

CHAPTER II

PREPARATION FOR THE REVOLUTION

Our Comilla organisation was not lagging behind. We were fully prepared under our able leader, Purna Chakravarty. Just as in 1912 Deben Ghosh was shot dead because he gave information to the police which led to the arrest and conviction to 7 years rigorous imprisonment of ten very active members of the Samiti for attempt at dacoity, so also, early in 1915, the Head Master of Zilla school, Sarat Chandra Bose, was shot dead in broad day light at Comilla while returning from the school. He was acting as a Government agent for the detection and suppression of revolutionaries, particularly students.

In the Deben Ghosh case our house was involved in an interesting way. During the Puja holidays several men were arrested including Shri Ramesh Banerjee, the agent of the Singer Sewing Machine Co. Our closest neighbour knew that Biren Chatterjee was very intimate with Banerjee. Biren borrowed a Singer Sewing Machine from Ramesh and his friends made Khakhi shirts and shorts. During the search these khakhi shirts and shorts were recovered. But the police did not bother to find how those things came there. A few days after, during a marriage in the town, a lady who

was our next door neighbour and whose sons were in the movement, told other ladies about the activities of Biren. One of the ladies, who came from Calcutta and who was the wife of a C. I. D. officer, heard everything attentively and in due course narrated everything to her husband in Calcutta.

The result was the arrival of an officer from Calcutta to enquire into the matter. Our servant Harendra, admitted the Singer Sewing Machine affair, but the police could not get Biren. When during the war time Biren was arrested in the Grier Park fight with the police in which Mr. Lowman's hand was dislocated by him, he was tried under section 110—a section under which people “leading a bad livelihood” were prosecuted—and our servant was the main witness. In many cases the police unjustly prosecuted revolutionaries under section 110, as in those days there was no other law, except the Regulation III of 1818, under which a person against whom there was no definite complaint and evidence could be detained for an indefinite period.

In 1912 this servant was taken to Calcutta by the officer in a second class compartment and was examined by higher C. I. D. officers, and during the case he was even interviewed by Rai Bahadur Basanta Kumar Chatterjee, a principal assistant of Sir Charles Tegart. I heard all these things from the servant on his return from Calcutta. Of course, Biren met him on many occasions before his arrest and told him to tell the truth in case he was called

upon to give evidence. Biren did not want this poor man to suffer because of him. Such was the feeling of Biren for the poor.

Coming back to the main theme of my narration, we did not know much about the big scale attempts of the revolutionaries. But this much we knew that an effort was being made to make the country free during the war. We were making ourselves ready to play our part in our limited areas. In those days my trunk used to be full of cartridges and bottles of Picric acid were kept under my wooden bed. We decided that our task would be to capture the Chittagong Division, i. e. , Chittagong, Noakhali and Tippera districts.

I was admitted into the Victoria school, attached to the Victoria College. The Head master, Sashi Kumar Bal, was a graduate of the B. M. College, Barisal, with which the name of late Aswini Kumar Datta was associated. The Head Master encouraged a social welfare organisation of the students styled " Little Brothers of the Poor " to help the poor and the needy. Discussions used to take place every Saturday after school hours. I regularly attended such programmes. Because of these activities the police had a suspicious eye on the Head Master.

Informally I was already in close touch with some of the Anushilan Samiti members. As a boy I had no knowledge of the national or international affairs. Only intense anti-British feeling was roused

in my mind by the environmental conditions. When the Governor of East Bengal, Sir Bamfylde Fuller, went to Agartala, the capital of Tripura State, two youths in saffron clothes were arrested as they were loitering in a suspicious way. They were brought by the police to Comilla for trial in November 1909. I went to see them in the court with an elderly neighbour, Dhiren Sen. They appeared to be handsome Sadhus. They were Shanti Mukerjee and Ashu Das Gupta, two important Anushilan leaders, as I came to know later. Though a boy, fresh from village life, I was much interested to see them because I was in search of such men.

Initiation to Secret Anushilan Samiti for me was only a formal matter. Fire extinction, nursing of patients, cremation of the dead, etc. were the work in which we were interested as students of the Victoria School. In fact my activities drew me unconsciously close to the Anushilan Samiti, whose members were also doing similar things. Even before my formal initiation I was thus working with them. In reality the organiser, Purna Chakravarty, told me that in my case no formality was necessary as I was the cousin of Biren Chatterjee.

The place at Comilla where my uncle's residence was situated was called 'Sonarang' Compound because one family from Sonarang in Bikrampur came to Comilla and settled in this part. The Compound consisted of about a dozen houses and

there was only one entrance. On one side of the entrance was the house of my uncle and on the other side was the house of a lawyer, whose cousin, Atindra Mohan Roy, was an important member of the Samiti. He was also my class mate. As in-Charge of the Violence Department of the Party in 1916 he led the group that murdered Rai Bahadur Basanta Kumar Chatterjee of the Calcutta C. I. D. who, as assistant to Sir Charles Tegart, had pledged to eradicate the revolutionary movement from Bengal during the First World War. Suren Roy, the younger brother of the lawyer, was also an important member of our party. Jiten Sen, the war time in-charge of the Jugantar Party at Comilla, was from this Compound. His younger brother, Dhiren Sen, was an important member of Anushilan. Profulla Das Gupta who became an Engineer after being released from jail as a State Prisoner, came from this compound. My class-mate, Bipin Behari De, lived in the house of Das Gupta's uncle in this Compound. My cousin, Paresh Chatterjee the eldest son of Bisweswar Chatterjee, was an Anushilanite from early boyhood. Another Jiten Sen, known as Kalababu, came from this compound too. He suffered jail and internment.

We started a literary club and Library at Sonarang compound, collected donations for it and in additioon we earned money by chopping firewood and used the money for running our Library.

