

CHAPTER XVIII

MOVE TO JOIN C. S. P.

Under the circumstances the clear question before us was whether to stand as a separate revolutionary Socialist Party or to work through some other party that was nearest to our ideology. To start a separate party was not an easy affair for us. As revolutionaries we were the worst sufferers in the hands of the foreign exploiters whom we gave the mortal challenge. When we were in jail all our worries of life were over. But as soon as we stepped out of the jail all the problems of food, clothes and shelter overwhelmed us as we had already burned our boat after becoming a revolutionary. I remember a letter written by Probodh Das Gupta's mother when he was in Rajshahi jail. In this letter she expressed how happy she was to learn that her son, a dangerous escapee from the police lock up at Dallanda House, and from the Gauhati fight with the police, was arrested and lodged in the jail. Das Gupta took Potassium Cyanide at the time of his arrest and escaped death only because the poison was spoiled by long exposure. How were we to get money to run a party? For a public party well-known personalities, money and other resources are required. But we had none. So there seemed to be no other

alternative before us than to join some existing party. After discarding the Royists and Communists, the Congress Socialists were the only alternative left before us.

Myself, Keshav Prasad Sharma and Tridib Kumar Chaudhury met Jay Praksh Narain at Sonapur in this mood and atmosphere. We had a four days, talk. J. P. convincingly assured us that the C. S. P. stood clearly and definitely for Marxism. Just like us, the revolutionaries, the C. S. P. had no faith in Gandhism or non-violence and it too like us believed in the attainment of independence through an armed revolution. He also appealed to us not to start a separate party but to join hands with them and thus make the C. S. P. a real All India Revolutionary Socialist Party. He also suggested that I should have further talks with Acharyaji and then take the decision. Acharyaji also said the very same thing and urged upon us the necessity of joining the party at the earliest. Then we took the final decision with this understanding that for a certain period we would keep our existence separate and then merge.

At that time the Congress Socialist Party was tremendously forceful in U.P. Important Congressmen of the province, including the two big leaders, Sampurnanand and C. B. Gupta were within its fold under the leadership of Acharya Narendra Deva. The over-all position was not too bad, but organisationally the C.S.P. was very weak and Communi-

sts were engaged with a plan to capture it. Ahmed and Sajjad Zaheer were already in the National Executive of the C. S. P. At Lucknow the meetings of the Party were being held in their houses. In the districts, too, their workers were being pushed forward. The local leaders were not realising it and were helpful in this plan. Sajjad Zaheer was a member of the Scrutiny Committee along with Acharyaji and Seth Damodar Swarup. The latter too were not even fully conscious of the happenings though they knew by that time that the communists had already captured their entire organisations in some areas of South India. J. P. had reported to us this fact during our conversations at Sonapur.

It was, therefore, the first task of Comrade Keshav Prasad Sharma and myself to drive out the communists from the organisation. At Unnao and Aligarh the communists had entrenched themselves strongly. At our instance, by a majority decision the Scrutiny Committee scratched the names of the communists from the membership of the C. S. P. By this way we became unpopular with the communists but Acharyaji appreciated our work and he openly expressed that he depended much on us for the U. P. organisation.

The next political happening of all India importance was the decision of Subhas Chandra Bose, the then President of the Indian National Congress, to contest the presidential election for the second

time against the wishes of Gandhiji and the High Command, who had set up Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya as their candidate. The general situation of the world at the time was a bit tense. Besides Soviet Russia, a third force was rising rapidly. A world war was in the offing. Anglo-American politicians were rather alarmed. The Congress High Command under Gandhiji's leadership was on a rightist compromising mood and Gandhism due to its presuppositions could think of nothing but compromise. The world youth movement was very strong at the time and Bose was an idol of the Indian youths. Bose, therefore, gave the Congress High Command a challenge.

At our request Acharya Narendra Deva issued a fine statement to the press supporting the candidature of Bose. In U. P., besides the Congress Socialists, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai was also supporting Bose. We took up the task very seriously. Lala Sankar Lal of Delhi was the election-in-charge of Subhas Chandra Bose. He wrote to me at Lucknow that the ministerial group was very strong in U. P. and they were holding the majority. Therefore, it should be our task to see that least number of votes were cast against Bose. I wrote back to him in reply that how wrong his notion was would only be realized by him when he saw the result.

Acharya Narendra Deva's statement in support of Bose was published widely in U. P. in all local languages, besides English. This made the people

conscious about the general position and after that an organisational attempt was necessary to reach the P. C. C. voters. For this Vishnu Saran Dublish was looking after Meerut area, Thakar Malkan Singh looked after Aligarh area, Seth Damodar Swaroop took charge of Bareilly area and I toured thirteen districts. Mohan Lal Gautam and Keshav Prasad Sharma looked after most of the eastern districts. Thus we carried on a vigorous propaganda in favour of Bose. Our strong associate, a leader of the former All Bengal Students movement, Amarendra Nath Roy, a former Anushilinite and founder of C. S. P. in Bengal, was at Lucknow as our most trusted helper. Acharyaji had full faith in him and so also Bose.

Because of the adverse report of Lala Shankar Lal, Bose was very worried about U. P. He, therefore, sent the revolutionary veteran, Birendranath Chatterjee, to Lucknow. Amar Roy made him to understand that things were going smoothly and further activities from Bengal might disturb the situation. Biren Chatterjee quietly went back and reported to Bose accordingly. But it seemed that Bose was not very satisfied, because Biren Chatterjee, though a veteran revolutionary of the Anushilan Samiti, was not much educated. So again Bose sent Dhiren Mukherjee, a brilliant graduate of Allahabad University, an ex-Anushilinite, to Lucknow. Amar Roy gave him to understand everything in details and he was thoroughly

convinced that things were going on very satisfactorily in U. P. and Bose was also satisfied.

