history, the two principal currents in the Indian national movement were gradually coming closer to each other and were eventually to merge in a gigantic upheaval in August 1942 culminating in the heroic assault of the Azad Hind Fauj in 1944.

Netaji met Adolf Hitler for the first and the last time at the end of May 1942. He was not satisfied with the meeting but one positive gain was that the decision to offer facilities to Netaji to travel to the East was accepted by Hitler. Prolonged and top secret negotiations between the German and the Japanese military commands began for working out a fool-proof plan for another hazardous journey for Netaji--a submarine voyage from Germany to the Far East.

15

IN EAST ASIA: 1943-45

The Indian Independence Day was celebrated on a grand scale in Berlin on 26th January 1943 at which Netaji delivered the principal address. Two days later, he spoke for the last time to the Indian Legion. Thereafter, he was not seen in Europe any more. On the 8th February 1943, Netaji, accompanied by Abid Hasan, arrived at the North German port of Kiel where they were received by Keppler, Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, Nambiar and Werth.

Before launching upon his second adventure into the unknown, Netaji left a poignant message in his own hand —a letter in Bengali to his brother Sarat. He told his brother that he was embarking on the most hazardous voyage and that he might not come through it alive. He asked his brother to show the same affection and consideration to his wife and daughter whom he was leaving behind in Europe as he had done to him all his life.

While it was still dark on the 9th February, Netaji and Hasan were welcomed aboard the submarine by its commander Musenberg. As soon as the two of them entered the vessel, the doors closed and it disappeared under the sea. The submarine was of Type IX variety and was a small vessel. The atmosphere inside was suffocating with the stench of diesel oil all over. Netaji had his berth in a recess along a passage. Even the food was stinking of diesel oil. Netaji had to spend three months in such an environment. The submarine first went through Danish waters, then through the small belt to the Norwegian coast and North

Sea and finally reached the Atlantic ocean. In the initial stages, it was protected by a convoy of submarines and a mine sweeper. But after it passed the German-controlled waters, it was exposed to attack by enemy forces both from the surface and the air. Every night, the submarine had to come up and sail on the surface to have its batteries charged. During the day, it went along its course under the sea. Before undertaking the voyage, Netaji was told clearly that he would be travelling at his own risk without any assurance of a safe transit. He accepted this condition without any hesitation.

Even under the most trying living conditions in the submarine, Netaji did not rest even for a day. From the first day, he started his work on the many plans he had for the coming struggle in East Asia. And all this had to be done, as was his habit, with thoroughness and to the minutest detail. One day, when he was working on his favourite subject--the formation of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment--an enemy freighter was sighted and orders were given to attack it. Through a mistake of the man at the controls, the submarine surfaced. Spotting the submarine, the freighter immediately changed its direction and came down at full speed to ram the submarine. The captain shouted his orders to dive. But, because of the original mistake his orders could not be immediately carried out. Only moments separated the submarine from total destruction and everybody was naturally very scared. But, Hasan found that not everyone was scared. While death was reflected on so many faces and Hasan's heart sank, Netaji remonstrated: "Hasan! I have repeated a point twice and you are not noting it down!" Meanwhile, the enemy freighter roared past over the submarine which had just dived giving it a big jerk. Later, addressing the crew the captain said that they should all take a lesson from their distinguished Indian guest and adjutant in facing a sudden crisis involving even death with such composure.

Defying enemy ships and planes, the submarine sailed

down the Atlantic ocean, went round the Cape of Good Hope and entered the Indian ocean in mid-April. The rendezvous with a Japanese submarine had been fixed in the Mozambique channel about four hundred nautical miles south, south-west of Madagascar. The Japanese submarine I-29 arrived at the spot about half a day ahead of schedule from Penang. It was commanded by Juichi Izu. After roaming about the area for hours, the small German submarine was spotted emerging out of the gathering darkness. Both the sides had to wait till sunrise. But then, when dawn broke the sea was too rough and it was impossible to get the two boats near to each other. Radio conversation was too risky. As a desperate measure, two men jumped into the sea from the German submarine and swam to the Japanese. Signalling between the boats then went on by show of hands, but the sea continued to be rough. Eventually, the two Germans rode a rubber raft dragging a strong hemp rope back to their boat. Netaji and Hasan crossed over in the rubber raft clinging to the rope and inching their way amid surging waves and lurking sharks. The transfer was effected on the 24th April and a radio message flashed to Berlin.

