

CHAPTER XV

IN AGRA CENTRAL JAIL AGAIN : Three and Half Years

I arrived at Agra Jail on the first of August 1931. Rajkumar Sinha and Ram Krishna Khatri were there in the European Ward. Khatri was transferred to Lucknow that very afternoon. We only enjoyed each other's company for a few hours.

Rajkumar was very pleased to have me as a companion. Through his letters his mother, sister and brother came to know of my arrival. His brother, Bijoy Kumar Sinha, was in Rajahmundry jail from where he wrote a letter envying his brother's luck to have me with him. His sister then started correspondence with me from Karachi. She wrote lengthy letters dealing with various matters.

My former sojourn in this jail was only for a year, but that had been very eventful. I, a habitual 'C' class prisoner under heavy fetters and heavy sentence, lived then with the hardened long-term criminals and earned the full confidence of my jail mates. I defied the Bengal C. I. D. Inspector, the Chief Judge of Oudh Chief Court and even the jail authorities on moral grounds. But this time, though under the same sentence, I was a privileged prisoner in a better class,

living aloof from others in a separate spacious European Ward. This meant only monotony and no romance. Formerly I was in constant touch with the active members of the party. Now that was a thing of the past. Chandrasekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh and Rajguru were already in the rank of martyred national heroes and others like Bijoy and Batukeswar were struggling hard as long-termers 'C' class in South Indian Jails, about to be transferred to Andamans.

About 500 Bengal detenus were sent to Deoli Detention Camp, 71 miles from the city of Ajmer. Convicts were sent from U.P. jails to serve them. Two of them belonging to Aligarh district came back to Agra jail on their way to be released. From them we came to know that there had been a lathi-charge in the camp. The news was conveyed to Satyendranath Mitra, who gave the news in the Hindustan Times and also put a short notice question before the Assembly. The reply was not satisfactory. But immediately after this the Home Member personally went there for enquiry and the Commander was transferred and a new Commander was given the charge.

Sachindranath Bakshi, whom I had left in Lucknow jail was transferred to Agra jail and Rajkumar Sinha was sent to Lucknow. Now Khatri and Sinha, sentenced to 10 years each, were in Lucknow jail and myself and Bakshi, the two lifers were in Agra Central jail. Shaukat Usmani

also was brought to this jail after his conviction in the Meerut Conspiracy Case. He had very serious differences with his comrades in the Meerut case, because when he started a hunger strike, as a protest against the misbehaviour of a C.I.D. Inspector, nobody supported him and consequently he felt humiliated. He was kept in a separate jail as an under-trial in that case and after conviction all were sent to Allahabad Jail, but he alone was sent to Agra Central Jail. He was very resentful and depressed, and pressed me for an escape plan with the object of going to Moscow with me. I was not enthused and suddenly one day he was transferred to the district jail.

Mahavir Banga of Allahabad was in a cell here on his sentence of two years rigorous imprisonment under the Arms Act. Also Sudama Prasad of the Shahjahanpur Bomb Case came with a conviction but later he was let off through the efforts of Devnarain Bharati.

I had nothing with which to occupy myself. So I took gardening in right earnest. There were big plots of land in front and on one side of my ward. At the back was the jail garden. Flower gardens were already in the front yard, started by my friends, and I made some improvements. I started vegetable gardening along one side first and it was gradually extended to the back. I read books on this topic and learned the theories of gardening but I picked up much more from the prisoners who had

life-long practical knowledge of gardening. To get their help was ordinarily difficult in jail but as I was a privileged prisoner, I could manage it. Butter, sugar, eggs and loaf helped me a good deal. The warders, convict officials and prisoners were helpful to me due to these delicacies. The jailor or the Superintendent came occasionally and the jail used to remain practically in the hands of the warders and convict officials. I was also regarded as an experienced person in jail affairs. Throughout the day I used to keep myself engaged in gardening and produced very nice flowers and vegetables. I composed a good quality manure and found that ashes applied in the compost and around the stem were the remedy against insects. In this my products were the finest. The jailor used to take the headwarder in charge of the garden to my place and showed my products and put him to task for bad results in the his garden. How could the poor warder compete with me? He was working for his living with forced labour. He had to extort money from the convicts. He had to satisfy the jailor and other officials providing them with a fixed supply. The quality vegetables were only needed for officials. The jailor knew the reality but he took the warder to task only as a general way of stimulating work. But for me, how to dispose of my garden products was a problem. Readily edible produce, such as carrot, beans, watermelons, etc. were taken away by warders but nobody

wanted green vegetables. Myself and our cook could take very little.

AGRA CONSPIRACY MEN

Some boys of local prosperous families were involved in the Agra Conspiracy Case and detained at the jail. We managed to meet them privately but officially they were not allowed to mix with us. They were given heavy sentences and transported elsewhere.

Bhupen Sanyal came here with a fresh sentence after his release from the Kakori conviction. This time he was given 18 months R. I. for a seditious speech in a Youth Conference at Mathura. But soon he was transferred to another jail.

DEATH OF MY COUSIN SAILESH CHANDRA CHATTERJEE

The most painful news of my life in jail was received here. Bakshi and myself had just finished our midday meals. The Chief Head-warder was coming towards our yard with some papers. He handed over one telegram to me. I read it and was just on the verge of collapsing. Bakshi snatched it from me and I came to myself and then read it carefully. The first shock was so sudden and so terrible that it seemed to me as if I had lost all contact with the earth and my hand with the paper was shaking. The telegram was to our Jail Superintendent from the Commandant of Deoli

Detention Camp. The message was : "Inform Jogesh Chatterji that his brother Sailesh Chatterjee died of sudden fever yesterday morning." Sailesh was my cousin who was hardly two years old when I went to jail in 1916. On my return from jail he became very intimate with me. He used to eat with me and sleep with me and he felt uncomfortable in my absence. He had such a loving nature that everybody was irresistably endeared by him. Health, beauty, intelligence and energy he possessed amply. Naturally he became a very active member of the party. He was thrown into prison before he completed even his seventeenth year, when he was preparing for his Intermediate examination in Science. He was in Hijli Detention Camp where two detenus were shot dead by the guards, and there was a countrywide agitation over this. From there he appeared in B.A. examination and passed with distinction. Then he was transferred to Deoli Camp. He had an attack of high fever and was removed to the hospital. He was there alone and a Dr. Khan gave him an intravenous quinine injection of 10 c.c. He died, rather the doctor killed him. Later I came to know that my father, too, died the same day in East Bengal.

Even then I wrote to my aunt that I suspected some evil hand in the death of Sailesh. This was in 1933 and eight years later in 1941 I came to know the matter in detail from the compounder

who was present at the time of my cousin's death. I was then in the jail hospital. The compounder was going to his quarters after his duty was over. He stopped beside my bed and we had talks about the camp. He began narrating some old stories of the place. He told of an incident when Bengal detenus were there and an episode happened resulting in the death of a brilliant youth. He said that Dr. Khan was solely responsible for that death. He said that he had been present at the time and objected to the administration of 10 c. c. quinine to a person in such high fever,—when the temperature was as high as 104°; but the doctor went ahead and the tragedy took place. The compounder had no idea that the youth he was talking about was my own cousin. When I told him this, he was very much afraid that he might lose his job if I attempted an agitation after eight years which would be ineffective and futile.

The Divisional Commissioner came on a visit one afternoon. After some talks on literature, he asked us if we needed anything. I said that he might do one thing for us. If he tried, we might be able to get books from the Missionary College Library. He promised to support my request but asked me to write it. Accordingly I wrote to the Principal of the Missionary College through the Commissioner that though the College Library was not meant for outsiders, theirs was a missionary institution and we were prisoners in jail ;

he might supply us a few such books as could be spared. I would suggest the subject and he would select the books. He was good enough to agree to my proposal and sent 10 books in the first month. It was a great boon to us. We read the books voraciously and sent them back in time and received the second instalment the next month. We returned the books duly. We asked for more books but none were received. We complained but no one paid any heed. The College authorities sent reminders but no reply was given. At the end of the third month the Principal wrote a strong personal letter to the Superintendent and he came to us. We complained of the lack of attention to so straight forward a request as these books.