We were realising that the move was gaining momentum through the enthusiastic youths everywhere. I myself had a whirlwind tour of many districts of U.P. with this purpose and the response every where was good. When votes were counted in the P.C.C. meeting at Lucknow, Bose secured 84 votes more than his rival. In all he got 199 votes more and hence U.P.'s contribution was not negligible. In the morning next day I received a lengthy telegram of congratulations from Lala Shankar Lal from Delhi.

TRIPURI CONGRESS

The Congress High Command was really upset at the victory of Bose and Gandhiji himself came out with the statement that Dr. Pattabhi's defeat was his own defeat. The High Command had made up their mind that at Tripuri Bose must be crushed at any cost. Sardar Patel and Rajagopalcharya were the main figures in this nefarious design. We shall come to this later. Let us see what was going on in U.P. before Tripuri.

Bose had realised the importance of U.P. and hence Lala Shankar Lal's secretary, Hukam Singh, came to Lucknow. He naturally approached Rafi Saheb. But now the situation was such that he could not accept this offer. Hukam Singh then approached C. B. Gupta but he, too, was not

ready to accept it, because he was afraid of staking his position in the Congress. Then he came to me and I readily agreed to do whatever was possible. When C.B. Gupta came to know this, he cautioned me. I told him that even if the High Command took disciplinary action against me, my role as a revolutionary would continue. Gupta was satisfied with my reply and I carried on my work to the best of my ability.

The orthodox Congressmen were not in our favour but younger enthusiasts were ready to support Bose at Tripuri. Following the former statement of Acharyaji the C.S.P. men were all in his favour. The orthodox Congress circles were alarmed at our activities. They were also active against Bose following the statement of Gandhiji that Pattabhi's defeat was his defeat.

With such background the session of the Congress at Tripuri was held. We reached there with Acharya Narendra Deva. The reception Committee men wanted to take Acharyaji to the leaders' camp but he refused. Acharyaji and others stayed at the station and I hurriedly hired a family quarter in his name and we went there. It was near the Bank of Narbada. On one side was the camp of Swami Sahajanand and on the other was the camp of Jai Prakash Narayan. We all went to take a bath in the river and on our return could not find Acharyaji. Shiv Prasad Gupta, the great patriot of Banaras, had personally come

and forced Acharyaji to go to the leaders' camp with him. This was the first assault on us by the High Command. Had Acharyaji been with us we could have free consultations with him ; but there was no free access into the leaders' camp which was at a great distance from our quarter.

A brisk and vigorous campaign was going on in the delegates' camp and everywhere against the President, Subhas Bose. Sardar Patel and Rajagopalacharya were freely doing this till late hours in the night. As a result the majority of A.I.C.C. members were already against Bose. But they failed to assess definitely if the majority of the delegates were in their favour. Bose was running high temperature and his condition was critical, yet the propaganda was carried on by responsible persons that Bose was not ill at all. The news of his illness was only to attract sympathy for him.

I pressed Acharyaji to do something here in support of Bose as he did at Lucknow. He said that his difficulty was that Bose was not putting forward any proposal. For this I requested him to pay a visit to him even if it was only to see him as he was ill. He saw Bose that evening but there was no proposal from the latter. I then realised my own mistake. I should have informed Bose about this after I had a talk with Acharyaji. I repented this later. So the High Command was successful in their propaganda and we failed.

In the open session a resolution was put forward by M. S. Aney that the power vested in the delegates be given to the members of the A.I.C.C. This was opposed by the majority of the delegates from Bengal and U. P. Others remained neutral. Maulana Azad counted the votes and declared that it was passed. We challenged it and wanted a division. They were not ready for that. But we insisted and walked to the passage in front of the dias. Nehru wanted to hoodwink us by saying that a disturbance by 200 Bengalees would not be able to disturb the Congress Session. This remark was resented by all. Neither the demonstrators were only 200, nor were they all Bengalees. The majority of U. P. delegates were there. At this stage J. P. came down from the dias and finding me in the crowd asked me why we were doing this. I counter-questioned him if he supported the Aney Resolution. His reply was in the negative. On his further question as to what could we do I said angrily that we would break the dias and finish the Congress and then go away. The thing was that I was attending the Congress after a lapse of 14 years, as I was in jail. It was a democratic platform of the nation and from this platform an arbitrary action was simply revolting to us. The resolution, too, did not come through the Subjects Committee as was the usual rule. J. P. then asked me in an angry mood that there were about 3,000 delegates in this gathering of nearly a lakh and

half men, and how could a division be taken? I said in reply that an announcement might be made that after the other business was over the delegates should go to the Delegates Pandal when the division would be taken. He then left for the dias but before he reached there the resolution was withdrawn. We then sat quietly in our respective delegates' blocks.

All were astonished that night to hear from Nehru the report of the Civil Surgeon of Jabbalpur that Bose was running temperature of 104° and that it was essential that he should be removed to hospital in the city, otherwise his life was in danger and also that despite this report Bose was not ready to go to the hospital.

The next morning there was a very unpleasant scene in the President's camp. Due to the deliberate negligence and inattention, Sarat Bose, the elder brother of Subhas Bose, got his articles in a taxi for quitting the Congress and going back to Calcutta. Govind Das, the Chairman of the Reception Committee, was himself responsible for this. This was resented even by the volunteers on duty. So they stopped the car of Rajendra Prasad and reported the matter to him. He approached Govind Das and prevented Sarat Bose from going back. A number of brand new cars with drivers were given free by the Ford Motor Co. for use. But the Congress President was only given a second-hand car.