In the entire annals of World War II, this was the only known submarine to submarine transfer of passengers in an area dominated by enemy air and naval strength. After the Japanese submarine had left the British patrolling area, it received a radio message from Penang that the passengers should be landed at Sabang, an isolated off-shore islet north of Sumatra. At Sabang, Netaji and Hasan were quarantined and rested for a few days and then flown to Tokyo where they arrived on 13th May 1943. They were put up at the well-known Imperial Hotel.

During the long submarine journey, Netaji completed plans of his coming encounter with the leaders of Japan first and then prepared his mind about the principal task that lay ahead of him, viz., to carve out the amorphous and heterogeneous mass of Indians in East Asia a united,

disciplined and militant organisation to give fight to Britain.

Netaji spent a full month in preparatory work for a summit meeting with Premier Tojo. He met leading personalities of all branches of Japan's armed forces, important political and diplomatic personnel, intellectuals and public men of standing. He also visited industries, farms, schools and all kinds of public enterprises. It has been said that at their first meeting in mid--June 1943, the 'magic of Bose' worked on Tojo who conceded most of Netaji's demands. Following their two meetings, Tojo invited Netaji to the Japanese Diet (Parliament) where in his presence, Premier Tojo made an official declaration affirming full and unqualified support to the cause of India's complete independence. This was the first and only declaration of its kind by the Head of State of a foreign power during World War II. Neither could Netaji obtain such a declaration from Hitlerite Germany, nor could Gandhiji and other Indian leaders extract a similar commitment from the British Government or any of its allies at any time during the war.

Having won the first round, Netaji disclosed his presence in Japan to the world. The news created a wave of sensation among Indians throughout Asia and consternation in the enemy camp. He broadcast a stirring appeal to his countrymen in East Asia for active and total support in the coming campaign for India's freedom. In the course of his broadcast, he said:

"Our countrymen and our sisters and brothers at home have been doing their best in the circumstances in which they are placed. But the enemy is ruthless and desperate and he is armed to the teeth. Against such a brutal foe, no amount of civil disobedience or of sabotage or of revolutionary terrorism can be of any avail.....The enemy has already drawn the sword. He must therefore be fought with the sword. But it is not possible for our countrymen at home to organise an armed revolution and to fight the

British army of occupation with modern arms. This is a task which must therefore devolve on Indians living abroad and particularly on Indians living in East Asia.....

"The hour has struck. And every patriotic Indian must advance towards the field of battle. Only when the blood of freedom-loving Indians begins to flow will India attain her freedom!"

Accompanied by the veteran Indian revolutionary, Rash Behari Bose, Netaji arrived in Singapore on the 2nd July 1943 to a rousing reception by officers and men of the Indian National Army and leaders of Indian Independence League.

During the one year that preceded Netaji's arrival in East Asia, much efforts were made by patriotic Indians there to organise the Indian independence movement. An Indian National Army was also formed at the initiative of Mohan Singh with the support of a dashing, young Japanese officer Iwaichi Fujiwara. While the Indian Independence League was led by Rash Behari Bose, the INA was commanded by Mohan Singh. Unfortunately, however, owing to inadequacy of leadership and inexperience in international affairs, the movement broke down. When Netaji arrived, it was in utter disarray and the INA was in a state of suspended animation. Netaji lost no time in launching a continuous, tireless and trail-blazing campaign for reorganising and consolidating the independence movement in East Asia and totally restructuring the Indian National Army or Azad Hind Fauj.