During the war the Defence of India Act

was promulgated. The main purpose behind it was to check the activities of the revolutionaries. Lord Carmichael, the Governor of Bengal, advocated in 1916 strong measures for the complete eradication of the revolutionary movement in Bengal. This encouraged the C. I. D. Police to use a strong hand in suppressing the revolutionaries. Mr. Charles Tegart was the head of the Bengal C. I. D. at that time. He gave assurance to the Governor that with the help of the Government he would be able to dig out the revolutionary movement at the very root. Rai Bahadur Basanta Kumar Chatterjee volunteered himself to work as Tegart's assistant in this mission. Arrests and interrogations followed in large scale. Harrassment and house searches in mass scale were conducted by the police. 44000 houses were searched in a single year. When these oppressions reached an intolerable point, the revolutionaries also started retaliating. Rai Bahadur Basanta Kumar Chatterjee was battered to death in public in Calcutta, in July 1916. This culmination of several unsuccessful attempts on Chatterjee's life was one of the most daring exploits of Atindra Roy's leadership.

Our District organiser, Purna Chandra Chakravarty, left Comilla and took charge of Dacca, but he could not work there for long. One morning we read in the paper that he was arrested. Chakravarty left handing over the charge of the district to Prabodh Sen, a student. Sen drew the attention of

leaders, because of his brilliant articles in our hand-written monthly Party Organ.

But soon Profulla, a new organiser, was sent from North Bengal to take charge from Sen. Meanwhile myself and Sen had gone to Chandpur and we received a wire indicating some trouble at Comilla. Sen stayed but I returned by a night train. Before day-break, as I entered Sen's drawing room, I found signs of house search even in the dark. Several places of the floor were dug up. I waited silently till his youngest brother came out. I met the afflicted mother, who wanted her son to be on the right path. This was rather a signal of the days ahead. Some absconded and some others kept themselves ready for any eventuality. We did not sleep in our houses during the night as we apprehended that a police party could suddenly swoop on us any time.

MY ESCAPE IN 1916

One day we received news that Prabodh Bhattacharya and another person from Mymensingh, both of whom later participated with Tarini Mazumdar in the attempt to murder Mr. Emerson, the District Magistrate of Comilla, were to come to our house by the midnight train. I waited and waited for them but they did not turn up. In the late hours of the night I did not go to my neigh-

bouring shelter as that would have caused disturbance. So I slept in my place. At about 4.30 a. m. my cousin, Paresh Chatterjee, roused me from my sleep and told that the house was surrounded by the police. The police had an eye on our house since 1911.

Though there was nothing objectionable in the house, we closed the doors and windows and burnt the papers which contained some of our secrets. At day-break the D. S. P. and the S. I. entered the house with the neighbouring lawyer as the search witness. In the warrant of arrest my name was written "Jogesh Chandra Chakravarty or Chatterjee". The witness said, "He is not Chakravarty. He is not wanted." But the D. S. P. replied, "I have definite information that he is the person wanted. Though he appears to be very young, the charge is very serious against him." My room was searched but nothing incriminating was found. At this stage the Superintendent of Police arrived on the cycle to see the positions at different places, as a dozen houses were being searched that day simultaneously. Two officers went to the veranda to receive him and I took the opportunity to go out through the back-door, bare-bodied and bare-footed with a lota (brass tumbler) in my hand as if I was going to the latrine. The policeman, guarding the back door asked my name and I gave him a false name and passed by. Almost simultaneously they were after me, because the

S. P. wanted to see me. I ran and the policeman also ran after me. I entered a neighbour's latrine through the big soil cleaning hole and entered inside the house and again went out speedily by another door to the other side of the road in the opposite direction. I was thus beyond the reach of the police. I walked about 5 or 6 furlongs and took shelter in a students' mess. My host, our Party member, had a relative from his village. That gentleman suspected me, but I acted in such a manner as if I had a severe pain in my stomach and was going to the latrine again and again. So my host also could not go to the school.

In the afternoon the District Organiser came and informed me that my friend, Tarini Majumdar, had also escaped arrest. Tarini saw his house surrounded by the police when before day-break he was about to enter his house from his night shelter.

Even at the time of repressions, twelve simultaneous searches on a single day was an unusual matter. Myself and Tarini discussed this in our secret hide-out. We could not reach any conclusion. But later, some two months after my arrest in Calcutta, the matter was clear to me. Both Prabodh Sen and Jiten Sen, the two leaders of the two parties in Comilla had made a clean breast of everything to the police after they were arrested, and the searches followed.

I met Tarini Majumdar after night fall and we both proceeded to a house of a Dafadar

(village police petty officer) who was a relative of Tarini. To reach there we had to walk about 13 miles in heavy rains. The Dafadar told us that in the afternoon he noticed activities in the Thana (Police Station). So, though very tired, we left his house in the early hours of the morning. Shortly after we left, his house also was searched to find out a local absconder, a friend of Jiten Sen. Had we not left, we both would have also been arrested. However, we took shelter in a house of another relative of Tarini. This house had a big compound accommodating six families. So, to avoid detection by neighbours, we were lodged under a bamboo machang in front of which dhoties were hanged, as if these had been spread out for drying purposes.

A ROMANCE AT COMILLA

I had a romance at Comilla during the first World War days. So long only Anushilan branches were vigorously active in the district. But during the war, the other Calcutta group, popularly known as the Jugantar group, also became active. Our neighbour Jiten Sen, whose younger brother Dhiren Sen was an active associate of ours, deflected from us and took charge of the Jugantar group's organisation in our district. One afternoon I was standing

outside his house with his younger brother. Suddenly I heard a bomb burst ; volumes of smoke came out of a room in his house. I stood guard on the road side and Dhiren ran round to see that no outsider came to know anything. Really nobody knew anything. Jiten Sen was safe but one of his friends, who was with him received several deep injuries on his face. I do not remember the name of the person.

Though by then I was a prominent Anushilinite, Sen recruited me to his party. Of course, I reported everything to my district organiser. He warned me to be very cautious but at the same time wanted to have me in the full confidence of Sen, so that I could get all information about his activities. Otherwise the safety of our party was at stake, because there might be police vigilance due to their activities and following that we might be taken unaware.

Sen gave me some fire arms etc. But I did not keep them in my house. At last I was ordered by Sen to participate in an armed dacoity. I was willing to go but my organiser would not allow me to do so. I was pressed to go by Sen but I gave the plea that a certain person of our household was suspecting me and that in case I joined the exploit he might divulge our secret to others. So it was decided that I would not participate in the dacoity but would accompany them to the railway station and help them to board the train with arms and

ammunitions. Before we started for the station, I was introduced to the leader of the group whom I accompanied up to the train. The leader was Shri Naren Ghosh Choudhuri of Noakhali, subsequently transported to the Andamans to serve a life sentence for the Shivpur dacoity case.