Sardar Patel did another act full of designs for this Session. They knew that they would do many improper things there ; so Gandhiji was kept engaged at Rajkot in a Satyagraha movement. The got up movement consequently was a total failure.

In the morning after the open session J.P. came to our quarters and took myself and Keshava Prasad Sharma aside and stated that C.S.P. and C.P.I. leaders had discussed the Pant Resolution and decided that they both would remain neutral. The Pant Resolution was like the Aney Resolution for the A.I.C.C. to vest the authority of the elected President in Gandhiji. To agree to this was to make the election of President null and void. I was mad with rage and told J. P. that I had a suggestion to make. He asked for it eagerly and I said that there should be a resolution placed before the Congress on our behalf that so long as Gandhiji was alive he should be given the absolute authority of the Congress and there should be no plenary session of the Congress during his life-time. J.P.'s face became red and he went away without uttering a word.

The Pant Resolution was to be moved in the Delegates' Pandal at 8 A.M. I waited for Achar-yaji at the leaders' entrance and asked for his opinion on it as soon as he alighted from his car. He said that he could not take part in the meeting due to his health and the decision was communicated to him by J.P. at 7-30 A.M. Under the

circumstances, he thought the decision was correct. I then entered the Pandal, a thoroughly dejected man and sat aloof at a distance. My colleagues C. B. Gupta, Bishambhar Dayal Tripathi, Seth Damodar Swarup, Mohanlal Gautam and Algurai Shastri asked me to come near them again and again. When I came they asked if I would resign from the party as a protest. I readily agreed and Tripathi at once made the draft which was signed by us except Gautam and Algurai and then handed over the same to J. P. just before he was to speak. The next morning the news of our resignation was published in all the dailies.

That evening I left Tripuri out of disgust. But J. P. called a meeting of the C. S. P. men the next morning and accused me of disruptive activities. This was objected to by many and J. P. had to withdraw his words. Naturally on such a vital question compromise was not at all justifiable. Compromise unfortunately again had been the role of this party as the Socialist Party even at the Delhi Session of A. I. C. C. on the Communal Division of India. There again by opposing the move the party could stand as a great force with the backing of the masses of India of diverse shades of opinion. But here again they were neutral. Naturally, therefore, intelligent people took this Party to be a junior partner of the Congress. And they preferred Congress to this Party in the general election of 1952.

LUCKNOW MEETING

After our return to Lucknow Acharyaji asked us how to rejuvenate the Party. A meeting of the district representatives was called at Lucknow and there my suggestion was accepted that the provincial organisation would be run strictly democratically. For this a provincial conference would be held shortly. Myself and Sethji then withdrew our resignation.

At Tripuri we resigned as a protest against the wrong stand but yet did not go the length of voting against the Pant Resolution. That would have been an open defiance. We only kept aloof from the wrong act. The Party was, however, so immobile that the proposed U. P. conference could not be actually held. And in September came the great event of the Second World War.

SECOND WORLD WAR

We had very definitely worked for a revolution during the First World War. I was only a student then in one corner of the vast country. But later through failure we learned a good deal. The opportunity was grand but we were immature and inexperienced. We could not properly utilise the great material resources, native and foreign, that were at our disposal. The history taught us that a war opens up unthinkable avenues for the working out a revolution. A dependency like India under the mighty British rule could not shake off

the shackles on her own in normal days. Foreign help was essential for such a change. In normal times, no foreign power could help us. The international law itself was a great barrier. But during a war in which Britain was involved, her enemies would give us the utmost help only if we were in a position to accept and avail it and use it for the guerilla method of warfare for the seizure of power.

Second World War was our second chance. The country was now much advanced politically. The consciousness of the evils of an alien rule was widespread because of the mass movements under the leadership of Gandhiji and the Congress. But this was also a great handicap. The clash of ideas and ideologies was a great deterrent to the tremendous forces that were let loose in the country. The Congress under Gandhiji preached non-violence and the revolutionaries were for an armed revolution. In between were the Communists who wanted to make a capital out of both. Sometimes they would be anti-Congress and pro-revolutionary and on other occasions they would be anti-revolutionary and pro-Congress. Their strength lay in the fact that people took them to be representatives of Moscow and Moscow was the great progressive force. The revolutionaries rose through struggle from the soil and hence they were indigenous and were always with the nationalist movement while the Communists were always anti-national and

pro-Russian. So one section of the people wanted them whole-heartedly but the vast majority disliked them with equal vehemence. These were the ground why we could not properly avail of the opportunity of the Second World War, too.

WARDHA

As soon as the war started I approached Acharyaji and proposed that we must at the earliest come in touch with some anti-British power. He understood that I meant Japan. He said that Japan was a fascist power and we were socialist. If we established contact with them we would go down in the eyes of our countrymen. I was mortally disappointed at this and realised my helpless position. We had no separate organisation of ours. Hence the way of our separate move was barred. The leaders, who assured us that they were really for an armed revolution like ourselves, were now taking shelter under theoretical socialism. When the path to an armed revolution was open how could we sit on the fence, I could not understand and was, much worried. However, after a tour of Banaras and adjacent places Acharyaji told us that much material would be available for a vigorous propaganda work. That was some consolation.