On the 4th July 1943, a general assembly of the Indian Independence League was held in Singapore with the representatives from all over East Asia. In a magnificent and statesmanlike gesture, Rash Behari Bose handed over the leadership of the entire movement to Netaji. In his address as the new President of the League, Netaji referred to the heroic struggle of the Indian people inside India and spelt out the tasks that awaited Indians in East Asia. He said: "...In the history of India's struggle, August 1942 will

therefore remain an unforgettable landmark, indicating the psychological transition from passive to active resistance....The time has therefore come to pass on to the next phase of our campaign. The aim and purpose of this organisation would be to take up arms against British Imperialism." The entire audience was captivated by Neta-ji's oratory. He spoke in clear and forthright terms and directly to the hearts and minds of men. He expressed in simple terms the sumtotal of his revolutionary experience. He told them that in the final battle for freedom two things were lacking--an army of liberation and a provisional government under whose auspices the army would go into battle. Indians in East Asia responded to their chosen leader in full measure. The national tricolour that was crushed and trampled under foot by British imperialists in India in 1942 was taken up and held aloft once again by Indians in East Asia and the battle resumed.

To carry on the struggle to a successful consummation, Netaji demanded total mobilisation of all available re-sources in terms of men, money and material. His country-men in East Asia responded to his call in a manner unknown in the Indian history of struggle since 1857. What followed was the saga of an entire emigre nation--men and women, young and old, the soldier, the labourer, the peasant, the businessman, the professional and all--merging their identity with the mother nation and throw-ing in all their resources for its liberation.

The 5th July 1943, Netaji called it "the proudest day of my life", as on that day he reviewed for the first time as its Supreme Commander the Azad Hind Fauj drawn up in battle formation on the spacious grounds facing the Town Hall in Singapore. Addressing his army, he said:

"...With the force of arms and at the cost of your blood you will have to win liberty. Then, when India is free, you will have to organise a permanent army of free India whose task it will be to preserve our liberty for all time. We must build up our national defence on such unshakable

foundations that never again in our history shall we lose our freedom.....".

"Because of our political enslavement, we have no tradition like that of Mukden, Port Arthur or Sedan to inspire us....out of your ranks will be born the future general staff of the army of free India..."

"....I assure you that I shall be with you in darkness and in sunshine, in sorrow and in joy, in suffering and in victory....I can offer you nothing except hunger, thirst, privation, forced marches and death. But if you follow me in life and death I shall lead you to victory and freedom...."

"My soldiers! Let your battle-cry be--'TO DELHI! TO DELHI!" How many of us will survive this war of freedom I do not know. But I do know this that we shall ultimately win and our task will not end until our surviving heroes hold the victory parade on another grave-yard of the British Empire--the Lal Kila or Red Fortress of ancient Delhi".

During the three months that followed, Netaji laboured ceaselessly and toured extensively to rouse the Indian community scattered all over East Asia to a new sense of national identity and patriotism and set up a disciplined organisation with its headquarters in Singapore to take charge of the movement. On the 21st October 1943, he proclaimed the Provisional Government of Azad Hind at a historic assembly in Singapore. The Provisional Government was recognised by nine states including three world powers---Japan, Germany and Italy. Thus, for the first time in two hundred years, India's freedom fighters tasted independent statehood. The first official act of the Provisional Government was to declare war on Britain and America, the latter being an active ally of the former on the soil of India. The Government was scrupulously correct in its foreign policy in that it did not commit itself to any post-war schemes of any of the Axis powers and solemnly declared that the permanent

government of India would be formed after the war "in accordance with the will of the Indian people". The proclamation of the Azad Hind Government is a memorable document in the history of India's freedom struggle. Netaji wrote it sitting through one whole night sipping cups of coffee. After proclaiming the Government, Netaji took the oath as the Head of State and Prime Minister. The moment was so emotionally charged that he broke down and tears rolled down his cheeks.

On the 22nd October 1943, Netaji formally inaugurated the Rani of Jhansi Regiment of the Azad Hind Fauj. This fighting unit of India's women warriors was a concrete expression of Netaji's belief in the equaltiy of men and women and his determination to give to women equal and full opportunities in every department of life and human endeavour.

In November 1943, Netaji attended the Assembly of Greater East Asiatic Nations in Tokyo. He chose to be an observer at that international conference, firstly because India had not yet won her freedom and secondly because he would not commit the future government of free India to any post-war plans or arrangements of Japan and her allies of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Nevertheless, he completely dominated the conference by the sheer force of his personality, robust independence, sincerity and oratory. In a historic address to the Assembly, he surveyed international relations from the standpoint of subject nations of the world and called for the establishment of a new world order based on the sacred principles of justice, national sovereignty, reciprocity in international relations and mutual aid and assistance. Towards the end of the conference, a motion moved by Ba Maw of Burma was adopted to "extend full sympathy and support to the Indian struggle for freedom." Finally, Premier Tojo made an announcement at the conference that the Andaman and Nicobar Islands which were then under Japanese military occupation would be transferred

to the administrative jurisdiction of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind.