ADMINISTRATION OF AGRA JAIL

As a man Col. Jafri was not bad. But he had no personality of his own and no integrity. He always depended on his subordinates against whom he could never think of taking any step even for the most gross misconduct. He would never dare to hear any of the prisoners. So the jail under him was a veritable hell. One Andaman returned Muslim of hardened character was incharge of cells. He was at liberty to do whatever he liked. So a reign of terror prevailed there. He was daily beating prisoners mercilessly. He extorted money from prisoners. Any youngster he could

have as his boy for homosexuality. Even our complaint to the Superintendent against this act was futile. But at last the prisoners themselves took revenge. He was given glass powder with Halwa (a sweet dish) and he died in the hospital under excruciating pain asking for God's mercy for his mis-deeds. The jail authorities did not know the cause of his pain but I knew, as the man who administered it told me what he had done. Such was the confidence of other convicts in me.

The Aligarh Muslim died but his role was taken up by a Brahmin of Mainpuri. This Brahmin, as a newcomer, had received brutal beatings from the Muslim and he complained to me very bitterly. But soon after the Muslim's death he became the jailor's pet and started doing the very same thing. It is not the person but the system which is responsible for all this. A radical change is necessary for social development, no matter whether it is in jail or outside.

Inside the jail wall there is a society of men under the same administration. The highly paid Superintendent is assisted by an army of low paid men. From amongst the prisoners also there are men on privileged position through whom others are kept in check. Force is the main factor. If the top is slack, then the whole jail is slack. Every officer's object is to earn something extra. The result is that Government properties are looted freely and the prisoners are atrociously and ruth-

lessly oppressed. That was the condition of the Agra Jail during the three years that I spent there as a 'B' class prisoner.

But quite different was the position during the time of Col. Seikh who was honest and upright to the core. The officials were terribly afraid of him, corruption was much reduced and prisoners were much better off. Looting of Government property was reduced.

Col. Seikh had the determination to stop illicit smuggling of articles in jail but Col. Clements, the I. G. of Prisons, told him that it was impossible. Seikh had to agree after a period of experimenting. In Lucknow jail Hearne studied the weak points in Seikh and befooled him by various devices. Hearne used to allow the rich relatives of the prisoners interview in his bungalow and received a good amount of money from them. Seikh had no knowledge of it. One day while convicts were in the jailor's bungalow, a warder of the gate guard, Alam Ali, gave the whistle of alarm. The Superintendent's bungalow was at a distance. So the daring jailor asked Alam Ali to allow the prisoners to get in. But Alam Ali warned him with loaded gun not to come near. In the meantime Jailor's men placed a ladder on the outer wall and jumped into the jail. One very fatty tradesman failed to do so and remained out. But the jailor with the assistance of others managed to show in the counting of prisoners that everything was alright. The

poor warder was dismissed for giving false alarm. Long after this Seikh came to know the truth and on his admonition the trader himself made the confession. So Alam Ali was reinstated and promoted as a head-warder. But even then no step could be taken against the Anglo-Indian jailor.

Even Salamatullah, a strict disciplinarian could not bring Hearne under his control. No doubt Hearne felt his pressure and was uncomfortable, as much of his income was reduced. He openly revolved at times in the presence of subordinates and Salamatullah had to yield, because he knew that in an open tussle Hearne would be backed by the Government. Hearne belonged to the rulers' race and that was his strength. Clements could never support Salamatullah against Hearne. Every white skinned man had the superiority complex. Clements looked upon us, the political prisoners, as his personal enemies. He ill treated us deliberately and was afraid of us. He told me after our conviction that we should forget now that we were Kakori men. It was because of his suggestion that we were classified as habituals after the hunger strike. I made it a point since then to be indifferent towards him. My grave indifference made him so much afraid of me that when he came on a visit he dragged two warder guards in front when he noticed that I was inside the weaving factory. This attracted so much notice from the habitual long-termers that they discussed this amongst themselves after he left the factory.

HUNGER STRIKE AT AGRA 1934 (11-7-'34 to 29-11-'34)

The Lahore Conspiracy Case was an offshoot of the Kakori Case. A struggle for special treatment of political prisoners in jail was taken up by the Lahore Case undertrials. Jatin Das, who was the link between Bengal and the rest of northern India after the arrest of Sanyal and myself, reluctantly resorted to hunger strike with others. He was at the beginning averse to it, because he knew the Government attitude in Kakori prisoners' cases. But when he joined it he was fully conscious of the dangerous consequences. His determination was either to mend the Government attitude or end himself. He proved true to it by ending himself.

Owing to strong public pressure the Government promised to do something. But the matter ended in duplicity. No special class was given to political prisoners but prisoners in general were classified into three divisions, 'A' 'B' and 'C'. As the result of this 95% of the political prisoners were classified as 'C'; about 3 or 4 percent were classed as 'B' and less than 1 percent as 'A'. This was an instrument to break the solidarity of political prisoners. The stereotyped policy of 'divide and rule' was introduced in jail. We the Kakori prisoners got 'B' class. But this Government attitude oppressed us too much.

The Kakori prisoners were given 'B' class the very first day classification was introduced in U. P.

jails, but they were neither sent to the Concentration Jail at Fyzabad nor allowed mutual associations. They were kept alone or in twos. Against this Manindra Nath Banerjee resorted to hunger strike in Fatehgarh Central Prison and ultimately died. Banerjee was given 10 years R. I. for shooting Rai Bahadur Jitendra Nath Banerjee, Dy. S. P., C. I. D. While firing he shouted 'Revenge of Kakori'.

The news gave us a shock. For three days we thought and thought. Are we to die one by one in this way? No, not at all. If we are to die we must do so with a loud protest. We gave notice to the Government through the Superintendent that (i) all political prisoners must be formed into a special class and given better class treatment; (ii) they must be given daily newspapers and other reading facilities; (iii) they must be accommodated in Association barracks and given opportunities for games and exercise. So I started my historic and grim hunger strike,—the hardest one of my life, in early July 1934 along with Sachin Bakshi, in Agra Central Jail. Bakshi developed dysentery during the strike and had to drop out on the 45th day at my request. His aged father was brought down from Banaras and sought my assistance which I readily gave. I was now alone and felt relieved as now I was free of any other responsibility.

From the 55th day I gave up water as well. The I. G. of Prisons, Lt. Col. Palmer, had already

told me that I might die and his Government wouldn't care. So I wrote to him that as an honourable Englishman he might keep his word by giving orders to the Superintendent of the Jail not to give me even water through my nose. The Superintendent saw that I was losing weight at the rate of one lb. per day for not taking water and this was very dangerous at this stage. So he was giving me one lb. of water along with the pint of liquids that he was feeding me through my nose. I redoubled my struggle when this water-feeding started. The first day I gave a blow to the junior doctor when he was twisting my left hand during the feeding. The Superintendent realised that this doctor was my enemy. So from the next day this junior doctor was ordered to look after my health and the senior doctor since then used to visit me only once during the force feeding with the Superintendent. The junior doctor once taunted me saying that he had met many hunger strikers in jail and like them I would continue about a month or so and then would give it up.

It was a grim competition. The authorities were determined to keep me alive and I was determined to bring about a crisis. Government attitude was well known to me and so I started with good preparations. Even before I gave notice of the strike I kept four big feathers cleaned and sterilized underneath my bed.

Every morning the Superintendent used to come

to my cell with a retinue of performers and went away leaving me alone after the food. I used to take out a feather and vomit out the liquid with its help, into the bed pan. But the system would absorb a good portion of the food within 5 or 10 minutes.

One day the Chief Head Warder, a muslim commissioned ex-serviceman of the Punjab, saw the sweeper washing the bed-pan in which there was a big amount of vomitted food materials and reported the matter to the Superintendent, Lt. Col. Jafri. He came out in the afternoon with the jailor, the doctors and others and made a thorough search and the four feathers were discovered and taken away. The whole night I felt uneasy and disturbed in mind. If I fail to vomit, they would be able to keep me alive for an indefinite period and the troubles and tortures would continue. But to my great pleasure the next morning I vomitted down the same portion of food as I was doing so long with the help of the feathers. More than a month's continuous practice had already made the system helpful for this. So in spite of the regular and substantial feeds my weight was going down steadily.