The Congress announced that the Working Committee and the A.I.C.C. meetings would be held at Wardha early in October. About ten

days prior to this the C.S.P. also was to hold a meeting of the National Executive at Lucknow. J.P. came to Lucknow earlier and he himself proposed that a War council would be formed and a secret organisation would be run with its headquarters at Lucknow. He proposed the formation of a War Council with Acharya Narendra Deva, Pratul Ganguli, myself and himself as its members. He also stated that Acharyaji and Ganguli would court arrest but he and myself would go underground. This was somewhat heartening for me. Japanese help would be sought automatically with immense precautionary measures. Arms would be the first requirement and then money and other things would naturally follow. I was confident that an immense force would be created, before which the Congress would remain as Gandhian impotent onlooker. The entire youth would rally round us and the masses too would be inspired through them. The Gandhians would be confined to their Ashrams of Khaddar organisation. They won't be able to inspire anybody except the too wise.

But at Wardha the C.S.P. and J.P. surrendered to Gandhism and decided that they would only participate in the movement if it was started by Gandhiji and would not start any separate movement. This was a death-blow to us. We returned from Wardha completely disappointed.

DR. HEDGEWARE AT NAGPUR

On our way back I went to see Dr. Hedgeware the founder of the R. S. S. organisation with Maharaj, Sri Trailokya Nath Chakravarty, under whom Dr. Hedgeware was working as a member of the secret Anushilan Samiti when he was a student in the Calcutta National Medical College. He said that he gave physical training to youths without any designed political objective, because in that case the work of the organisation could not be carried on. But if during the war period we could do anything then their men, about 44,000 in number at that time, he thought, would be helpful to us. The Doctor passed away in the next summer and his organisation did not come forward during the August Movement of 1942, although some individuals did.

CONGRESS STAND

Empowered by the Government of India Act of 1935, the Congress had established ministries in most of the provinces. But these were withdrawn on the ground that Britain had involved India in the World War without consulting the people of India whom the Congress represented. This was a big non-cooperation step. But after that the Congress became quite inactive. On the one hand, no help was to be rendered for the war efforts and on the other hand it was decided that there should also be no embarrassment to the Britishers. People

of the country wanted that something must be done at this time because England's difficulty was their opportunity. But the Congress and the C.S.P. remained inactive.

RAMGARH : SEPARATION FROM C.S.P.

The Ramgarh Session of the Congress in March 1940 was therefore very dull. Subhas Bose was by now a Congress rebel. had organised a Conference at Ramgarh during this session styled as Anti-compromise Conference. People were more interested in it than they were in the Congress. Bose was given a big reception at the Railway Station. The Congress High Command asked Acharya Narendra Deva to speak at the Congress when Bose arrived at the Railway Station. They knew that none else could hold the audience and prevent the Congress members from joining the reception to Bose. This gives us inkling of the role of the C.S.P. which because of its woolly headed policies and half-hearted moves failed to bring about a radical change in the country's political life. When Subhas Bose had been at Lucknow as the President of the Congress in 1938 he met the C.S.P. leaders at the residence of Minister Sampurananand. Before the gathering Bose said : "I am thinking of joining the C.S.P." Sri Mohanlal Gautam, the U.P. secretary of the party, at once stood up and requested Bose to take the decision soon so that the Party might

be strengthened. But thanks to C.S.P's sentimental weakness for Gandhian leadership, it failed to go the whole hog with Bose. So Bose formed the Forward Bloc, not as a party but as a platform, only because there was no other alternative before him. He wanted to drag us into it, but we had firm faith in an ideology and we were unable to follow that loose path. We were definite that the objective must be crystal clear and the programme too must be commensurate with it. We had full sympathy with Bose but could not join hands with him only because of this fact. He, too, appreciated this.

L. K. SHARMA AND BOSE'S MOVE

Since the outbreak of the war Bose decided to establish contact with Japan and wanted to send Lala Shankar Lal to Japan with the help of a revolutionary of U. P., L. K. Sharma. Sharma had his pass port and other travel documents with him. I sent him to our Calcutta leaders with the request that some responsible person should be sent to Japan with him. It was proposed that I should go to Japan. But I thought that the news of my going to Japan would be known to the British government and that it would be impossible for me to come back to India. Work in India was more vital during the war than contact with Japan. But we wished we could establish some contact with that country. No

other power could help us. Moreover, Rashbehari Bose was there and he would have certainly helped. But the Bengal leaders of our party did not accept my proposals.

L. K. Sharma met me at Ramgarh Congress and told me that he had very important matters to discuss with me and I must not not leave Ramgarh without meeting him. But I forgot to ask him where he was putting up. Later we searched for him but could not find him anywhere. Then there was heavy rain and we left Ramgarh with great difficulty. When I came to know long after that Sharma and Lalaji had left for Japan, I understood, why he told me not to leave Ramgarh without meeting him.

CHAPTER XIX

FORMATION OF R. S. P. AT RAMGARH

We were very eager to do something. We were not only disappointed but disgusted too with the C. S. P. and I have stated why we did not join hands with Bose. The alternative before us was to form a new party of our own based on the ideas of Karl Marx and Lenin for the emancipation of the masses through a revolution and then bring about a new social order in which exploitation of man by man was to be a thing of the past.

With this object in view a meeting was held in a big tent of a friend, Vir Raghav Achariar, who was then the Senior Vice-Chairman of the Manbhum District Board. Revolutionaries of different provinces gathered there and the decision was taken after prolonged discussion that a new party of the Indian Marxist revolutionaries be formed and this party be named the Revolutionary Socialist Party which would very clearly convey the ideas for which it was brought into being. A Committee was formed there for giving a proper shape to the Party and making a draft constitution and programme. I was elected as its convener.