Sen, however, asked me to meet him in the closing hours of the night. When I met him, he handed over the booty to me in the dark... I kept everything outside my house along with the arms. The things were handed over to Sen next day. The booty included some gold mohars and a necklace.

Sen's organisation was so weak that he could not even maintain contact with revolutionaries, who wanted to work with him or who belonged to the party of which he was a member. This was revealed to me much later when Shri Aswini Ganguli of Barisal, a co-prisoner in the jail, told me that he came to contact them all the way from Barisal, but had to go back baffled as he failed to find them out.

A MURDER PLAN

Once we planned to kill the district magistrate of Comilla, Mr. Emerson. The scheme was that when the district magistrate was murdered, Sir Charles Tegart, the biggest target of revolutionaries at the time, would certainly come from Calcutta

for the investigations. In that case he would be put to an end to at Chandpur where he would get down from the steamer and walk to board the standing train nearby. The persons, who were sharpshooters and were prepared to die, were deputed for this. It was decided that if they were arrested they would give a statement prepared by the party. Even this statement was made ready and handed to them.

But fortunately for Tegart, the plan of the murder of Emerson could not be executed. In the whole town only Emerson had a car and he used to go out every evening in that car. Our men were to stop the car just before the gate of his bungalow, where two stout trees stood on either side of the drive. They were to fasten a strong rope between the trees and thereby get the car stopped and shoot him dead. For 12 consecutive days our men were ready but he did not go out. We gave it up on the 13th day and that day he went out in the car. For the next few days he again did not come out. So out of sheer disgust we had to give up the idea.

HARASSMENT OF MY UNCLE AFTER MY ESCAPE

The District Magistrate, Mr. Emerson, came to my uncle's house in the Sonarang Compound after he received the news of my escape from there.

He threatened my uncle accusing him that he was himself a supporter of revolutionaries and, therefore, encouraged by him, I became bold and escaped. My uncle, though not a member of the revolutionary party, was a very bold man and told the Magistrate that he had no authority to threaten people in their own homes. Emerson left, but after this search parties came to my uncle's house on many occasions only to harrass him. Every time they came they invariably entered the kitchen, which in a Brahmin household meant that any cooked food exposed to their search was defiled and had to be thrown away, uneaten. They demolished ovens and broke open boxes and almirahs. And once about 300 policemen surrounded the whole Sonarang Compound and proceeded to destroy many things in my uncle's house. From our hide-out we were getting information of the police harassment of our house. But we were not then in a position to retaliate.

In our hide-out we had to spend the whole day lying on mats. But after nightfall we met our party members in the school building away from the village. One day we planned an excursion into the hills many miles away. After several hours' walk we arrived at a village where we took shelter in a hill-man's hut. Our guide introduced us as members of the local zamindar family. So we were treated as most esteemed guests. Women, who were almost naked like the males, avoided us and went inside

their huts. But the men gave us utensils, rice, vegetables, etc. We took water from the nearby spring and cooked rice and vegetables offered by them. But they also presented a bird to us. On our refusal to accept the bird they felt offended and we begged to be excused. We did not like roasted meat as they did and meat cooked without spice and other ingredients we could never relish. Moreover, we were in a hurry to cross the hill section before dusk.

This adventure during the rains told upon my health so badly, that I ran a high temperature with shivering cold. I was down with malaria. Bagala Majumdar, a member of the Party, paid a visit to the house where I was sheltered. The house was his relatives' house, so none suspected anything.

Bagala delivered the message to us that on an urgent matter we were to go to a place 28 miles away. I felt so weak that it was not possible for me to walk such a great distance. But Tarini would not go leaving me in that condition. At my repeated request Tarini agreed to leave. He impressed upon his relatives that they should take special care of me. Then he embraced me and departed at midnight. How could I know then that this would be our last parting? Next day a man came with a phial of quinine pills. This was the last gift of Tarini.

One night I came out of my hide-out and took the train from Laksam Junction for Chandpur. Bipin Bihari De came by this train from Comilla

with my clothes. For years we were intimate friends and classmates in the Victoria School and College. When we were students of the 9th class I tried to recruit him into the Party by a frank and direct approach. He resented it so much that he vehemently insisted that as a genuine friend it was his duty to prevent me from going astray. The next morning he did not go with me to the tank for bathing nor did he accompany me to the school. This change of attitude of my friend pained me. But when I reached school he embraced me and expressed regret, stating that difference of opinion should not stand in the way of our personal relations.

Two years later when we were in the last year intermediate class, one day Bipin told me that he had watched us (the members of the Party) keenly all these years and thought over the matter from all points of view and that he was convinced that we have taken up the right path. Soon he became an important member of the Party.

Bipin came from a poor rural family. His father was a day labourer. But Bipin was so meritorious that he secured a scholarship from the village school and then came to the town for further studies with the help of generous persons. He was from a village near Kashipur from where came Basanta, Sashi, Kali Prasanna, Bagala, and the great martyr Tarini of the Mazumdar family. They were all revolutionaries. They were zamindars too. Bipin came to escort me and stayed with the family

a few days. One day after we all took our meals together in the kitchen Bipin had to wash his plates himself, because the women members of the family knew his caste. This was very painful to us. Bipin came because I was there. The male members of the family were very much ashamed but were helpless before the prejudices of the women. The revolutionaries did not observe anything like that.

A word here about the social condition and the revolutionaries. Our brotherhood in the Anushilan Samiti not only made us staunch nationalists, but also advocates for the removal of social inequalities on the basis of caste. We had recruits from all classes and castes amongst the Hindus who were very orthodox. We were brothers at arms, a part and parcel of a semi-military organisation in which every one was ready to sacrifice himself before the altar of freedom. In such a brotherhood there was no question of differentiation and untouchability. We had no Muslims in our Samiti. As a matter of fact the Muslim community as a whole remained, by and large, unaffected by the revolutionary movement. To mention only one the religious orientation of the revolutionaries was more sympathetic towards the Hindu religion than to Islam. The revolutionaries were mostly inspired by a type of Hindu Nationalism. The rituals that we had to perform and most of the ideals that we held scarcely attracted the Muslims.