Before finally returning to Singapore in December, Netaji toured China, Philippines and Indonesia. Everywhere he was received with the honour due to a Head of State. In China, he took the opportunity of visiting the mausoleum of Sun-Yat-Sen near Nanking and offering his homage to the father of Chinese Revolution.

16

CHALO DELHI

On the 29th December 1943, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose arrived in Andaman islands to take charge of the first territory of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. As Head of State, he unfurled the National Tricolour in the presence of a massive gathering on Gymkhana grounds. He likened the liberation of Andaman to the fall of Bastille during the French Revolution. He visited the notorious Cellular Jail where the British had imprisoned and tortured hundreds of India's freedom fighters. During his stay in Andaman, Netaji and his party occupied the former British Chief Commissioner's residence on Ross island over which the National Tricolour fluttered proudly. Netaji renamed the Andaman islands as Shahid and Nicobars as Swaraj Island.

In the first week of January 1944, Netaji moved his headquarters forward from Singapore to Rangoon as a preparatory step to the advance of the Azad Hind Fauj towards the Indian frontier. In February 1944, the Fauj had its first baptism of fire on the Arakan front. In the battles that took place in Arakan on the road to Chittagong, the Azad Hind Fauj proved its superiority over the enemy. This proved great encouragement to Netaji and all ranks in the INA, and created confidence in the Japanese Command about the fighting capabilities of the Army.

The assault on Imphal was launched in the middle of March 1944. In this last offensive operation of the East Asia War, the first INA Division commanded by M.Z.

Kiani and three Burma-based Japanese divisions took part. For the Japanese, it was a defensive-offensive operation to safeguard their bases in Burma. For Netaji and the Azad Hind Fauj, it was an armed revolutionary thrust into India--to secure a base for the future liberation war and to open the gate-way to the Brahmaputra valley. On the 21st March 1944, Netaji announced at a press conference at his advance headquarters that the Azad Hind Fouj, fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Japanese forces, had crossed into India on the 18th March and that fighting was going on the soil of India. The Indo-Japanese forces advanced rapidly on all the three sectors of the wide front. In the north, they entered Kohima in the first week of April. In the last week of April, they were already within ten miles of Imphal in a remarkable encircling movement. As they fought their way forward through the almost impassable terrain, Netaji's memorable Order of the Day to the Fauj echoed and re-echoed through the hills and dales of India's north-east frontier:.

"There, there in the distance, beyond that river, beyond those jungles, beyond those hills, lies the Promised Land--the soil from which we sprang and the land to which we shall now return....Blood in calling to blood. Get up, we have no time to lose. Take up your arms. There in front of you lies the road that your pioneers have built. We shall march along that road. We shall carve our way through the enemy's ranks or, if God wills, we shall die a martyr's death. And in our last sleep we shall kiss the road that will bring our Army to Delhi. The road to Delhi is the road to Freedom ! Chalo Delhi !"

In the first week of April, Netaji appointed A.C. Chatterjee, a member of his cabinet, as the Governor-designate of liberated territories. The Azad Hind Dal, the administrative wing of the Provisional Government, was ready to move forward with the Fauj to take over the administration of freed areas. The Japanese Premier had already made a declaration that captured territories in

India would be turned over to the Provisional Government under Netaji.

But the march on Delhi was halted. The monsoon broke pre-maturely, and while the Indo-Japanese forces had no air cover and their lines of supply were long and hazardous, the Anglo-Americans had full command of the air and poured in reinforcements for the last-ditch defence of Imphal. The Indo-Japanese forces held on as long as it was humanly possible to do so. But eventually, they were compelled to retreat. They suffered heavy casualties all the way down the Chindwin and Irrawady. As the Anglo-Americans mounted their counter-offensive for the recapture of Burma, the Japanese and the Azad Hind Fauj fought heroic rear-guard battles. Netaji maintained close contact with the fighting troops. There were occasions when he himself ran the risk of being encircled or of being killed in action.