The condition was so much alarming that on the 68th day the European District Magistrate came to see me and talked with me for nearly an hour and half. The trend of the talk clearly indicated that he was seeking a way out. I made the Go-

vernment and the Jail Superintendent, too, responsible for this desperate step of mine. The Government must recognise political prisoners as a special class of prisoners and the jail authorities too, must be made to feel that we are not ordinary criminals,—these were my demands. I was a determined man on the death bed and the examples of Jatin Das and Mani Banerjee were before me. I, therefore, spoke to this Englishman as an Indian patriot who was speaking to a representative of our exploiter though I was in no way impolite to him.

The next day came the Commissioner of the Division. He, too, was an Englishman. He categorically asked me if I would go to the Andamans. This was significant. Because once in the past I had volunteered to go to the Andamans as an English knowing Clerk. I told the Commissioner that I was quite ready to go to the Andamans, provided that my standard of living would continue to be the same as a 'B' class prisoner and that I was on hunger strike for the cause of all political prisoners. I told him categorically that I stood by my demands. They might get rid of me by sending me to the Andamans, but that would not solve the problem. This proposal of mine was no solution of their problem and he went away rather puzzled.

The very next day Pandit Srikrishna Dutt Paliwal, Balkrishna Sharma, Prem Krishna Khanna and other gentlemen came to see me. Without even asking me anything first, Paliwalji delivered a

speech in English that on behalf of the public they want that I should surrender as the alien Government would not meet my demand and allow me to die as others have died. The country could not afford to lose me. He also assured me that a big reform was to come and that the Congress would come into power in a couple of years and it would then get us out of jail. When he stopped Sharmaji, in the like manner, delivered a fine short speech. In the meantime Khanna was very much upset and began to weep when he felt that my hands and legs were tied down to the bed. I was covered upto the neck with a bed sheet and the ends of the sheet were carefully fastened to the bed with big safety pins. I was kept in this condition for months by the Jail Superintendent on the ground that I might otherwise commit suicide. I had spoken to the D. M. that this allegation of the Superintendent was absolutely groundless because, as a veteran revolutionary, I hated the idea of suicide.

The hunger strike lingered on and I continued to suffer terrible pain day in and day out for nearly another two and half months.

But there was fortunately a big change in my favour. The Junior Doctor who was my enemy so long suddenly became a fast friend. He overheard the talk that I had with the D. M. In the afternoon he came to me alone and declared that he was my friend and would render all possible help

to me. On my enquiry he gave the reason that he overheard the talk and he never before believed that an Indian prisoner could talk on equal terms with an English D. M. Since then he used to give me all secret information regarding my affairs and used to go to Paliwalji and the editor of a local daily to acquaint them with the latest news regarding my health. There was also a warder, who took a keen interest in me purely on patriotic grounds and took the risk of coming to the back of my cell. On hearing his tap on the wall I used to be attentive and exchanged words slowly and quickly. So although absolutely alone in my bed, counting the days of life in excruciating pain, I had three sure friends : the sweeper, the warder and the doctor, to console me.

The Chief Head Warder again saw one day the bedpan being cleared by the sweeper in the drain in which the vomitted materials were being washed away. He again reported to the Superintendent. This time the order was that over and above my fastened hands legs, a thick newar rope be fastened round my chest in such a way that I had to lie down on my back and could not stir. I was kept in this way for one hour after forced feeding and then the Senior Doctor used to come and unfasten the rope. This was because after the feed a man can vomit within half an hour and after that liquid is absorbed by the body. But to my delight even in this prostrate condition a considerable

quantity of food came out and dropped down on my chest soiling the cloth. The Superintendent could do nothing to prevent this and hence from the next day after the feed while roping me up with the bed they placed a big towel on my chest and it was taken away by the Doctor when he came to unfasten me.

There was no natural motion and hunger strikers generally do not have natural motions. I never had a natural motion in any of my hunger strikes. This was a problem this time with the Superintendent. From the beginning I refused to take enema. This was a veritable struggle between myself and the jail authorities. My task was to get rid of these tortures as soon as I could either through an honourable compromise or through an early death. A number of people used to overpower me, clutching hold of my hands, legs and the head and the compounder used to sit on my body. The junior doctor used to hold the head steady and the senior doctor used to help the Superintendent, in thrusting the long tube inside the nostril. The tube was soft and made slippery by dipping in glycerine before passing it through the nose. Daily I struggled hard and got completely exhausted and the pound of water that they poured into the stomach caused me a terrible pain for nearly an hour when I used to make water. My body was reduced to a mere skeleton, only the loose skin remaining on it. My intestines also shrunk and hence the big amount

of water along with the liquid feed gave me so much pain. But at the same time this water helped me a good deal in vomiting out the liquid and water too. So the process of reduction continued slowly but surely.

I was given feeds for 6 days every week and on the seventh day a big quantity of castor oil emulsion was given in the stomach through the nostril. That day no feed was possible. In the beginning I was getting a motion after the administration of this castor oil, but with the passage of time I was getting physically exhausted and was losing proportionately the power of regular motion. At an advanced stage I was getting a motion the next day or the day after or even the third day and no feed was possible as long as the castor oil was there. The smell was nauseating and the pain too very acute.

At long last this very thing brought about the crisis. The Superintendent gave me castor oil emulsion feed for three consecutive days but there was no motion. He was alarmed. He consulted the Civil Surgeon and perhaps the other doctor friends and then for another three days consecutively he gave me a drug called Cascara. Yet there was no motion. My pain was simply unbearable and the condition became frightful for myself as well as the jail authorities. The Superintendent reported that I could never survive more than a fortnight. For a week I could not have a wink of

sleep and was restless. Even today the very memory of that gives me a shudder. The inhuman police tortures of 1916 was nothing compared to this pain I was suffering. The hallowed memory of my dearest comrade Jatin Das was constantly in my mind and the Government's refusal to fulfil the public demand for a special class for the political prisoners was inspiring me. Young Mani Banerjee's martyrdom at Fatehgarh jail was the fresh stimulant with which I started the Strike. I tried to forget all pain absorbing myself in these thoughts and felt refreshed and relieved.

Within more than five and half months my weight was reduced from 138 lbs. to 76 lbs. only. The organs inside were working alright though feebly. Sense organs were rather keen. A slight sound anywhere would stir me up and even the chirping of small birds disturbed me a good deal. In fact in my own mind I had taken leave of the world. The doctors used to examine my heart very often. Their idea was, as my doctor told me, that one day suddenly my heart would fail. But before that my pain would be unbearable for a day or two. I told him that I would put up with that patiently.

At this stage I heard that the I. G. of Prisons was to visit the jail. Preparations were going on very vigorously, because the notice was very short. One morning the doctor friends gave me the information that the Governor had suddenly come

to Agra and was staying in the Circuit House and the Jail Superintendent had been there in the night. He thought that it had something to do with my hunger-strike.

In the morning two chairs were placed in my cell and the doctor informed me that this was done under the orders of the I. G. of Prisons, Lt. Col. Salamatullah, who would come to see me. He came at about 11 A. M. after hurriedly finishing his round of jail and sat near me for full two hours, accompanied by the Jail Superintendent. He tried to persuade me to give up the strike. As the first Indian I. G. of Prisons he had come authorised to meet most of my demands. But he was not ready to come to definite terms. I told him that after an exhaustive struggle the situation was now under my control. The Government policy of keeping me alive indefinitely was now shaken off and I controlled the reins. Therefore I could not give up the strike unless I was assured of the future. It was not a personal matter at all. He told me again and again that he had come fully authorised and could therefore say that most of my grievances would be removed. He requested me again and again to take one last chance and I only said in reply that the matter required clarification, otherwise I might again be placed in the same terrible plight. At last I agreed to take the chance once again giving him the warning that the strike would surely be restarted if the matter was not

decided satisfactorily and he would be held responsible. He agreed and I called off the strike by taking a little milk. He also promised me that I would be transferred to Naini Jail.

Later I realised that I did this because when a man hangs between life and death, the life-saving instinct prevails on him. It was certainly weakness on my part to give up the strike without any clear and definite understanding.