It was war time and the formation of a revolutionary party with the veteran and tried revolutionaries was an eye-sore to the administration. They

were not to sit idle and allow this party to proceed with its work smoothly. They set their machinery in motion against these revolutionaries and within a short time most of the leading persons were rounded up and thrown into prison, of course, without any trial. So the committee could not even hold its first meeting. Bengal, however, proceeded with the organisational work promptly.

C. S. P. POSITION

In Bengal the revolutionary organisation was very old and it had province-wide ramifications. It was not so in U. P. Here there was a complete break down after the activities during the First World War and Sanyal and myself had to start anew. Again after the Kakori releases when we joined the C. S. P. our number was very limited. We devoted our energy to form the C. S. P. as a left organisation within the congress platform. For this at Ramgarh Comrade Keshav Sharma was not in favour of leaving C. S. P. But my two years' experience with it convinced me that C. S. P. could never become a real left socialist party. Therefore, ultimately we would be nowhere. Hence it was better for us to separate with whatever small force we could command. C. S. P. was not a party of democratic centralism, but a party of leaders holding divergent views and having no proper democratic connection with the rank and file. The leaders had positions in the Congress and hence

they were born leaders in C. S. P. and it did not matter whether they were Marxist Socialists or not. They financed the party through dubious and even at times questionable means and the rank and file had no voice over them. The ranks were either to remain in the party silently or quit.

A SOURCE FOR JAPANESE CONTACT

So after Ramgarh our position in U.P. was not very strong but we were quite sure that in no time the energetic and enthusiastic youths would rally round us. An atmosphere had to be created for that somehow. I was known to the political workers and youths of U.P. but to start an organisation material resources were necessary. In this we were lacking badly. The old method of forcible collection of money could not be followed. I was much worried.

At this time I got a chance. A junior officer of Japanese foreign office was learning Urdu at Lucknow. He promised that he would help me to establish contact with the Japanese Consul-General at Simla and could get forged Indian currency notes from Japan through Thailand. At this time also came Comrade Tridib Chaudhury from Bengal and gave me the good news that Subhas Bose wanted to do something serious and he could not entirely rely on his loose F.B. organisation. Bose at this time received a list of some 30 persons of his F.B. some of whom were secretly in touch

with the C.I.D. He was, therefore, trying to amalgamate the better elements of F.B. with R.S.P. Bose himself sent Tridib Chaudhury to me for that purpose. He was also sent by Bose to the North Western Frontier Province.

THE ARRESTS

This scheme of Bose remained unfulfilled as shortly after this he was himself jailed. I was eagerly expecting some news from Simla but was one day suddenly arrested and sent to jail as a detenu. Four days later Keshav Sharma also reached the jail and I suspected a man to have betrayed us. Sharma was arrested in his house, yet he would not believe that he was betrayed by him. This man was very eager to work with us. But I was reluctant to take him in full confidence. I told Sharma to have details about his antecedents from Banaras where he was a student of the Hindu University. He later assured me that the man was very reliable. In a day or two came Seth Damodar Swarup to the jail. He told us positively that he was the man who had got him arrested. Now Sharma also was convinced of it. That man later became an officer of the C.I.D.

I did my utmost to avoid arrest. Though we had formed the R.S.P. at Ramgarh and I was its convenor, yet I tried to keep the outward form as mild as possible. We were having a Satyagraha

parade in a park at Lucknow in which all the members of the City Congress Executive, including C.B. Gupta, were on parade. The police dramatically came there in a lorry, and took me away to my residence and searched everything but nothing objectionable was found. I was then living in the same house with Mohan Lal Gautam, M.L.A., the U.P. Secretary of C.S.P., who later became a Congress Minister. He was present during the search and police men were polite to me. From the Kotwali I was taken to jail late in the night and I was so well-known in the Lucknow District Jail that no personal search was made there and I was lodged in the hospital barrack for the night.

IN JAIL AGAIN, MAY 1940

Everything was familiar to me in Lucknow jail. We were here as Kakori under-trials. For hours in the night I could not have any sleep. The memories of old friends haunted me and the chain of thoughts kept me awake.

In the morning I was sent to the Civil Ward where the old Lahore Case comrades were still there to welcome me. This was the place where I was lodged when I entered this jail 15 years ago for the first time. On many occasions we had been there to interview the Lahore Case friends and spent hours during the Congress Ministry. This time I was the first person in the province to

be arrested on provincial warrant.

We all were detained under War Ordinance yet we were not given all those concessions which the convicts were getting. Many other detenus in other jails were given only ordinary 'C' class diet. This was intolerable. So, as a protest, myself and Keshava Sharma started hunger strike. After a week the same old Superintendent of Agra jail hunger strike days, Lt. Col. Jafri, tried to give me a nasal feed. He tried his best but failed totally.

He fed me in Agra jail in my longest hunger strike of 142 days through one nostril. A year after this another inexperienced doctor did the same thing for 111 days in the Lucknow Central Prison. Because of all this there was a permanent sore inside my nose and blood often oozed out even now after decades. Medical treatment proved ineffective to cure this and it has now become my life's companion. Because of this sore forced feeding was impossible. This made the authorities a bit nervous. They did not like public agitation on this especially during the days of the frightful war. Babu Purshottamdas Tandon interfered in the matter on the 10th day and at his request we abandoned the strike. As a result all detenus were given better class.