On the 6th July 1944, Netaji addressed a radio appeal to Mahatma Gandhi over the Rangoon radio. In the broadcast, he traced the contemporary history of India's struggle underlining the great role played by Gandhiji in that history. Then he gave his own analysis of the international situation with particular reference to the intentions and policies of the British imperialists with regard to India. He told Gandhiji: "I am honestly convinced that the British Government will never recognise India's demand for independence". On the other hand, Netaji said, the war aims of America were to dominate the world and create the American century. Therefore, he said, "I am convinced that if we do desire freedom we must be prepared to wade through blood." Netaji then made a logical defence of the steps he had taken for the attainment of India's freedom since his escape from India in 1941. He told Mahatmaji, "If I had any hope that within our life-time we would get another chance, another golden opportunity for winning freedom, as during the present war, I doubt if I would have set out from home." He assured Mahatmaji, "Whatever I

have done has been for the benefit of my nation, for enhancing India's prestige before the world and for advancing the cause of India's freedom."

He concluded his message to Gandhiji with these words: "India's last war of independence has begun. Troops of the Azad Hind Fauj are now fighting bravely on the soil of India....this armed struggle will go on until the last Britisher is thrown out of India and until our national tricolour flag proudly floats over the Viceroy's house in New Delhi...."

"Father of our nation ! In this holy war for India's liberation we ask for your blessings and good wishes".

In October 1944, Netaji was invited for consultations in Tokyo after a change in government there. The Japanese government offered to confer on him the highest decoration as a foreign dignitary. Netaji turned the offer down saying that he could accept no decoration until India was emancipated. During his visit, Netaji sent a letter to the Soviet Ambassador to Japan through the Military Attache of Burmese Embassy in Tokyo. He also concluded at this time the Indo-Japanese Loan Agreement without any strings and with the assurance of full repayment. It is worthy of mention that Netaji made a lump-sum repayment from East Asia to the German government on account of loans advanced to the Free India Centre in Berlin. He also made a large donation to the government of Thailand for the facilities offered to the Azad Hind Fauj.

By the time Netaji returned to Rangoon at the end of November 1944, the military situation had deteriorated much further. There was continuous bombardment from the air by enemy planes and on the ground. British forces were surging forward on all fronts.

On Netaji's birthday in January 1945, the Indian community in Rangoon demonstrated their trust and confidence in Netaji by organising a huge rally and donating gold and jewelleries in large quantities for continuing the struggle. Soon thereafter, Netaji left for the front. The first

division of the I.N.A. commanded by Kiani on the Irrawady front was in great danger. Netaji himself continued to work twenty hours a day inspecting troops and facilities, while his adjutants had to be replaced three times on account of exhaustion. When Netaji heard that certain I.N.A. officers and men had deserted, he immediately issued a proclamation that deserters regardless of their rank were to be shot.

When the capture of Rangoon by allied forces appeared imminent, the Japanese command requested Netaji to join them in evacuating the city. Netaji refused the move until and unless arrangements had been made to evacuate the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. The Japanese were compelled to comply. Thereupon, Netaji accompanied by the Ranis and his personal staff moved out of Rangoon in the direction of Bangkok. The terrain was very difficult, roads had been rendered almost impassable by rain and floods and the entire area was infested by army stragglers and guerrillas. Vehicles in Netaji's convoy broke down one by one. He had, therefore, to march miles and miles in the company of the brave women soldiers and his personal staff. All those who saw him during this historic march from Rangoon to Bangkok were deeply impressed by his indomitable spirit, endurance and leadership qualities in the midst of dire adversity.

Netaji's marching column consisting of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment and his personal staff reached Bangkok a month after they had left Rangoon. In a parting message to Indian and Burmese friends he left behind in Burma, Netaji said:

"We have lost the first round of our fight for independence but we have lost only the first round. There are many more rounds to fight....

"When the history of India's last war of independence comes to be written, Indians in Burma will have an honoured place in this history...."

"I have to leave Burma in order to continue the

struggle for India's liberation....My unshakable faith in India's early emancipation remains unimpaired."