Our movement however did affect a small section of orthodox women. One night we dined together in a friend's house at Comilla. The cook served us the dinner. The lady of the house was requested not to bother about our dinner. This naturally aroused her curiosity. She came into the room where we were dining and next morning she told our friend that Satyayug had come. She knew we belonged to different castes. The very sight of our dining together without the distinction of caste thrilled her. And hence her remark. The Hindus believe that Satyayug is the beginning of the cycle of cosmic existence and that it is the purest and fullest of all the periods. In this yuga there is no distinction between caste and caste. But social prejudice dies hard. On another occasion when we were taking our food from the same pot in a Brahmin's house, a girl saw us and reported to her mother. She appeared in such a furious mood that we had to quit hurriedly, leaving everything.

On another occasion I stayed at Dacca with a Vaidya family. The first midday meal I had to prepare myself. But on my request I was later allowed to take food prepared by the ladies of the family. But the children of the family were not allowed to see me eating food cooked by the Vaidyas. They were afraid that the children might report it to outsiders that a Brahmin was taking food with them and cause a turmoil. Twenty-nine years later, one lady friend of our

Lucknow family used to come to us almost daily, help with the cooking and ate with us often. One day by chance I came to know this lady to be the daughter of the same Vaidya family with whom I stayed at Dacca. I narrated my story to all present and wondered at the great change that had taken place in our society within this 29 years.

After staying at Chandpur for some time, I accompanied Atin Roy who was also an absconder to Faridpur district crossing the great river Meghna in a small boat. Our object was to collect money through robbery. But the man on whom we were depending failed. He was a married man and hesitated. So we left for Calcutta.

I was to take charge of a district where I was to go from Calcutta. I was to live in the new place as a tutor. But it was already September and the Puja vacation was approaching. So it was decided that I should stay at 39 Pathuriaghata Street Calcutta till the vacation was over. From Mymensingh came a requisition for a boatman for a boat dacoity. I was bored with my idle life and was eager to go to Mymensingh district for this. But the leader, Jogendradas Bhattacharya, did not allow me to go.

I was forbidden to go out from the Pathuriaghata Street house because important C. I. D. watchers from East Bengal district had been brought to Calcutta and they were walking in the streets in batches for the arrest of absconders.

Some of our friends were already the victims of such watchers.

There was a large number of books in the house and I read them avidly. My other duty was to cook. Every noon and night a number of persons used to come to eat. I cooked rice and dal in a big pot and boiled potatoes. After every meal everybody except myself used to go out. That was the daily routine. The time was very bad for the revolutionaries. The idea of war-time revolution could not be fulfilled. Frustration led to the shaking of faith and consequently discipline among the revolutionaries became slack. Government repression reached its height. Tegart's men created havoc. Thousands of houses were searched and thousands were jailed and interned under the Defence of India Act, 1915.

MY ARREST AT 39, PATHURIAGHATA, CALCUTTA

On the 9th October, 1916, only one person came at noon-time. Naren Bannerjee, a student of the Presidency College, who was the organiser of Calcutta at that time, had his meal with me and then left. In the night nobody came. I waited and waited and then at about 10 p.m. went to sleep. In the midnight I was awakened from deep sleep by violent knocks at the door. Somebody said "Open,

open, ”—I thought that some of our men were at the door. But as soon as I opened the door several revolver barrels were pointed at me. Some were Bengal police officials and others were European police sergeants. Two Bengalees caught hold of me and pushed me into the room using me as a shield against any attack from inside.

It was the first floor. On the verandah on the other side facing the street, screens, rags and pieces of water-proof clothes were hanging to indicate that the house was occupied by some family. While passing through the verandah, I tried to pull down the clothes, but the officer said rather ironically, “ Don’t remove them. Let them remain as they are ”. This showed that they possessed full information about this house. Long after this I came to know that Comilla information was given by Jiten Sen and Calcutta information by Prabodh Sen, the two one time head of two local units.

Before I proceed further with my story let me quote here the paragraphs in the Sedition Committee Report about this House at 39 Pathuriaghata Street (the head quarters of the All India Secret Anushilan Samiti at the time.)

“ In October a confessing revolutionary in custody pointed out 39 Pathuriaghata Street as the resort of conspirators. The house was searched and among other documents found were cipher lists of names and addresses in seven districts of Bengal and also outside the province. There were also lists

of depositories of arms and bombs.

“ All the addresses in Bengal were searched and the results have been investigated by us. In all but one or two cases these results were of more or less importance, but we only take one as an illustration. One of the addresses at Faridpur was ‘ N. N. Chatterjee Hemanta Mukerjee, Pleader ’. Hemanta was Chatterjee’s uncle, with whom he lived. Another address was ‘ Prabodhendu Mohan Roy, 32 Sonarpura, Benaras

“ A letter was intercepted written to this man from Bijnore in the Punjab. The writer was traced as Prabhudayal Mehta, resident of Rohani, Punjab. This man was arrested and in his possession was a book with nine addresses in the Punjab and also a suspicious letter of the 12th December, 1916, from Jabalpur giving the address of a student at Jabalpur to whom Prabhu should write. This led to enquiries at Jabalpur and the police was led to believe that there was a branch of the Dacca Samiti there, of which among others one Sailendranath Ghosh was a leading member. He was arrested and his letters intercepted. One came to him from Vinayak Rao Kapile from Calcutta. On the back in the cipher was the name of...Calcuttawas arrested there and in his possession were cipher lists like those at No. 39 Pathuriaghata Street, containing, among others, the name of N. N. Chatterjee of Faridpur, with whose name the story started. Thus by following up a Benaras address given in the.....,

No. 39 Pathuriaghata Street, one is led from Benaras to the Punjab, from the Punjab to Jabalpur in the Central Provinces and from Jabalpur back to Calcutta and there a new list is found containing a name of Faridpur found independently in the list of No. 39 Pathuriaghata Street, from which we started." (p. 106)

To resume my narration, early next morning Sisir Kumar Datta Gupta, an absconder from Comilla, came to 39 Pathuriaghata Street from French Chandernagore. He had two revolvers wrapped in a small bundle. He was arrested by the C. I. D. men inside. At about 9 a. m. Jogendra Das Bhattacharya, was entering the house and the C. I. D. officials tried to arrest him. He fired a shot and tried to run away. But he was followed and arrested.