The doctor friend came to me shortly after the departure of the I. G. of Prisons. He had earlier given me the information that in the evening the Superintendent had been to the Governor. Now he gave me the information that the Governor came to Agra accompanied by the I. G. of Civil Hospitals, the outgoing I. G. of Prisons, Lt. Col. Palmer, and the incoming I. G. of Prisons, Lt. Col. Salamatullah and Major Bhandari I. M. S. Our Jail Superintendent met them in the Circuit House with the records of my case and all the doctors were agreed on the report of the Superintendent that my case was really beyond their control and my death was inevitable. So they decided that I would be released unconditionally and kept in the Thomson Hospital for treatment. But Lt. Col. Salamatullah volunteered to make the last effort to see if I could be persuaded to give up the strike.

I was under the sentence of transportation for life in a dangerous case. In this respect my

unconditional release would have been a big thing for me no doubt. But the cause for which I suffered would not have gained anything as a result of my release. In this sense my conditional calling off of the strike was better, because by giving up the strike I did not give up the case. And really I had to restart it at Lucknow the next year as the Government's attitude was callous and even deceitful.

Gradually I recovered my health satisfactorily. The first few days were very critical. A man must be very careful and must restrain himself strictly till he reaches the normal condition. A slight wrong step at this stage may prove dangerous. I was an expert on this due to my long practice as a hunger striker. Gandhiji also considered himself to be expert on fasting. But compared to him my practice and sufferings were hundred times more. Gandhiji had been on strike utmost for 3 weeks at a time but I had been for months and months. He was never given a forced feeding.

So many revolutionary prisoners have died in India, the Andamans and Burma by hunger strikes. Parallel occurrences can hardly be found in other countries. Mac Swiny is the single example in Europe. Old Russian revolutionaries were once on hunger strike in Cara prison in Siberia. It continued for a little over a week. Some leading women revolutionaries in the female jail which was at a distance of about seven miles from the Cara

Prison were also on hunger strikes. But they could not continue and had to give up. The reaction of this frustration was so intense that later some of these men and women committed suicide by taking opium. Death by hunger strike is still continuing in the Indian Union under the Congress rule as a protest against the administrative policy.

A few days after I gave up the strike the mother of Rajkumar Sinha came to see me at about 10 A. M. I was lying on a mat in the sun and my convict cook was massaging mustard oil on my body. The jailor and the mother sat on the two chairs. Though a skeleton I could even walk a little, but at my first attempts I dropped down several times. I mildly complained to Rajkumar's mother that I did not get proper stimulating nourishment. I asked my cook to show her what rotten fruits I was given. Then I told her that I asked for fish and fish was actually brought for me and shown to me, but when the Superintendent saw this he told them not to give me that. Of course, he had no evil intention, he thought it would be harmful. Rajkumar's mother said that it would have been better if she could cook for me.

Her report in the press that I was not getting proper nourishment produced a good result. I started getting good things.

My doctor friend was anxious, because of the rapidity of my heart-beats but when he talked to the Superintendent, Col. Jafri, he stated that it

was quite natural. My heart-beat was fast, he said, due to the rapidity of recovery and for this reason the pulse of children work very rapidly.

I was all alone and I pressed for association. The result was may transfer to Lucknow jail again.

CHAPTER XVI

TRANSFERRED TO LUCKNOW CENTRAL PRISON

I was soon transferred to Lucknow Central Jail where I met again Rajkumar Sinha and Ram Krishna Khatri. Lt. Col. Sheikh was the Superintendent. I recovered my lost health rapidly in their pleasant association. My heart which had sunk down alarmingly during the strike now became normal. But as a result of the hunger strike my liver was permanently damaged and the nerve system weakened.

Ram Krishna Khatri and Raj Kumar Sinha had made the small European Ward a nice place. Beautiful flower beds were developed and they also planted some big crotons. The atmosphere was very pleasant. Time was passing well.

They both had served their terms of 10 years and the time of their release was approaching. Rajkumar's release was more important. He and his brother were in jail and the mother was alone at Kanpur. At last the pleasant day arrived and Raj Kumar and Khatri were released from jail. Kashi Ram and Haldhar Bajpai came in their place. Haldhar Bajpai came from Banaras Central Jail.

Famous Bengal revolutionary of Anushilan Samiti, Sitanath De, had come to Banaras and

approached late Acharya Narendra Deva for shelter. Acharyaji, the Principal of the Kashi Vidya-pith, gave the charge to a student of the Vidya-pith. Sitanath De thought that he was betrayed to the police. He met Haldhar Bajpai in Banaras jail and told him that his object in coming to U. P. was to take me out from jail. But he was arrested even before he could try to contact me. This message was brought by Haldhar Bajpai.

Sachindra Nath Sanyal was also transferred to Lucknow Jail. I met Sanyal after many years. Although we met at Agra casually, exchange of ideas was not possible there. Here I realised the difference in ideas between us. He persuaded me to the best of his ability not to restart hunger strike. But I was determined. When he fully realised my grim determination he gave up arguing. I told him that I knew that the Government would not pay any heed and my death was absolutely sure and yet the strike had to be resorted to. Jatin Das had sacrificed himself and let me also follow the same path. I wanted nothing but death.

Gradually I realised that I have been befooled by the I. G. of Prisons and the Government. In Lucknow jail personally I was given an association of four persons and in place of a weekly paper a biweekly was given. My demand was not at all personal. So this could not give me the least satisfaction, rather it exasperated me to further action. So I sent an application wherein I put my grievances

and the I. G. of Prisons came personally to see me ; but his sweet words could not at all convince me. I now saw that another hunger strike was inevitable. In the meantime Khatri and Sinha had gone out after serving their long 10 years' terms. Through them and through other sources the news was sent out that I was serious on this. Pressure was put on me from outside that such a step at this time would be very dangerous and hence should not be resorted to. Sachindranath Sanyal was transferred to Lucknow surely with this purpose. He was constantly dissuading me from my determination. But no amount of argument or pressure could slacken my firm stand. At last I gave the Government one month's ultimatum.

HUNGER STRIKE AGAIN

Sanyal realised the gravity and told me that India was going to lose an honest revolutionary. The I. G. of Prisons and the U. P. Government knew now that it was a greater problem before them than that of Agra. On the completion of the month I started the Hunger strike in October 1935. This time because it was a real fast unto death the demands were also placed before the authorities in a crystal clear manner. They were :

- (1) All political prisoners are to be classified as one class and given better class treatment.
- (2) Daily newspapers are to be supplied at State expense,

- (3) All political prisoners are to be kept in concentration jail and be given facilities for games, reading and writing and accommodation in association barracks.
- (4) All political prisoners kept in Andaman must be repatriated to the Indian jails.

On the sixth day I was removed to hospital cell. I parted from my associates with the idea of parting for good. I was absolutely prepared for that. None had the least idea that I would survive. The only problem in my mind was how to hasten the end. The very idea of hunger strike was a terror to me yet I had to resort to it.

The circumstances here were more favourable in the sense that the Superintendent was not doing anything himself. He left everything to the Muslim senior doctor who was also callous and gave false reports to the Superintendent. The doctor came to me seldom and depended on the compounder. And the junior doctor was in touch with the revolutionaries as a student and hence he was sympathetic to me.

One day one person came from Kanpur and had a talk with me. He said that they were not giving anything to the Press and trying their utmost to come to some settlement with the Government by private negotiations. I only told him that the matter was not so easy.

On the sixth day Pandit Jagadamba Prasad Hitaisi was allowed to meet me in jail hospital,

but Surendranath Pande and Maulana Hasrat Mohani had to remain outside the jail gate as they were not allowed to meet me.

On the 23rd day the Home Members, Sir Maharaj Singh came. He said that a daily paper was a most reasonable thing and this could be given ; but concentration of all political prisoners into one jail was simply impossible. I refused to enter into any discussion and said that my demands were there in the application and the Government would either concede them or allow me to die peacefully. He sympathetically felt the temperature of my forehead with his hand and then went away telling the Superintendent to keep me warm.

I was struggling on for more than a month. I was given a big feed in the hospital and I was afraid. But I vomitted out much of it the very first day and nobody kept any watch on me. I gave up water as well. But some water out of the feed was absorbed by the body. The doctor gave the false report always that I took water. I, however, felt very thirsty all along.