In an Order of the Day to the Azad Hind Fauj issued at the same time, Netaji said:

"At this critical hour I have only one word of command to give you and that is, that if you have to go down temporarily, then go down fighting with the national tricolour held aloft; go down as heroes, go down upholding the highest code of honour and discipline. The future generations of Indians who will be born not as slaves but as free men because of your colossal sacrifice, will bless your names and proudly proclaim to the world that you their forbears fought and suffered reverses in the battle in Manipur, Assam and Burma, but through temporary failure you paved the way to ultimate success and glory."

Upon his return to his old headquarters in Singapore, Netaji set about regrouping his forces, boosting the morale of the civilian population and preparing both the administration and the armed forces for a long-drawn struggle in the Malay peninsula--the second round of the fight he had in mind. He also launched a series of radio broadcasts addressed to the Indian people and Indian leaders appealing to them not to compromise with Britain--not to yield to the overtures of Wavell or to Jinnah's demand for the dismemberment of India. He particularly warned the Indian leaders about the British design to bring in and mix up sectarian and communalist forces with representatives of the National Congress at the conference table as a stepping-stone to the partition of India.

The Soviet Union entered the war against Japan on the 9th August 1945 and its forces immediately invaded Manchuria and the northern Japanese islands. In the week that followed, the Americans dropped atom bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki resulting in loss of life and devastation unprecedented in the history of war and humanity. Japan's fate was sealed and she unconditionally surrendered to the Allies on the 14th August 1945.

The news of Japan's surrender was conveyed to Netaji while he was watching a cultural performance by the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. He sat through the performance in the normal fashion and called an emergency cabinet meeting on his return to headquarters. In the following two days, he arranged for the proper discharge of civilian employees of his government and INA troops based in and around Singapore. On the 15th August 1945, he issued a special Order of the Day to the Azad Hind Fauj in which he said:

"In the struggle for the independence of our motherland we have now been overwhelmed by an undreamt of crisis. In this dark hour I call upon you to conduct yourselves with the discipline, dignity and strength befitting a truly Revolutionary Army. Remain true to India and do not for a moment waver in your faith in India's destiny. The roads to Delhi are many and Delhi still remains our goal. India shall be free and before long."

In a special message to Indians in East Asia the same day, he said:

"A glorious chapter in the history of India's struggle for freedom has just come to a close and in that chapter the sons and daughters of India in East Asia will have an undying place. Do not be depressed at our temporary failure. There is no power on earth that can keep India enslaved."

Since the fall of Burma, Netaji is believed to have been planning to move into Soviet territory to continue his struggle for Indian independence. While the Japanese Supreme Command in Tokyo did not look upon this idea favourably, certain highly placed Japanese military officers including Terauchi, the Japanese Supreme Commander in the South, wanted to assist Netaji in his future plans. A decision was taken at the cabinet meeting of the Provisional Government that Netaji should proceed to Tokyo on the 15th August 1945, accompanied by Habib-ur Rahman, S.A. Ayer, Abid Hasan, Deb Nath Das and a few others. They left by plane for Tokyo and on the way halted at

Bangkok and Saigon. At Saigon, Netaji was put on a heavy Japanese bomber plane carrying some Japanese army officers to Tokyo. As there was only one more seat available on the plane, Netaji took Habib-ur Rahman with him leaving the rest to follow him. After leaving Saigon, they spent a night in Tourane in North Indo-China. On the 18th August, they flew in the same plane to Taiwan en route to Tokyo via Dairen in Manchuria. It was announced over the Tokyo radio on the 23rd August 1945 that the plane while taking off from Taihoku airport crashed, killing the Japanese General Shidei, the pilot and some others while Netaji was severely injured with extensive burns. It was further reported that Netaji passed away the same night at the military hospital at Taihoku. According to Habib-ur Rahman, Netaji's remains were cremated at Taihoku and the ashes taken to Japan in the middle of September and deposited at the Renkoji Temple in the suburbs of Tokyo. Many in India still do not accept the report of his death to be authentic.

During the war in Burma and particularly after the fall of Rangoon, news had been trickling through to India about the exploits of the Azad Hind Fauj. When it was rumoured that INA prisoners were being maltreated and some had been executed, Jawaharlal Nehru came out with a statement saying that "the punishment given to them would in effect be a punishment on all India and all Indians." Sarat Chandra Bose on his release in September warned the British Government in a forthright manner that "not a hair on the heads of INA officers and men must be touched." Such declarations set the tone and the temper of the Indian people in regard to Netaji and the INA.