Just at about night fall Atindra Mohan Roy, the then leader of the Violence Department, came to the house. He called me by my name, abused me for not lighting the house even after night fall and went up the staircase. But as soon as he was about to enter the room he received a heavy lathi blow. He turned and ran for safety. But a man caught hold of his shirt from behind. Fortunately for Roy, the shirt was very old and half of it remained with the man and Roy dropped through the staircase to the ground. He was hurt, but yet he stood up and ran away. Roy is now at Comilla in East Pakistan. Naren Bannerjee who was also

arrested from Pathuriaghata house is (now) in the Aurobindo Ashram at Pondichery.

On the Vijaya procession, a day previous to my arrest, I saw a man particularly looking at our house. I reported this to Naren Banerjee next morning when he came. He did not suspect anything. But next night I saw the same man with the search party and came to know that he was an officer in the C. I. D. Inspector Satish Mazumdar was in charge of the police party. The Bengali police officers were in plain dress and the Sergeants were in uniform. Mazumdar started abusive language and was frequently pulling my hair and even slapped me. We proceeded to Jorasanko Thana on foot. Even on the way to the Thana abuses and slaps continued as I remained silent to his questions.

The C. I. D. men left me in the Thana under the charge of a sergeant. He made me sit on a chair while he remained standing. We were talking. Suddenly a European Deputy Commissioner came and ordered me to stand up and asked the sergeant to take off my shoes. The sergeant, though no doubt reluctant to perform this mental act, was constrained to obey him. At his direction the sergeant caught hold of my handcuffed hands. The D. C. started his interrogations. My silence annoyed him so much that he gave me a blow. He then ordered the sergeant to send me to the office and went away. A Bengali clerk of the office told

me in Bengali that I would receive brutal assaults. Soon a Police van came and I was taken to the C. I. D. Office at 4 Kyd Street.

On the first floor of the big police office at 4 Kyd Street lived Mr. Goldy, Dy. Commissioner of Police and on the ground floor was his office. The stable was divided into 3 cells. In the front was the barbed wire door and there were two rows of iron netting walls. Every important revolutionary arrested at that time had to live in these cells.

My shoes were taken off at the Jorasanko Thana and as soon as I entered the new office my coat and shirt were also removed and then I was ordered to be put into the stable. When the sentry took me to the latrine he told me that I would not have any more chance to bathe or drink water. So I drank as much water from the tap as I could. Round midday I was given a dry chapati and a potato. I ate, but it only increased my hunger. I had only a dhoti on and slept in the stable cell spreading half of my dhoti as a mat. In the afternoon I was roused from my sleep by a harsh voice and as soon as I opened my eyes a man started abusing me. With blows and pushes I was brought to the office. A plump man of white complexion and bloodshot eyes was sitting in a chair. This was Manoj Pal, son of a Deputy Collector, who had inherited loyalty to the British. But how he could be so brutal, I do not know. The man who brought me was an office peon. Like peon, like

officer. An armed police man was standing in the room with his rifle. The man seated started filthy abuses and put several questions to me. I remained silent. The officer's intention, of course, was to extort confession. Divulge the Party secrets, get the friends arrested and thereby accomplish the great mission of life, that of being loyal to the British crown—these were the instructions. My silence exasperated this officer. With filthy abuses he started striking me on bone joints so heavily that with every strike the joints swelled. Though I was silent the Bihari armed man could not tolerate the sight and turned his face towards the opposite wall. The officer was drunk and the peon appeared to be jubilant.

After about a dozen blows when he stopped to breathe the joints of my body were so swollen that it appeared as if I were suffering from some peculiar disease. But my silence made him more enraged and more abuses and more strikes followed. He struck my chest and back several times with the end of the stick. Blood came out from different parts of my body and there was suffocating pain in my heart and lungs. I sat on the floor with my hands on my chest. Questions and abuses continued. With nightfall the peon was ordered to bring a cane and brutal caning followed. I was made to lie on the table and my legs were raised and cane strikes went on underneath my feet. It was already late night and the officer had to leave me possibly

for his drinks. I was sent to the stable cell with the strict order that I must not be allowed even to sit. I should be bayoneted on any such attempts. Yet the good sentries allowed me to sleep and instructed me to get up on their raising the alarm. I marked later that there was a sense of general respect for me even in this torture chamber, as on many occasions they showed sympathy for me. All were not brutes like Manoj Pal and his peon. One sentry on duty gave me also a lota of water, which I needed badly after all the inhuman tortures.

One day the drunk Manoj Pal became very angry with me and told the peon to bring pieces of beef from the Dy. Commissioner's cook and push those inside my mouth. Next the idea came to his mind to put urine etc. in my mouth. No sooner did he express an idea than a man in European costume jumped at it and helped in its execution. Owing to tortures, starvation and sleeplessness I was extremely weak. They caught hold of me and forced my mouth inside the commode. When I was on the point of being suffocated they released me. Then they poured the urine mixed with excreta all over my body and locked me in the cell. For three days they did not allow me to have a wash. After three days I got the first chance of a wash in the Calcutta Presidency Jail.

Inspite of the arrests, tortures and slackening of discipline, work of the party went on vigorously. The war news also was encouraging and created

hopes in the minds of the revolutionaries. Britain was terribly afraid and the next year in August 1917, Mr. Montague, the Secretary of State for India, came to India, peddled help and declared in Calcutta that after the war India would be given the right of self determination. Because of such promises leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Surendra Nath Banerjee and others lectured and worked in support of war efforts. But the turbulent youth did not like the idea. They were sure that nothing tangible could be had through compromise. This resentment of the revolutionaries came out in the open when a student threw a shoe at Surendranath Banerjee when he was lecturing in a meeting held at Lahore.