There was no news about my strike in any newspaper. Ram Krishna Khatri, who had gone home in Central Provinces after release from this jail, was astonished not to see any news in any paper. Khatri came to Lucknow and Swami Kumaranand joined him. At their instance the Pratap of Kanpur came out with the news for the first time in bold headline and thus gave the start to propa-

ganda. Then the cause was taken up by all other leaders including the President of the Indian National Congress, Babu Rajendra Prasad and the U. P. Congress President Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. A countrywide vigorous propaganda was carried on and a Day was observed. I was in day to day correspondence with Khatri and received cuttings of various papers daily. The sweeper helped me in this. Daily I was also receiving telegrams from leaders, of course, persuading me to give up the strike as the country had taken up my cause. Yet I did not believe that this time there could be any compromise with the authorities. So in the midst of all this I was trying hard for an early end of myself. My weight was going down alright. What worried me was the thought of the continuance of my sufferings. From the beginning I had worked out a set plan from an early end. I never put a drop of water into my mouth. As a result after about a hundred days my gums began to bleed. An intolerable bad odour was constantly coming out of the mouth from the beginning only for this reason. This pyorrhoea in the gum would emit dangerous poison and this would go into the stomach and poison the intestines and thus my death will be hastened. On hearing this the Superintendent persuaded me very seriously to save my fine set of teeth from immediate ruination. Though an eccentrically strict man he told me that the Government was ready to concede my main

demands and he was sure that I won't require to end myself. The Government was on the move and I should not live the rest of my life without teeth. I could disbelieve any other official but not Lt. Col. Sheikh, the Superintendent whom I knew thoroughly for so many years. I have not seen such a fanatically honest man in jail in my 24 years of jail life in different provinces of northern India. It was now clear to me that a compromise move was ahead on behalf of the Government. So I agreed to get my gum and teeth treated. He sent for the doctor and gave detailed instruction and himself attended the first course. My teeth were saved with slight permanent damages.

Within a week after this one morning Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Mohanlal Saksena, Balkrishna Sharma and Ram Krishna Khatri came to interview me. They said that Maharaj Singh had sent for them and given them the clear understanding that they would concentrate all politicals into one jail, grant daily newspapers, keep the political prisoners in association barrack and give them facilities for reading writing and sports. But as regards the two other demands namely, to treat all politicals as a special class and repatriation of Andaman prisoners to Indian jails, the U. P. Government would strongly write to the Government of India for an early settlement. It may be mentioned here that before Maharaj Singh sent for the four leaders, it was announced through the

press that Maharaj Singh had gone to Simla for consultations with the Central Government regarding some problems of U. P. It was also hinted by the press that the hunger strike in jail was one of the problems. It was decided that some member would put a question in the Council and the Home Member would give the reply that the Government would look into the case after Chatterji gave up the hunger strike.

The point of dispute was that I wanted a time limit for the fulfilment of the two main points. This was decided to be a year and a half. They then left and came back after five days with the question and answer in the Council and I terminated the strike in their presence on the 111th day.

My hunger strike was terminated in January. Lucknow was busy at that time for the next session of the Indian National Congress (1936) under the Presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru. When after the hunger strike was over and I was fit to travel, my transfer took place to Naini Jail.

We were four in number. The guards were on friendly terms with me on our way, because as a result of the victory in my hunger strike, sympathies of many Indian elements among the Government servants were with us.

That is the reason why our escort in charge told me while we were standing outside the Allahabad Station waiting for transport to Naini, that Jawaharlal Nehru was at the station and we

might meet him if we liked. Nehru was coming out of the platform when our guard told him about us. Nehru came to us and told us that he had come to the station to see off Dr. B. C. Roy and we could also have met Dr. Roy had it been known a little before. I regretted this loss and thanked Nehru for meeting us. He enquired about our well-being and left and we left for Naini Jail.

The year and half was to be completed on the 31st August, 1937 and the Congress Ministry was formed in U. P. in June 1937 and our defence counsel Govind Ballav Pant, became the Chief Minister and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai the Home Minister in charge of jail. In July I made an application to the Chief Minister to the effect that on the 31st August a year and half would be completed and hence from the 1st of September I would be free to restart the hunger strike if the two demands were not fulfilled. A copy was also sent to the Hon'ble Home Minister. We, the Kakori prisoners were released on the 24th August and on the 28th night I met Kidwai at the residence of Acharya Narendra Deva and the first question he asked me was, 'Mr. Chatterji, when are you going to restart the hunger strike ?

CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE RESOLUTION

Shortly after the formation of ministries in the provinces a meeting of the Congress Working

Committee was held at Wardha. It passed a resolution to the effect that political prisoners should be treated as a special class. The resolution was moved by Babu Rajendra Prasad and my name was mentioned in it. It stated that the Committee accepted the demand put forward by me (Jogesh Chatterjee) for the treatment of political prisoners in jail as a standard demand. They, therefore, directed that such rules be framed in those provinces where Congress ministries were established and that in other provinces, too, the attempt should be made for the formulation of such rules.

Gopinath Srivastava, the then Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Jail in U. P. drafted rules on that line and one day showed them to me. I pointed out to him that I had objection to one paragraph in which it was stated that the political prisoners would be kept in association barracks but such prisoners sentenced on a charge of violence could be lodged in cells. He insisted that this demarcation should be there but I told him that if somehow I reach jail on a charge involving violence I would challenge this. After this he changed the paragraph and placed it before me and I thanked him. But these rules were not adopted by the U. P. Government. In fact in the whole country only one province adopted the rules, and it was the Central Province.

I have stated how unexpectedly the hunger

strike was terminated through the mediation of four leaders whose help the Home Member, Maharaj Singh, sought. The Government attitude was changed only because of the great public pressure started by two persons and then taken up by the entire country. It has been mentioned how Ram Krishna Khatri compelled the Kanpur leaders to come in the open in support of the cause taken up by me. The next person to take up my cause was Shri Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. As President of the U.P. P.C.C. he took it up vigorously and it was Kidwai who persuaded the then President of the Indian National Congress Babu Rajendra Prasad to take up our cause. Honest and sincere patriot as he was, he gave it much importance. He telegraphed and wrote to many leaders. Pandit Balkrishna Sharma read out to me the long letter he wrote about me. Bengal took up my cause very seriously. Akhil Chandra Datta, Shri Prakash and others sent wires and letters to me in jail. Meetings and demonstrations were held particularly in U.P. and Bengal.

My strong determination to die and the people's determination to save me were the two factors which compelled the Government to yield. Jatin Das had created the field and that experience, and again my historic hunger strike a year ago in Agra jail, made the Government shaky which at last gave way.

There had been so many hunger strikes by

many determined persons but the Government had not softened a little. But this time they conceded the main demands even when I was alive. This was a new thing in the whole history of hunger strike in Indian jails. What Sir Maharaj Singh thought impossible on the 23rd day of my hunger strike was conceded by his Government on the 111th day of my strike. That was not gained by me but by my countrymen who stood solidly behind the demands.

Political prisoners were not ordinary criminals especially in a dependency. They were national soldiers fighting the nation's war against foreign domination. The exploiting foreigners were always ready to crush them. They changed only when the outburst of public opinion compelled them to do so. So really my triumph was the victory of the people over the foreign Government.

European criminals were getting special class treatment only because they were European, that is to say, of the ruling race. But Indian fighters for freedom were treated as worst criminals because they were people of the subject race. Political prisoners had to fight against that in Indian jails and in the Andamans. So they fought while they were at large and again they fought when they were in jail. Constant fighting was the lot of these fighters for freedom.

ONE YEAR IN NAINI CENTRAL JAIL IN FEMALE WARD

I have stated how we reached Naini Jail. So far as I remember, we three were transferred together from Lucknow Jail, Kashiram, Haldhar Bajpai and myself. Sheo Singh, a communist, joined us on the way. We were kept in the female ward which was vacated for us, all female convicts having been transferred elsewhere. A deputy jailor, Mr. Abdul Jalil, a graduate of Aligarh University was specially deputed to look after us.

We were having regular interviews on Sundays. The mother of Manindra Banerjee used to come almost every Sunday. She was living at Allahabad at the time. One day Rafi Ahmed Kidwai came to see me. He apologised for coming after long time but I told him that they were to work hard for the country's cause and we were Royal Prisoners now under the safe custody of the rulers and hence required not much care from our own men. They have done their duty when we were in difficulty.