When the second world war ended in 1945, the Indian independence movement was at its lowest ebb. After the defeat of the August rebellion and the Azad Hind crusade, a sense of frustration and despondency had gripped the nationalist forces. In the midst of such bewilderment, the Indian National Army descended upon

the Indian scene as a God-send and the shadow of one man came to dominate Indian politics like a colossus. That man was Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. An entirely new revolutionary climate was created in India by the returning I.N.A. prisoners and repatriates from East Asia. The blanket of secrecy cast on the I.N.A. and its Netaji by British censorship was ripped open and the heroic deeds and colourful accounts of the Azad Hind movement roused the entire Indian nation regardless of political differences, caste, creed, age or sex to new heights of mass patriotic activity. The Indian National Congress set up a defence committee at a trial of the three I.N.A. officers, Shah Nawaz, Sahgal and Dhillon, which was ably led by Bhulabhai Desai. I.N.A. men became national heroes overnight." "Jai Hind" became the national slogan. There were deep stirrings in the British-Indian armed forces resulting in open revolt in the Air Force and the Royal Indian Navy. Thus, in the beginning of 1946–as Netaji had rightly predicted–the post-war upsurge had brought the Indian nation to the threshold of freedom. Netaji had achieved his strategic objective of destroying the loyalty of the Indian armed forces to the British Crown and supplanting it with a new loyalty to India and India's freedom. What is more, the new military tradition established by Netaji destroyed the old tradition of the British Indian Army being the instrument of subjugation not only of India but the whole of East Asia by British Imperialism.

Epilogue

In the history of India's struggle for freedom, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose stands out in all distinctiveness. In physique and mental constitution, in manner and life style, in ideology and action--packed with daring and drama--in fact in his total personality and achievements, he was a unique phenomenon of twentieth century India.

When he was born, the surging tide of Bengal Renaissance had reached its high water mark. The new national consciousness which had by then begun to manifest itself had its full impact on his early development. Netaji grew up in harmony with the evolution of India's national movement, responding and reacting to it positively. As a mere boy in an English missionary school, he found the environment foreign to his nature and thus became already a rebel at heart. In his further career, he was in turn a humanitarian, a social revolutionist in the mould of Vivekananda and finally through a process of sheer hard experience, a political activist. It is hard to find in contemporary annals a person so seized with such an overpowering sense of mission so early in life. His resignation from the Indian Civil Service in 1921 put the seal on his future course of life which admitted of no retreat and no surrender.

Even before he formally joined the Indian National Congress, as early as 1920 when he was still a student in Cambridge, his conception as to the role of the Congress in the making of a new India was clear. To his scientific mind and thinking, the party that was to win freedom for India

was also to be the instrument of post-war national reconstruction on the basis of long-term research and planning. Even then, he thought in terms of researchers and trained cadres in every department of life who would take charge of free India and take her forward.

It was during the last crucial twenty-five years of the Indian liberation struggle that Netaji played his role. He based his politics on a deep and scientific analysis of Indian polity since ancient times and particularly an objective study of British conquest and rule. He came to the irrevocable conclusion that the fundamental interests of the Indian people in colonial subjugation and those of British imperialism were irreconcilable. Therefore, any adjustment or compromise between these two forces was impossible. True to his ideological commitment and belief, he reacted to British rule with a sense of total opposition and deliberately and consciously chose the path of uncompromising struggle for national liberation. He believed further that the final decisive confrontation between Indian nationalism and British imperialism would take place in their life-time and that it was the historic task and duty of his generation of India's national revolutionaries to ensure India's victory in the final battle. As he recognised the Indian National Congress to be the supreme organ of struggle of the Indian people, it was his persistent and tireless endeavour to firstly, build the Congress up as a broad anti-imperialist front and secondly, bring the Congress to the path of uncompromising struggle against British imperialism. His sponsoring the independence resolution at the Calcutta Congress in 1928; his call for a parallel government and total boycott at the Lahore Congress in 1929; his formation of the National Planning Committee and proposal to set up the Congress Working Committee as the shadow cabinet of Independent India at Haripura in 1938 and finally, his call for an ultimatum to the British to quit India at Tripuri in 1939–all have to be understood in the light of his ideological commitment and

strategic objective relating to our national struggle.