The Lahore Case prisoners were brought down to Lucknow jail on their repatriation from the Andamans. They belonged to U.P. and hence

were allowed by the Congress Ministry to be lodged here and were given 'B' class. The Punjab Government at first were not agreeable to this but when U.P. refused to keep the political prisoners in 'C' class, they had to give their consent, as otherwise they would have been sent back to the Punjab and this they did not like at all. When the three Ootacamund Bank Robbery Case lifer repatriates from the Andamans were released from Lahore, they were sent to Delhi under police escort. Such was the attitude of the Punjab Government. Even in Congress ministry there were differences of attitudes. Rajagopal Acharya as the Premier of Madras did not even recognise the revolutionaries as politicals.

During the war the British Government at first was as strong on the Communists as they were on the revolutionaries. Two communist absconders, beside others, were also arrested at Lucknow and put up with us. One of them, Mazumdar, is now a lecturer in the Lucknow University and the other was Ajoy Kumar Ghosh of Kanpur. But the most difficult position was that of B. K. Mukherjee, M.L.A. He had a big family and had no connection whatever with revolutionary politics and yet he was brought to the jail. However, he was soon released from Fatehgarh Jail.

TRANSFERRED TO DEOLI DETENTION CAMP IN AJMER

In the latter part of 1940 a concentration camp was started at Deoli in Ajmer. Detenus from all over India except Bengal were lodged there. We were also brought down to Deoli Camp from different jails of U. P. by batches. When Dr. Z. A. Ahmed of C. P. I. met me at Deoli he congratulated me for the timely hunger strike at Lucknow jail, as otherwise many would have been in 'C' class. In fact due to this all the detenus of U. P. were put in 'A' class in Deoli camp, though most of the Punjab and Bihar detenus of eminence were given 'B' class.

C. I. D. officials of various provinces were in charge of the camp under a European army officer. The fencing was made of double line of barbed wires covered with mats under the guard of armed sentries all round. The internal management was left to the detenus themselves under official control. Separate enclosures were there for each camp, but we all could meet in the morning and evening in an enclosure set apart for games and exercises, at fixed times when they were kept open. A hospital camp also was there at a distance, as also separate punishment cells.

Two classes of political prisoners were its inmates, communists and the revolutionaries. The former were in the majority. For management of affairs a camp committee was formed which was re-

cognised by the authorities. Internal differences were there, yet the committee was all along working satisfactorily. But we had to have separate kitchens as the two groups refused to dine together. This possibly was a reflection of our Hindu collective subconscious instinct where segregation of differing people at dinners is very often recognised as the norm. To the Indians dining together very often signifies many deeper cultural traits than can be seen on the surface.

The first meeting of the prisoners was held under the presidentship of Master Mota Singh for the formation of the camp committee. Dr. Z. A. Ahmed spoke as to how the communists would conduct themselves ; they would spend their time mainly in studies and would not like fights with the authorities and particularly deprecated hunger strikes in jail. I strongly supported hunger strike as the only weapon in confined life and also said that we must continue our fight even in jail. There were police agents amongst us through whom the reports of the meeting reached the authorities.

Our only connection with the outside world was through the newspapers, books, letters and interviews. But this was much curtailed because of very strict censor on letters and interviews were there in such a God forsaken place.

It was war time and the comunists were sure of Germany's victory as Soviet Russia was on

friendly terms with them. Their leaders preached openly that Red Army was such a mighty force that it could conquer the world easily, but, of course, they were not aggressive. Then when the table turned and German army marched on Russia, men like Master Mota Singh became enthusiastic and thereby became an object of attack by the communists, who wanted to remove him from the camp committee.

We observed 'Bhagat Singh and Azad day' but the communists did not participate, as it was, according to them, against their principle. But we participated in their Lenin day ceremony and October Revolution Day. On a Lenin day comrade B.T. Randive in the presence of all invitees of the other camp enunciated their policy stating that they did not recognise the existence of any other party in India except the Communist Party not even the Congress he declared emphatically.

We were once in a fighting mood with the authorities and the committee was to decide as to what was to be done. Sachin Sanyal suggested hunger strike but prompt came the retort from Randive "We cannot do that, that's the Gandhian method." Not long after that on another occasion the C.P.I. pleaded before the committee that only hunger strike should be resorted to and nothing else. When Randive's former remark was referred to Dr. Ahmed said "That was Randive's personal opinion."

My cousin Sailesh Chatterjee, was killed by one, Dr. Khan, when he was a detenu here in 1933. This time, therefore, when one of us, Satrughna Kumar of Dehra Dun, was down with high fever we wanted that one of us should accompany him to the hospital as an attendant. He refused to go alone and the authorities wanted to take him anyhow. The military Superintendent came fully prepared to take him by force. He put a big number of extra armed guards all round the fencing and an equal number were placed inside. A fight seemed to be inevitable. The communists were not only aloof, but some of them also jeered at us. But the situation was saved by Master Mota Singh. He followed Satrughna Kumar's stretcher feigning to be a sickman. Neither the doctor nor the Superintendent dared to stop him.

A show is not perfect without a clown and we had a veritable clown in Mobarak Mazdoor, who would stand half-naked before the Superintendent with some portion of his body painted black. He was even sent to the solitary cells as a punishment but he remained unchanged even there.

Jay Prakash Narayan arranged to smuggle some letters outside through a source. He asked me if I would like to send some letters outside to somebody. I said to him that he might send first some unimportant things just to test the source. But he did not pay any heed to my caution. The man did not do the job and J.P. got it back after

a long time. Then when his wife came to interview him, he tried to pass on a bundle of papers to her. But the C.I.D. officer, a sub-inspector from Bengal, caught him red-handed and he, Master Mota Singh and Munshi Ahmed Deen were punished. J.P.'s letter was, long after, given to the press by the Government of India. This was done when everything was prepared for a general hunger strike in all the three camps.