The female ward of the Naini Central Jail was the concentration jail for the political prisoners. We were all kept here in big association barracks, were getting books and newspapers and for exercise badminton and volley-ball were given. Some of us were having interviews on every Sunday. In a way we were now in direct touch with the world outside the jail walls. Now it was possible for us to have concentrated studies in various subjects and

regular classes were started. The British Indian bureaucracy were not ready to concede these amenities to us. This little change was brought about after years of hard and strenuous fights in which many valuable lives were lost. For this special treatment of political prisoners we had to suffer so much during undertrial stage and even after conviction. Yet we got something only as a temporary patch work.

MINISTRY BY CONGRESS AND AFTER

After the Congress Ministry was formed in U. P. in 1937 the release of political prisoners was the general public demand. The Ministry was in a difficult position on this issue. They were ready to do things but the British Governor was reluctant. At this stage Sachin Bakshi started hunger strike, demanding release. This forced the hands of the Governor. Sir R. S. Pandit and Dr. K. N. Katju came to interview us all on two different dates and tried to know our mind. Then there was direct tussle between the Governor and the Ministry in which the Ministry had to threaten resignation as a result of which the Governor submitted. Sachin Bakshi was released on parole and we, the most dangerous Kakori prisoners, were let off.

CHAPTER XVII

RELEASE AND DEMONSTRATIONS

The people of U. P. were jubilant over this success of theirs. Despite the strict directive of Nehru that there should not be any demonstration and despite the drizzling rains the whole day, thousands gathered before the Naini Jail on hearing the news of the release of Kakori prisoners. We were brought to Allahabad in a procession and there was a public meeting at Purushottam Das Park that evening. The next day we were given receptions in the Ward Congress Committees and from 3 P. M. till dusk we were in the Anand Bhawan with Jawaharlal Nehru. For two and a half hours we were closeted with Nehru in a hall on the first floor and his sister, Mrs. Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, was sitting by his side all along. Nehru gave us a discourse on the international and national situation and urged upon us the necessity of working for the national liberation. We were quite agreeable to work with the Congress for the common cause. Then we came downstairs and there was a grand tea party to which all the notable Congress leaders of Allahabad were invited.

NEHRU AND PANT

In the meantime telephonic talks were going on between Nehru and Pant, the Chief Minister. The

people of Kanpur and Lucknow, too, were preparing for our reception but these two leaders were nervous about it. Their apprehension was that if too much importance was given to us, the revolutionaries, their absolute leadership might be in jeopardy in the long run. Nehru phoned to Balkrishna Sarma, the President of City Congress Committee at Kanpur that there should be no demonstration. Sharmaji said that there would be a big demonstration even without the Congress participating in it. Congress and Sharmaji himself would only be condemned by the public. So he and the Congress could not keep aloof in such a matter. Pant sent for him ; but he sent a friend and himself remained at Kanpur to receive us.

The Kanpur demonstration was unique in the whole history of Kanpur. The whole city welcomed the released men with open arms. Balkrishnaji himself led the crowd at the Railway Station and he was with them every where. The procession and the meeting at parade grounds was huge. More than a lakh of people attended the meeting. Next day the reception in the morning by Ward Congress Committees, the reception by the Municipal Board, the Congress Workers' meeting at the Tilak Hall and the labour meeting at Goaltuli were of the same type as of the previous day. The Governor was upset at this. The second day he went to Kanpur and sent for the Congress leaders at the Circuit House, and asked them if a revolution

was going to take place. The leaders impressed on him that there was no question of any revolution. The people were jubilant that their demand was fulfilled and that big change had been ushered into existence along with the establishment of Congress Ministry. Lucknow, too, did not lag behind in the demonstrations. Huge crowds waited at the Railway station under the leadership of C. B. Gupta, the then President of City Congress Committee. Here, too, the procession and the meeting at Aminuddaula Park were unexpectedly big. I use the word 'unexpectedly' because Lucknow city is traditionally backward in politics. The meeting at Chowk the next day was also very big, though it was spoiled by heavy showers of rain. The University students of Lucknow gave us a very hearty welcome the next day. The gathering was fairly big.

KANPUR OR LUCKNOW

Kanpur was my old field of work. Suresh Babu was still there. Bhagat Singh, Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi had been great martyrs and their memory was fresh with us. Kanpur had supplied the life-blood in Kakori and Lahore cases after Banaras. Kanpur political prisoners were still rotting in Naini Jail. Our old friends and sympathisers were there and the general demand was that I should start afresh from Kanpur. That was also my choice. But Khatri won't allow me to leave

Lucknow. And he did so much for me during the hunger strike. Mohanlal Saksena and C. B. Gupta the two Kakori defence counsels, were at Lucknow occupying public position and both of them offered hearty cooperation. Lucknow was also the provincial headquarter. Acharya Narendra Deva was the President of the Provincial Congress Committee and Seth Damodar Swarup, our old friend, was the General Secretary. So I decided to stay on at Lucknow. One difficulty was there. That was the attitude of Govind Ballabh Pant, the Premier. Though he too was our defence counsel in Kakori Case, he was looking on us with suspicion. He wanted us to be docile and moderate, but this we could not do. The radical difference was this that he wanted a compromising attitude towards the power that-be, but we preferred a fighting mood. Pant's attitude towards the revolutionaries continued to remain unchanged till his death, It may be mentioned here that as the Union Home Minister he ordered that the files maintained by the British Government in India on the revolutionaries and now deposited with the different Government Archives should not normally be shown even to the research scholar. He is also reported to have given the fantastic argument that perusal of such documents may lead to an increase of subversive activities.

PROPAGANDA TOUR FOR RELEASE OF POLITICALS

After so much ovations and demonstrations when we entered into the actual field of work we encountered great difficulties. People and even youths were praising us from a distance but they were not ready to come forward and join hands in our revolutionary activities. The Congress was the common platform and we also like others started work through Congress. A separate move seemed to be very difficult. The first thing we did was to try for the release of the political prisoners who were still in Naini Jail. For this propaganda the Provincial Congress Committee sent a circular to the districts that they might organise a tour of ex-Kakori men in their districts. Invitations came from almost all districts and programme was chalked out. Sachin Bakshi, Ram Krishna Khatri and myself covered the first round of the tour of the Eastern Districts.

The Congress High Command was alarmed at this. Acharyaji and Sethji were accused by the Congress bosses for allowing the circular and the programme. Acharyaji felt embarrassed. Sethji had signed the circular and he had given us a room in the P.C.C. office to live in.

When we were touring the Eastern Districts on behalf of the U.P.P.C.C Nehru and Pant were busy in counteracting our growing influence in the public. Through their influence Mahatma

Gandhi wrote an article in which he stated that according to his opinion the demonstrations on the release of Kakori prisoners was a political mistake. This writing by Gandhiji was painful to us and the general public also could not appreciate it. The proof was that in spite of this writing our tour in Western districts was a grand success. M. N. Roy was to preside over a Youth Conference at Dehra Dun. But at the eleventh hour he fell ill and wired to the Reception Committee to get me in his place. So K. K. Sinha saw me at Lucknow and with my consent gave the news to the Press. The conference was a grand success. There I received the invitation to preside over a conference in Delhi for the release of political prisoners. From Dehra Dun we started the tour of Western districts. Great enthusiasm of the people was witnessed everywhere. We were holding three or four meetings in different parts of the district and at night a meeting was being held in the district headquarters town. The programme terminated in the district of Meerut where almost all the Kakori prisoners were gathered at the residence of ex-Kakori prisoner Vishnu Saran Dublsh. The programme lasted for four days and we covered the whole district in different batches.

Just after we had finished the tour of Eastern districts and came to Lucknow I had a meeting with Shri Krishnadat Paliwal, who was staying

with Pant. He was summoned by Pant to take charge of the Rural Development Scheme of U. P. Government. Paliwal was taking his meals and we were talking. Pant entered the room and finding me there accused me straight of delivering objectionable speeches. He particularly mentioned my Gorakhpur speech. I told him politely that the C. I. D. reports were not correct and that all the prominent Congress leaders of the district were present in the meeting and he might know the reality from them. Then Pant told Paliwal that the District Magistrate would be in charge of their respective districts, of the R. D. work. At this Paliwal became wild in protest. Pant silently consented.