When the administration becomes weak, the police rule is established. Revolutionaries were direct actionists and therefore they were the most formidable enemies of the British raj. They had to be suppressed if the administration was to be carried on. The necessity became more pressing during the war, so brutal tortures were carried on. I was one of the worst victims because I escaped from Comilla and was arrested in Calcutta in the Headquarters of the Party Organisation. In spite of all my efforts many of the secrets were known to the police as our district organiser had himself given much information in detail.

During the First World War the Government opened the Special Branch of the C. I. D. in

Calcutta to cope with the revolutionary activities and in 1916-17 the amount of Rs. 1, 400, 000 was sanctioned for it. We now read with creeping sensation about the torture chambers of the feudal days. Stories of Spanish Inquisition repulse us. But seldom did the outside world know that medieval tortures were being continued by the British Raj in India. From the point of view of brutality, British tortures on Indian revolutionaries can easily be compared with the brutalities of any other regime of terror in any part of the world.

To come back to my plight in police custody : From the torture house Sisir Kumar Datta Gupta and I were separately brought to the Dallanda House. The elderly officer in charge, a European, saw the marks all over my body. I could walk, but with difficulty. Sisir had high temperature as a result of the torture. Our names had already been entered into the Register. After that the European Officer in Charge saw our condition and refused to take us under his custody. By chance the army doctor of the Police Training School also came there. The doctor had seen Sisir that morning at the Kyd Street office and prescribed medicine. He also complained to the officer. So we both were sent back to the Kyd street office (the torture house) from where we were sent to the Presidency Jail, Alipore. But I had to wait for two years to ventilate my grievances even to the higher authorities of the Government. In 1918 I got the first

chance to do so from the Rajshahi Central Jail in a petition to the then Viceroy of India, extracts from which were published by Ramananda Chatterjee in the August issue of the *Modern Review* of 1918 with the headline : “ A State Prisoner’s Petition”. Let me quote :

“ Early last month we received a copy of a petition submitted to His Excellency the Governor General in Council by one Jogesh chandra Chatterjee, a State Prisoner, now in Rajshahi Central Jail. It contains allegations of incredible cruelties and revolting ill treatment. One extract from it will suffice. The prisoner thus described what happened on the fifth day after his arrest : “ That on the fifth day at about 5.00 P. M. I was again taken to the office of Kyd Street. There the officer of the first day, according to the proposal of an officer in European costume, called his men and they took me to the latrine. There one man took hold of my hands, another my head and the officer in European costume pressed my nostrils and the Sweeper Mehtar put a commodeful of urine mixed with stools and thrust and poured it all over my face. Then they kept me in my cell and did not allow me to have a wash. All these days I was not allowed to take my bath and got only 2 or 3 luchies for food and that, too, not every day.”

EDITOR’S COMMENT : “ We do not know whether this petition has reached the Viceroy’s

hands. If it has, the public should be informed what has been done with it. If it has not, it is to be hoped His Excellency will order it to be placed before him, and cause an open enquiry to be made.”

Various were the methods of torture at Kyd Street. My legs were forcibly taken apart, one leg standing about two feet away from the other and an iron bar was put between my two legs to prevent me from drawing them together. In this position I was made to stand for hours. When this failed to accomplish their purpose, they kept the lower part of my body on the table while the other portion remained suspended in the air. This was also done for hours together. When even this was not enough, the police took recourse to a peculiar method of torturing me. They stripped me naked while my hands and feet were chained. Then one man masturbated with me for hours. This they did to make me a nervous wreck. Such and many other inhuman tortures were perpetrated on me and other revolutionaries who were arrested in that period.

A leader of Anushilan Party, Nalini Kanta Ghose, was being transferred from the Kyd Street office after torture to Dacca Jail for trial. On the way he succeeded in sending word outside. By this way the news of brutal tortures on revolutionaries found a place in the newspapers. Mrs. Annie Besant challenged the Government on this ;

and long after this a whitewashing committee was appointed to enquire into the matter. This committee did nothing. Had there been any real enquiry many things would have been revealed. For example, the records in my and Sisir Datta Gupta's names in the Register of Dallanda House would have been a convincing proof of the tortures perpetrated on us and the record in the Register of Presidency Jail of the marks all over my body, which did not exist after a month, could have convinced anybody about the tortures perpetrated on us.

Akhil Chandra Datta of Comilla as the President of the Provincial Congress Conference held in Hooghly, expressed his feelings against the ill treatment of revolutionary detenus and said that this was the "massacre of the innocent". But the Anglo-Indian papers as the mouth piece of the alien rulers, raised a hue and cry against Datta's words. He was hardpressed to withdraw the words. Local papers supported him firmly and B. G. Tilak wrote to him to stick to his stand. Of course Datta was firm.

Tortures have been perpetrated on many important revolutionaries. In some cases the police was successful in extorting confessions. But all this failed to suppress the movement. Even when some people were acting as police informers, the movement went on quite vigorously. Various devices were adopted by the revolutionaries to save them-

selves from being detected by the police. Umbrellas played a big part in avoiding detection by the watchmen in prominent places like the railway station, bazar and streets. There were various methods of cipher writings. The police had experts for deciphering ; but they often failed to know the code word. The man through whose information the Pathuriaghata Street search took place also helped in deciphering the ciphers found in the house by the C. I. D. This was a big help to the police.

To resume my story, “ 44 Cells ”, of the Presidency Jail, where I was lodged, created a history. The under trial prisoners of the first Alipore Bomb Case were detained there. Shri Aurobindo occupied one of these cells. Revolutionaries under capital sentence in Calcutta were kept in these cells before their execution. The scaffold was situated just behind these cells. In fact one of the cells had a door opening to the scaffold. Kanai Lal Dutta and Satyendra Nath Bose were hanged there in 1908, and so was Gopinath Saha in 1923 and many others. Revolutionaries under transportation for life were kept in these cells prior to their transfer to the Cellular Jail in the Andamans.

I was lodged in Cell No. 6, the very cell in which the famous Bengal revolutionary of Anushilan Samiti, Trailokyanath Chakravarty, was kept. I saw on the wall clearly written a stanza from an inspiring poem by Rabindranath Tagore and under the stanza was the name ‘Maharaj’, —

legendary Trailokyanath's secret name. On another side wall he wrote a few lines and signed "Kalicharan", his other secret name and yet on another wall was his own composition in verse bidding adieu to Mother India before his departure for the Andamans and hoping to come back again and devote the rest of his life in her service. I still remember the few lines written in Bengali. Underneath was the signature, Biraja, another secret Party name. As I know all these Party names, I was sure that Trailokyanath was kept in this cell before his transfer to the Andamans, only a few months before my arrival. This gave me encouragement and accentuated my sense of responsibility and determination.