What happened was this. The Government was very much upset on the preparations of general hunger strike with a demand to redress 18 grievances. N.M. Joshi came to see us on this but no way out was found out. Though tmqeoost plains were common they were represented to him differently by the two different sets of detenus communists and non-communists. The communist draft was prepared by them and presented to Joshi by comrade Mahmuduzzaffar and the one of non-communists was written by J.P. and presented by me. The authorities wanted to take advantage of this difference by publishing the J.P. letter through the press before the strike started. The letter had many adverse remarks about the C.P.I. and their men. They, therefore, naturally thought that this letter would further embitter the relationship between the two groups and as a consequence the strike move would fail.

The morning the letter was published J.P. was taken to the office and then the newspapers were

sent to the camp. Only when J.P. assured the Superintendent that there would be no quarrel or assault on him he was sent back to the camp from the office on his own responsibility.

Joshi on his return to Bombay submitted a report to Mahatma Gandhi and also issued a press statement in which, strangely enough, he placed our last point as the first, as if repatriation to respective provinces was our main demand. Later on we realised that the object of the C.P.I. in starting the hunger strike was repatriation and nothing else. But that was not the aim of others. That is why during the strike when N.M. Joshi came for negotiations they gave up the strike on the understanding that they would be repatriated ; but others who were serious, continued for more than a month. When Joshi saw me alone he told me that the C.C. of C.P.I. had urged upon their comrades to give up the strike.

Allow me to digress a little. Martyr Bhagat Singh's two brothers, Kulbir Singh and Kultar Singh, used to chat with me every evening before the lock-up time. I thought that this was because their brother was associate of mine. But one day Kulbir Singh told me very sentimentally taking me aside that their illustrious brother had told them in the condemned cell in Lahore jail that if they would like to work in the political field and if I would be alive till then, they should work according to my direction and then they would not be

misled. My relation with Sardar Bhagat Singh was very deep no doubt, but I could not think of so implicit a faith in me on behalf of this brilliant youth, who came to me at Kanpur at the age of 17 and lived under my guidance only for a couple of months.

This sentiment of the great martyr Sardar Bhagat Singh was manifest into later documents, as well. Veteran revolutionary leader, Pratul Chandra Ganguli, wrote a letter from Calcutta to my Lusknow address on 9-2-52 in which he wrote "Bhagat Singh had spoken many things about you. He had the greatest regard for you. As a revolutionary leader, his confidence and regard for you was above anybody else." Professor Bhagwandas Mahore of Bhusawal Bomb Case, who was a close associate of Sardar Bhagat Singh, and participated in the attempt to take me out while I was being transferred from Agra to Lucknow jail, writes "When we all came back to Agra (after the failure of the attempt) Bhagat Singh on entry to the house wept bitterly, although all the way (from Kanpur to Agra) he restrained himself in such a way that nobody could say seeing him on the way that he was so much mortified."

Comrade Batliwala of Bombay was in Hijli Detention Camp in Bengal. That camp was dominated by the Revolutionary Socialists, who were confirmed Marxist-Leninists. Naturally Batliwalla was much impressed by them. When he was trans-

ferred to Deoli Camp he wanted to talk to me. We were known to each other as leading members of the Congress Socialist Party. But when he came to my place to deliver the message of the Hijli camp the C. P. I. leaders felt nervous. We had hardly started the talk when he was taken away on the plea of an urgent call by the Communist leaders.

Just on the eve of the general hunger strike Dange, Ranadive and Batliwala were separated from us and kept in another segregated camp. When they were going away I invited them to tea in our kitchen. On that occasion the sentiments that Batliwala expressed for me regarding the fight with the authorities, was not liked by the other two. They were dead silent. Ultimately Batliwala could not accomodate himself in the Party and left politics for good.

Shortly after our arrival at Deoli there was a swing towards the C. P. I. and most of the Congress Socialists and Red Communists joined the C. P. I. ceremoniously in which the camp committee members were invited. Speeches were delivered by the leaders of the new entrants extolling the C. P. I. to the best of their ability. But again after the arrival of J. P., most of the C. S. P. men in the same way came back to the C. S. P.

HUNGER STRIKE AND RELEASE

I was well-known in the country as a hunger striker due to my prolonged hunger strikes several

times during my previous life sentence as a leader of the famous Kakori Case. Much propaganda was carried on in the papers about this hunger strike even before this was actually started. I was already an aged man now and as a result of the strike I was going down rather rapidly. Attempts were made by the doctors four times to give me nasal feeding forcibly. They not only failed in it, but profuse bleeding continued for hours as a result of the attempt. Friends were alarmed and all were agitated. The news reached the camp and strong protests were made to the Superintendent when he came for his round. In the afternoon J. P. and A. K. Ghosh were sent to the hospital for the enquiry. I had just explained the position to J. P., when the doctor-in-charge, an Anglo-Indian I. M. D., came there. When he admitted to J. P. that attempts were made to feed me 4 times and 4 times they had failed and that he thought that my condition was such that I might even die in a week, then he said that as a doctor he should report the position to the authorities. A doctor is not supposed to torture a patient. As I had told J. P. that if another attempt was made on me then I would physically resist it and others in the ward also promised to help me. J. P. also requested his party leaders of the Punjab, a professor and an M.L.A., who were in the adjoining room, to come to my help, should there be a fight.