When we were at Meerut Pant and Kidwai were also there one day and the former invited us to tea at his place. After tea he took myself and Sanyal aside and his first sentence was, "You people are creating a lot of trouble for us." He spoke in this strain and wanted an understanding. This was not possible. We could enter into an understanding easily with Pant but no understanding could be arrived at with the Britishers and Pant wanted that. This difference between us was fundamental.

It was a question of belief and faith. We had this difference throughout our career. We had been in the Congress from 1920 to the transfer of power in 1947. But it was possible only because the Congress then was not a party but a common

anti-British platform. Gandhiji was the dominating figure but his ideas and principles were different from those of ours. So at times there were open or tacit conflict of ideas. While a life Kakori prisoner in the European Ward of Lucknow Jail I chanced to receive a statement of Gandhiji in which he went so far as to say that revolutionaries of India were as much enemies of the country as the alien rulers. I was so much upset that nearly for a week I was quite restless. I saw clearly that though we differed so much with Gandhiji yet we had a respect for him ; but it was clear that he himself had no respect for us.

This trend of his mind and those of the Congress High Command were evidenced on various occasions. The whole country was vocal in demonstrations and lamentations over the martyrdom of Jatin Das by hunger strike in Lahore Central Jail but Gandhiji remained absolutely silent over this great historical event. Netaji Subhas and other eminent Indian patriots urged upon him the necessity of saving the life of Bhagat Singh and his other two comrades by incorporating that demand in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. But Gandhi was not ready to go so far and the Government executed these patriots just on the eve of the Karachi Session of the Congress. A section of the public, therefore, staged a demonstration and showed him black flags at Karachi.

The attitudes of Nehru and Pandit became

apathetic to ex-Kakori men as soon as they saw that they were hostile to the Government even after the reforms. Nehru did two more things during that period. When ex-Kakori men were arrested in Delhi defying the unjustifiable and humiliating orders of the Chief Commissioner, somebody put up a resolution in their support in the Provincial Political Conference at Harduaganj (U.P.). Nehru himself opposed it stating that by defying the orders without the permission of the Congress they had committed an offence and disciplinary action should be taken against such violations. Men like Mohan Lal Saksena and Acharya Narendra Deva were also made to oppose it ; as Acharyaji himself told me later that he did not like it but Nehru forced him to stand up. There was another occasion in January 1938. Nehru declared before the P.C.C. meeting that the representatives of the districts of Meerut and Muzaffarnagar (which were just transferred from Delhi to U.P. Congress Province) should elect one person who would be taken in the Provincial Executive. After the P.C.C. meeting was over, the representatives of the two districts met and unanimously elected ex-Kakori prisoner Vishnu Saran Dublish. The next day before the session Nehru told Dublishji that he should resign as he was involved in a dangerous case and if such a man was taken in the P.C.C. executive the Governor would resent it. Dublish did not resign. He

was the district leader of the Congress and a legislator.

NEHRU ON AZAD

Nehru in his autobiography has remarked about the revolutionaries that they were fascists in ideas. He had very scanty knowledge of the revolutionaries. From an interview with Chanrasekhar Azad, the martyr, he jumped to this conclusion. There was not the least justification for him to make such a remark about persons who had created history in this slave country by shedding their blood drop by drop on the scaffold, in the solitary cells of the Andamans, in various Indian jails of different provinces and by facing bullets.

Nehru was in Lucknow district jail once with the revolutionary prisoners. They questioned him on this. His reply was that he had very little personal knowledge about the revolutionaries, but he had been in Naini jail once with Sachin Sanyal and from his talks with Sanyal he had the impression that he was fascistic in ideas. This showed his natural apathy for the revolutionaries and this also gives the clue why he subtly condemned the revolutionaries in his autobiography.

When Nehru started criticising the revolutionaries adversely he was openly questioned as to why he himself gave a tea party in Anand Bhavan to the released Kakori prisoners. As a reply to this, he gave a public statement that there was no

party. Some of the prisoners were known to him, they came to his place and he gave them tea. The readers are only to judge whether the function was like that or it was an attempt at belittling it.

THE COMMUNISTS AND YASHPAL

I knew that our release was not far off. Various ideas about our future stand occupied my mind. I came to jail about 13 years ago and in jail I had very little connection with the outside world. Amongst our own men I totally differed with the ideas of Sanyal. Others seemed to be on the right track. But we were not certain as to what stand we should take. For myself much depended on our Bengal comrades. I had been with them in Bengal jail at the beginning but I knew nothing about the latest developments. There seemed to be three factors in our favour, the Communists, the Congress Socialists and the Royists. From the jail the Communists seemed to be the nearest. So I had greater sympathy with them and read their literature eagerly. Amongst others Yashpal seemed to be inclined towards them mainly on one ground as he told me that they had vast resources at their disposal. He spoke particularly of the North West Frontier where the Communists were spending big amount of money and this he said was within his knowledge.

On our release Z. A. Ahmed and Sajjad Zaheer took a prominent part in our processions

and meetings. After tea at Anand Bhawan Sajjad Zaheer made the proposal to me that if I liked he would take me to R. D. Bharadwaj, who, according to him, was underground at the time. I consulted Khatri about this and he said that it was not a fact that Bharadwaj was exactly absconding. He was often seen in the open. I at once saw that they thought that I was a romantic person of the old revolutionary school and they planned their romance only to captivate my imagination. I did not express my willingness to meet him and they did not insist. The next morning Sajjad Zaheer again met us at the Railway Station when we were leaving for Kanpur and he brought his mother, Lady Wazir Hussain, and we were introduced to her.

Sometimes after this, after our tour of eastern districts, Bakshi, Khatri and myself along with others were going to Naini jail to interview the political prisoners for whose release we were on the propaganda tour of the province. On the way M. N. Gupta met us and gave us the information that a statement was going to the press that the political prisoners of Naini Jail were against the the propaganda demonstration of the released Kakori men and that Z. A. Ahmed was doing this through Yashpal. In the interview we applied for seeing all, and all except Yashpal came. It was stated that Yashpal had an interview with Shiv Singh, a Communist, the previous day and hence

was not entitled to an interview with us. We asked them all if they had any objection to our propaganda work. They supported our move strongly and wholeheartedly. From jail we went straight to the A. I. C. C. office to meet Z. A. Ahmed. Shiv Singh told us that the papers given to him by Yashpal were with Ahmed who was absent. We, however, found him out as we were going out by the back door of the house. He was there with Lohia and Ashraf. At our insistence Ahmed gave us the original statement of Yashpal and also some 25 typed copies. Only one copy was given over to the A. P. I. who, it was learned over the phone, had sent a copy to Calcutta. A wire was at once sent to Calcutta not to publish it and we burned down all the copies and the original. Yet at Lucknow next morning we read the news in the morning papers. We at once issued a statement to the press contradicting it over the signature of all of us and it, too, was published in the papers the next morning. This incident left a very bad impression on my mind and I lost faith in the Communists' sincerity of purpose.

Long after when I joined the Congress Socialist Party, I narrated this story to Minoo Masani. At that time though they knew that Ahmed and Sajjad Zaheer were leaders of the Communist Party they allowed both to be on the National Executive of the C. S. P. Masani asked me if I would be ready to give this in writing that they

both tried to recruit me to the Communist Party on my release so that they might be expelled on that ground. I was ready to give that in writing but the party leadership was so weak that they dared not do it for years, though they knew the facts.