I stayed in "44 Cells" that time only for a month. The cells had no windows. The only inlet for air was a hole in the roof.

Parallel to the main high boundary walls were two rows of cells, 22 in each row. In between were two big open yards. The European Warder-in-Charge had a seat in the middle from where he could watch both the sides. Gurkha military personnel were kept on duty with their open Kukries. No Indian jail warder was allowed to enter this yard. Even the jail doctor had to take permission of the European Warder-in-Charge when he had to come in and the doctor was to talk with us in English in the presence of the European Warder.

I was brought to the cell in the evening. I was

in semi starvation condition in the torture house and hence I enjoyed that evening's ordinary jail diet because I got a bellyfull for the first time after my arrest. I also enjoyed a very sound sleep in the night. The next morning the Warder awakened me. The Superintendent and the Jailor were to come on their morning round and preparations were completed. There was the shout " Sarkar Salam " ("Salute to Government ! ") and then passed the Superintendent under a big umbrella, the Jailor following him.

At noon the European Warder came before my cell with a very big Register in which my name etc. were entered. Special marks of the body were also noted. The young Warder seemed to be a new man. There were marks of beating all over my body. He asked who beat me and in reply I said that C. I. D. people had done so. Yet he noted down in the Register all the marks of beatings I had on my body.

One noon I was taken to the jail office. A European officer was seated there. After my entry the door was closed and I was told to sit on the opposite side of the table. He then started interrogations. I was silent, as was the case in the torture chamber. He started writing, " I came to Calcutta from Comilla by aeroplane, etc." and asked me to sign it. He had a big sized revolver on one side and a batton on the other. On my refusal to sign, he freed his shirt sleeves from his wrists, stood up with

the batton in his hand as if to start beating me. I also made myself ready to counter-attack as there was no other person in the room. I thought that this was perhaps another torture chamber. But after this menacing attitude the officer sat down on his chair, rang the bell and asked the man who brought me there to take me back to my cell. I came to know later that this was Mr. Colson of the C. I. D. the prosecutor of the Barisal Conspiracy Case.

After a month's stay in the jail myself and Naren Banerjee were taken out one evening and lodged in the cells of the Police Training School in the Dallanda House. I came to know afterwards that this was necessary because under the Defence of India Act a man could not be kept in jail for more than a month. So we were brought to Dallanda House again. Similar was the case with many others. We were to be kept in jail under Regulation III of 1818 as State Prisoners. This required sanction from the Government of India, Pending this sanction important revolutionaries were kept here. On two occasions two leaders of Anushilan Samiti had escaped from Dallanda House detention. One was Nalini Kanta Ghose and the other was Prabodh Chandra Das Gupta. Meanwhile a lot of correspondence went on between the different authorities of the Government. I come to know about these much later. So let me quote the relevant portions from these correspondences.

National Archives, New Delhi, Home-Poll-
1917-January 364-372 and K W Part—A.

Extracts from the above file of Archives :—

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Statement of Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee of
Gaodia, PS Lohajang, Dacca.

“ My name is Jogesh Chandra Chatterji. My father’s name is Bepin Chandra Chatterji. He keeps a timber and corrugated iron sheeting shop at Daulatkhan, Barisal.

I am aged 20 and am unmarried. We are 3 brothers.....and 3 sisters... ..

I was educated in the Comilla Victoria School, from where I matriculated in 1915. At Comilla I have been living all alone in the house of my maternal uncle, Bisweshwar Chatterji, pleader in Sonarang Compound. I joined the Comilla College in 1915 and then read upto 2nd year IA class.

I left my place of resort about a week ago. The police arrived to search my house about a month ago. They said they wanted me. I gave them the slip by the back door on the pretext of going for a wash. This search took place about a month ago. After escaping from the house I went and took shelter in the house of a poor man in a village—some distance from Comilla (says again not Comilla) by giving bribe of Rs. 7. I will not give out the name of the village or the name of the man with whom I took shelter.

I then met some Sinha in Comilla, who

brought me down to Calcutta. I will not give out the name of the man as I took a vow not to give it out. He comes from East Bengal. He brought me to Calcutta and took me to the house at 39, Pathuria-ghata Street. He left me there saying that he would meet me later on.

I have saved Rs. 60 from the money which used to be remitted to me from time to time by my father while I was residing at Comilla. I have still Rs. 40 left with me in 4 GC notes of Rs. 10 each. The rest I spent in travelling and my fooding expenses here. I refuse to make any further statement.

8th October, 1916. Recorded by B. Mukherji ”

Note of C. Tegart on Jogesh Chandra Chatterji :—

“It will be seen from the statement of Jogesh Chatterji, a copy of which is attached, that he has declined to account for his conduct, his associates or his movements. He is undoubtedly a dangerous criminal, and should be dealt with under Regulation III of 1818 without delay.

Calcutta,

The 3rd November, 1916.

C. Tegart

for Deputy Inspector General of Police,
Intelligence Branch”.

National Archives, Home-Poll-Jan. 1917-No.
364-372 K W—Dept. A

Page 4 Appendix.

From Hon'ble Mr. J. H. Duboulay KCIE,
CSI, Secretary to the Government of India.

Home Department

To J G Cumming CSI, CIE, ICS Additional
Secretary to the Government of Bengal,
Political Department

No. 3232 (Political) dated Delhi, 25th
November, 1916.