On the eve of assuming the Congress presidentship in 1938, Netaji had summarised his total political thinking by saying that "the Indian National Congress should be organised on the broadest anti-imperialist front and would have the two-fold objective of winning political freedom and the establishment of a socialist regime". The Congress had been committed for many years to a policy of active opposition to British exploitation of India in imperialist wars anywhere. Netaji wanted the Congress to stand steadfastly by that policy and intensify the mass struggle in order to bring British governance of India to a standstill. To his utter disappointment, however, he found that the leadership in power in the Congress was unwilling to fight while the leftist camp in the party was rent into factions and rendered powerless by endless doctrinaire hair-splitting. This was the situation even after 1939 when the world went up in flames and empires began to crumble. In the midst of the international war crisis pregnant with revolutionary possibilities, he took the most important decision of his life as to the militant revolution to make a determined bid for India's freedom.

The strategic objective that Netaji set before himself during World War II was based on a scientific examination of the strong and weak points of the British position in India and that of the Indian national movement also. Although, he believed that India was ripe for revolution, the rest of the national leadership thought otherwise. Therefore, the possibility of starving the British fortress into submission by a total mass Satyagraha was out of the question. In the circumstances, Netaji seized upon the only potent element that kept British rule going in India, namely, the mercenary British Indian Army still loyal to the British Crown. Netaji's task in the midst of the international war crisis was to destroy that old loyalty and supplant it by a new loyalty of the Indian soldier to India and India's freedom. This was exactly what he did both in Europe and

East Asia by organising a revolutionary volunteer liberation army to ignite the flame of revolt in India by forcing its way into the country by all available means and routes. The Indian independence movement, by then nearly one hundred years old, lacked one very important element in any revolutionary upsurge, namely, a military tradition. The new military tradition not only destroyed the old tradition of subservience to imperialism of the army in India, but in the process destroyed the one potent instrument in the hands of British imperialists for the subjugation not only of India but the whole of East Asia.

Since Netaji disappeared from the scene more than five decades ago, the world political situation as well as the national situation have changed profoundly. British imperialism has been defeated in most parts of Asia. But imperialism in new forms seeks to appear in many parts of the world. Threats to human freedom remain as ever before. As the undying symbol of anti-imperialism, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, thus, remains a leader of hope and inspiration for all oppressed humanity. For India, he remains a fountainhead of faith and promise–undying faith in India's historic destiny and the promise of a new egalitarian social order based on a synthesis of all the social experiments carried out across the world over the last two centuries.

Even as a human being and thinker, Netaji was seeking a new philosophy--a new ethical conception in human affairs. A rare personality in contemporary world history, he was at once deeply involved in the great spiritual heritage of India and at the same time actively concerned with the most modern social and technological advances anywhere in the world. He sought to inspire his countrymen with his single-minded dedication, defiant courage and reckless sacrifice and abandon for a cause which did not admit of any compromise or reservations. In this, he succeeded in a large measure and, thus, remains an example in leadership. That is why, even though he left much

before his time, his legacy in thought and deed remains for the present and generations unborn. Who knows, India may in time rediscover Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and in his own words "deliver to the world the message that has been her heritage through the past ages".

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Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was one of the foremost leaders of the Indian freedom movement. Unlike other popular leaders of the movement, he dreamt of freedom of the country by waging a war against the British and thus formed the Indian National Army. This concise biography —first time published during the centenary celebrations of the Indian National Congress —presents in a simple and lucid language an authentic account of the life of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in the background of our freedom struggle.

Dr Sisir Kumar Bose (1920-2000), a nephew of Netaji, participated in the freedom struggle and helped in organising an underground network for the INA. He was imprisoned in Lyallpur Jail, Lahore. A pediatrician by profession, he served Institute of Child Health, Calcutta as Director for twenty years. In the post-independence period, he founded the Netaji Research Bureau and for more than four decades carried on studies and researches on Netaji. He wrote and edited a number of publications on Netaji.

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