Next morning a Punjabi doctor came and told

me that he would remove me to the operation room of the hospital and then make an attempt. My comrades on either side of my bed sprang up from their beds and told the doctor that my body won't be removed before they were dead. Undoubtedly the object of the doctor was to torture me there in the lonely place and thereby get my mouth opened. But the talk of the previous evening and the threat of my friends that morning acted as a brake against the evil intention of the doctor and he went away disappointed. That day the doctor-in-charge submitted his report to the Superintendent that my condition was critical and I might die in a week or so.

RELEASE FROM DEOLI CAMP

On the 17th day of the hunger strike the Superintendent came to the hospital very early at 8 A.M. and stop'ed near my bed and told me "There is a good news for you. You are released unconditionally." I said, "I am in the midst of a fight and I cannot leave the field without any decision." "This is Govt. of India order" he said. "And I cannot detain you." He then said that N. M. Joshi was expected that day. On that I argued that if he came with some understanding then there might be some compromise and in that case the strike might also be called off. Then no question will remain of my release. Of course it was not possible for him in the face of the Govt. order. I was

carried to the camp and thence to a room, meant for the officers, in the military hospital. I was to be there as a free man till I was fit to undertake travel.

Here is an extract from "Pioneer" on my release.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA COMMUNIQUE
ON UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE FROM
DEOLI CAMP

Pioneer, Friday, November 7, 1941.

Unconditional Release of Jogesh Chandra Chatterji. New Delhi, November 6,

Yesterday afternoon, November 5, the Government of India received information that the health of Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, one of the security prisoners, who is on hunger strike at Deoli, was deteriorating owing to the fact that, for certain physical reasons, it was impossible to administer food by artificial means, states a press communique.

In these peculiar circumstances, the Government of India, after consulting the Government of the United Provinces by whose order he had been detained under Defence Rule 26, informed the Superintendent, Deoli, late last night that Jogesh Chandra Chatterji was to be released unconditionally forthwith.

Sachindranath Sanyal was in the hospital as a positive T.B. case and he expected release as he told me that the Superintendent had recommended

strongly for that. But instead he was sent to special T.B. Jail at Sultanpur. At my earnest request Acharya Narendra Devaji made vigorous effort for his release and he was released only to die after another year's struggle.

After my release the Government of India issued a communique to the press regarding the precarious condition of my health, which alarmed my Lucknow friends and Sri C. B. Gupta, sent Ram Lakhan Benipuri to escort me back to Lucknow. Dr. Mukherji of Ajmer accompanied Benipuri in a car and on the 5th day I was brought to Ajmer. On the 6th morning when the train steamed into the Lucknow station Sri Gupta was astonished to find me standing on the door of the compartment. He had already phoned to the Medical College to keep the ambulance car ready to carry me home from the station.

Before I conclude this chapter, I should refer to the unity talks between the C.S.P. and the R.S.P. in the Deoli Camp. Under J.P.'s initiative unity talks were carried on for 3 days between the C.S.P. and the R.S.P. On their behalf were J.P., Seth Damodar Swarup, Mohanlal Gautam and Munshi Ahmed Deen, and on our behalf were myself, Keshava Prasad Sharma and Sushil Bhattacharya. There was complete agreement on all points but it was broken up abruptly on the fourth day when the question of a new name of the party was raised. J.P. could only concede that had Subhas

Bose also agreed to join with his Forward Bloc. Bose was then in Europe.

J.P. was in jail early in 1940 before the Ramgarh Session of the Congress. So he did not know that at Ramgarh we had formed the R.S.P. In Hazaribagh jail he wrote a thesis for a new party of leftists and named it R.S.P. He also sent a lengthy private letter to Subhas Bose through a released political prisoner. Later on he came to know that we had already formed R.S.P. On his release he went to Calcutta and had lengthy talks with Subhas Bose and Pratul Ganguli separately. On his arrival at Deoli Camp he narrated to me and Keshava Prasad Sharma the substance of the talks.

BACK TO LUCKNOW

The worst period of my life was at Lucknow. Physically I was very weak due to hunger strike. Economically also I was in a bad shape. On hearing of my release my sister came to Lucknow. I rented a house and came into it but had no money to pull on. I was so much surrounded by the C. I. D. men that I could not move about freely. The C. I. D. people approached the owner of the house and he was so much afraid that I had to leave it and go to another place.

I took a loan of Rs. 100/- from C. B. Gupta and started a laundry. At that time my brother also came. This laundry helped me much at the

time. Though the income was small but I was successful to avoid C.I.D. vigilance. Finding me engaged they lessened their attention and thereby I got an opportunity to proceed on with my life's mission I mean, the underground work.

I came out of jail in November, 1941 and one painful tragedy happened the next month just when the Japanese attack on the far East was in the offing. A Bengal revolutionary of our party Jiten Moulick came to Lucknow as an absconder and took shelter in "Sangharsh" office in Model Houses. Ramakanta Shastri, the editor, brought him to me in a dark night to see if he was a genuine man. I was convinced that he was a valued comrade. My sister served him food but he could not take even half the quantity. I expressed my surprise at it because he appeared to be a stout and healthy youth. The next day I heard that he was down with high fever which turned out to be typhoid. He was betrayed and in this condition he was taken to the police station and thence to jail. The inevitable result was that he breathed his last in two days on the 15th or 16th of December 1941. I gave him assurance about my sympathy and support but I could not come to his help in his direst need. This feeling I cannot forget even at this distant date. The news of his death was conveyed to the "Sangharsh" office through the Arya Samaj, whose men had taken out the dead boy for cremation. I received the news in the night when

everything was over. He came from village Madhyapara in Vikrampur in the district of Dacca, Bengal. Later I came to know that he was sent to Lucknow by the party to establish contact with me. He also had told me so.