DELHI ARRESTS

After the U. P. tour, we reached Delhi on the morning of the 2nd December 1937. Prior to this during our Meerut Programme Bimal Prasad Jain asked me at Hapur as to what I would do if any restriction was placed on the occasion of the Delhi Conference. "It shall be defied," was my simple reply. In the public meeting at Meerut which we addressed on the 1st evening many C. I. D. men of Delhi were seen. The next morning as soon as the Frontier Mail reached Delhi we saw a number of policemen on the platform but nobody on behalf of the Reception Committee. Later we learned that the police did not allow them to come. They served an order on behalf of the Chief Commissioner of Delhi on five of us that we must quit Delhi within six hours and must not take part in any meeting or procession. After this they allowed the Reception Committee men to enter the platform. After formal reception, garlanding, etc., I sat on the decorated carriage. But the Delhi leaders were in an awkward position. They did not like that their invited guests be arrested, but we had no other alternative

than to defy the order and court arrest. It was settled between ourselves that my friends would defy the order by joining procession and I would court arrest when Manmatha Nath Gupta, Ram Krishna Khatri and Ram Dulare Trivedi were arrested while leading the procession one after another. I entered the pandal through the female gate and took my seat on the dias unnoticed by anybody when the inaugural speech was being delivered by Munshi Ahmed Deen. As soon as he finished I went to the mike, was duly garlanded and started speaking. Within a few minutes the police caught hold of me and there was a wild scene for a minute. With the permission of the police men, I requested the audience to be peaceful and then left with the police men. Pandit Parmanand then volunteered as the President and delivered his speech and he, too, was arrested and later jailed. Only Sachin Sanyal did not court arrest. Parmanand was given 6 weeks R. I. and all others four months, R. I. each. The Conference itself was very successful. The release of political prisoner was a general demand throughout the country. The object of the Conference was to demonstrate this at the capital. So the general public were enthusiastic and 16 gates were made on the route of our proposed procession. The entry of the pandal was not free. The fee was Rs. 1 to Rs. 25/- Yet at the time of my arrest about 5,000 men were within the pandal. A huge crowd was waiting outside and cheered me

as the police car took me away. The pandal was made upon to the public after my arrest and it was a huge gathering. I had come out of jail after full 13 years. How could I obey the orders of the Delhi Chief Commissioner and leave Delhi without any procession or meeting? Neither could we obtain permits from the Congress at that time. Yet Nehru announced in the Harduaganj Conference that it was an act of indiscipline on our part to defy the order without the permission of the Congress.

We were bailed out and soon I was in Lucknow Medical College Hospital with an an attack of double pneumonia. In this condition a Muslim C.I.D. Inspector served an order of the Bengal Muslim League Government externing me from that province, the province of my birth.

Between my discharge form the hospital and entering Delhi jail there was a stormy meeting of the U.P. P.C.C. at Lucknow in January 1938. In this meeting two different views clashed. M. N. Roy supported one side and I differed with him. Socialist and non-socialist question was there. Roy, Paliwal and others supported the candidature of Mohanlal Saksena for the provincial presidentship and we, ourselves, Acharya Narendra Deva and C. B. Gupta supported Sampurnanand. At the instance of Nehru Sampurnanand's name was withdrawn and our position was compromised.

Then I went to Delhi jail for 4 months and

met the other friends inside. I met there B.K. Dutta, the associate of Bhagat Singh, who was close to me at Kanpur when he was a student there.

I marked that Dutt had undergone a psychological change. The terrible suffering in the jails of India and Andamans had told on his mind. A very honest and sincere youth as he was, he frankly expressed this to me. This is why he could not stick to politics after his release. Prolonged and endless sufferings at times unnerve a man.

One day Akhil Chandra Datta, the then Deputy President of the Central Legislative Assembly, came to see me in jail with his wife. They were our leaders at Comilla. I told him that there was no justification on the part of the Bengal Government to serve an externment order against me. U.P. was now my home, yet I should have the right of visiting Bengal on occasions. My old mother and other friends were there and I was not meeting them for nearly 15 years. He promised that he would try to do whatever was possible. After a few days a C.I.D. Inspector interviewed me and asked for an answer of the Bengal Government's query as to what I would do in Bengal. My reply was that I would not remain there permanently but would go there from time to time. The same man came again later and gave me the notice that the Bengal Government was pleased to cancel the

externment order. I conveyed this happy news to all and gave thanks to Akhil Babu through Mohanlal Saksena, M.L.A. (Central) who came to interview me.

MOTHER'S ILLNESS : IN BENGAL FOR FEW DAYS

Suddenly there was a telegram from Subhas Chandra Bose to Asaf Ali that my mother was seriously ill and the latter should try to get my premature release through the Chief Commissioner so that I may see her in her death bed. The news was published in Delhi papers with bold headlines. The Chief Head Warder and the Deputy Jailor told me that I might be let off as I had only 14 days more to end the term of my sentence. I was actually released that morning so suddenly that even the C.I.D, Inspector who was to meet me inside the jail met me near the Delhi Gate while I was going to the city in a tonga. I was under close watch up to my home in East Bengal. A number of friends attended the Howrah Station to receive me but my rail ticket was via Bandel and Naihati. So they went away disappointed. At Bandel junction I enquired about my train from a youth who later told me that he was on a token hunger strike during my hunger strike in Lucknow jail and he accompanied me upto the Naihati Junction.

My mother had an attack of paralysis and she

was unconscious. For four days and nights I sat by her bed but she never regained consciousness even for a moment. On the fourth day a retired Civil Surgeon of a neighbouring village came to see her. He said that the illness would linger on indefinitely. I was to return to U. P. as I was to preside over a Conference in Unnao district. At that time the All India Kisan Conference was being held at Comilla, the place where I had spent the whole of my youth.

AT COMILLA FOR FOUR DAYS

I therefore went to Comilla to meet my friends as also the political workers who had gathered there. Naturally I was given a good reception at the station. The next day I presided over a meeting at the town hall in which Jaiprakas Narain spoke on Socialism. I also spoke before the Kisan Conference according to arrangement made by Kamini Kumar Datta, the Chairman of the Reception Committee and Bankim Mukherjee.

My cousin, Paresh Chandra Chatterjee, his family and myself planned to go to his tea garden for a pleasure trip next night. But in the morning at about 11 A. M. an Inspector of Calcutta C. I. D. accompanied by four other men came from Calcutta and served me an order of externment from Bengal. I was also given to understand that these men would follow me till I leave Bengal. Akhil Babu very much resented this attitude of the Bengal

Government. I went home for a few hours and sat by my mother, who was still unconscious and then left her and the place of my birth never to see them again.

At Comilla I had an important talk with Jai Prakash Narain. Bengal friends were already moving with him. J. P. invited me to come to Sonapur where shortly the Congress Socialists were to hold a summer school of politics.

When I reached Sealdah station at Calcutta many friends came to see me. There were a number of C. I. D. men besides the 5 who were shadowing me from Comilla. They insisted that I must catch a certain train at Howrah as the order was to quit Bengal at the earliest. My contention was that I would catch the train I liked. It appeared to be certain that I would again have to go to jail in Bengal. However, my friend Gopal Chatterjee, an employee of the Calcutta Corporation, took me to his residence. I was ill at that time. A doctor was called. My temperature was 102° and the doctor certified that I was unfit to travel for a week. I thus got an opportunity to stay on in Calcutta and during these days met many notable friends, including our party leaders who were at large. More important leaders were yet in jail.

I later come to know that there was a move in Calcutta to give me a reception not on behalf of our party only but by the revolutionaries in general. After the stiffest fight with the Government most

of them were now released from detention and they were in Calcutta. A group of leading persons among them approached the B. P. P. C. for this but they refused to comply on the ground that Gandhiji had written in the Harijan that demonstration on our release was a political mistake. Thereupon a brisk preparation was started on behalf of the revolutionaries to give me such a reception as was not given even to Gandhiji in Calcutta. At that stage it was possible because the revolutionaries felt that they should all stand united. Bhupendra Kumar Dutta conveyed that idea to me from jail through Suresh Das. His message was that I should not take any decision without consulting with other revolutionaries. That was really a matter to be taken into consideration very seriously. But I had a great difficulty in this. The question of ideology was now a very big factor. A big section of revolutionaries had definitely been inspired by the ideology of Marxism. They were uncompromising on this. One section of them had been with the Communist Party of India and others seriously differed with it. My old colleagues and friends were ardent Marxist-Leninists but they differed with the latest move of the Third International under Moscow's leadership. My own inclination was also towards Marxist-Leninists. About Bhupen Datta and his friends I came to know that they were not in favour of socialism.

I have already stated that my Bengal friends

were already very close to the Congress Socialists and hence here in U.P. our representative comrade Keshav Prasad Sharma was even living with Acharya Narendra Deva, the leader of C.S.P. Acharyaji was also a supporter of the revolutionaries all along. He was at the same time a strong Marxist. So for my differences with M. N. Roy I was attracted towards Acharji.