“ Would you kindly refer to your letter No. 5418 of the 9th November in which you send up the names of four persons (Narendra Nath Banerji, Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, Sishir Kumar Dutta Gupta, Jogendra Das Bhattachaya) recommended for treatment under the provisions of Regulation III of 1818. The necessary warrants have doubtless reached you by now, but I am to draw attention to the examination of Jogesh Chatterji by Mr. L. H. Colson. You will see that in one place Mr. Colson warned him that his answers would entirely ruin any chance of mercy, and further on threatened that on the evidence against him he would be punished, and that if he chose to make a full disclosure of his knowledge he might hope that some mercy would be shown him. There are further remarks in the record showing an intimidatory attitude on the part of Mr. Colson against Jogesh. This is not in the opinion of the Government of India a proper method of interrogating an accused person, and if it were believed to be the common practice, it would go far to endanger the credibility of the various statements that have been made by persons dealt with under the the Defence of India

Act and Regulation III of 1818. I am, therefore, to suggest that with the approval of His Excellency the Governor some admonition should be addressed to Mr. Colson so that any examination he may conduct in future should be free from these objectives.”

Note of L. H. Colson on Jogesh Chatterji on
23rd October, 1916.

Note, —

“ This appears to be a very hardened and dangerous youngster. He has been consistantly defiant throughout the proceedings. I forgot to mention I also told him that many leaders of his party had made full statements and he could save neither himself nor the Samiti. To which I received no reply.

The 23rd. October, 1916. L. H. Colson.”

National Archives, Home-Poll-1917-Jan.

364-372 and K. W Part A.

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“His Excellency the Governor General in Council being satisfied that the interests of the state demand the close restraint of the above conspirators (four), has been pleased to direct the issue of warrants under Regulations III of 1818 for their confinement in the Presidency Jail, Calcutta.

Delhi

J. H. Duboulay.

5th January, 1917.

Secretary to the Govern-
ment of India.”

Note to Secretary of State for India :—

No. 1 of 1917

Government of India, Home Department,
Political.

To

The Hon'ble Austin Chamberlain,
His Majesty's Secretary of State for India,
Dated Delhi, the 5th January, 1917.

Sir,

In continuation of our secret despatch No. 15 (Political) dated the 3rd November, 1916, we have the honour to report that we have found it necessary to issue warrants under Regulation III of 1818 for placing under personal restraint the four persons named below, in circumstances detailed in the annexed proceedings :—

1. Narendra Nath Banerji alias " Scientist " alias Pratul S/o Uma Charan Banerji.
2. Jogesh Chandra Chatterji S/o Bepin Chandra Chatterji
3. Sishir Kumar Datta Gupta S/o Nagendra Kumar Datta Gupta
4. Jogendra Das Bhattacharya alias Jogendra Nath alias Master Babu alias Jyoti alias Justidhar alias Dada, alias Maharaj S/o Haridas Bhattacharya.

We have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient humble servants

R. S. Craddack

W. S. Meyer

C. H. A. Hill

C. Shankaran Nair

G. R. Lowndes

DALLANDA HOUSE AND KYD STREET C. I. D. OFFICE

To come back to the Dallanda House, I saw there the two leaders of Comilla, Prabodh Sen of Anushilan and Jitendra Sen of the Jugantar Party. We were behind the bars but these two were on the opposite side of the big compound. Their cells were not locked any time of the day or night. Yet I did not suspect them. Many days after this I came to know that my Comilla arrest was made on the information of Jiten Sen and the Calcutta house at 39 Pathuriaghata Street, was pointed out to the police by Prabodh Sen. Jiten Sen has died but Prabodh Sen is now a professor in a big institution.

Prabodh Sen had a favourite student at Comilla named Ramesh Bhattacharya, whom he made his assistant. This student as an agent of Mr. Tegart did a good deal of mischief to the revolutionaries, first in North Bengal and then in West Bengal. When he was a student of Bankura College, his College Hostel associates among whom were some revolutionaries including Charu Ghosh, sus-

pected him and even opened his trunk in his absence. They found a letter of Tegart introducing him as an agent. He, too, on his return to his room suspected that his trunk was searched and left the College immediately. Charu Ghosh told me this in Rajshahi Central Jail. In 1923, Ramesh met me at a Ghat of Benaras. He was then a professor in Bengal. As soon as he accosted me, I gave him such a reply that all people present were astonished.

Rai Bahadur Bhupen Chatterjee of the Calcutta C. I. D. used to pay daily visits to the Dallanda House. He visited us casually, but spent much time with the two Sens. Prabodh Sen told me that people, who were detained in Dallanda House were sent to different Jails as State Prisoners and that it was always better to be interned in a camp from where one could escape. He also told me that we should try to escape as new developments could take place in favour of revolutionaries. It was a part of a conspiracy between Sen and Chatterjee. One evening I was again sent to the torture house ; but this time they did not ill treat me much but the food supplied was not edible. Mr. Colson came one day and narrated to me some details of my stay in Faridpur district. I was sure that there was something seriously wrong with our organisation or else how could he know the things which he told me ? This dampened my spirit and I wanted to leave that hell somehow, so that I could be spared the agony of listening to the acts

of betrayals of my own associates.

One day I saw one finely dressed person under police guard. I asked the Havildar about him and he told me that he was from Singapore and was helping the police. He was a Bangkok lawyer who betrayed the Indo-German conspiracy to the police and got a big amount of money in return. He was Kumud Nath Mukherjee. He had a serious difference with "Father Martin" (Naren Bhattacharya, later M. N. Roy) and for this he went to Singapore and gave out all information to the authorities there. In this way the whole Indo-German affair came to the direct knowledge of the British Government and they took all possible precautions. Thus the Indian revolutionaries could not get the German help in their greatest hour of need.

I was restless to leave the hell. I could not understand why they were detaining me. I found that the armed police and the officers doing clerical work were all sympathetic to me. Perhaps it was because they all knew how I had stood firm against all brutal tortures. In fact one day a South Indian clerk told me that Europeans were afraid of dysentery and advised me to approach the Deputy Commissioner and tell him that I was suffering from dysentery. I did so. Promptly after this I was sent to the Presidency Jail. At the Jail gate I met Naren Banerjee, who was also brought from the Dallanda House. We both were sent to the European Ward, where the good cells on the ground

floor were under occupation and so we were kept in cells upstairs.

CALCUTTA PRESIDENCY JAIL

So I was back in the Calcutta Presidency Jail.

The European Ward was a small enclosure in which there were ten cells. It was two storied, five cells on the ground floor and five on the first floor. Naren Sen, the well known leader of Dacca Anushilan was there in a cell. Jogendra Das Bhattacharya and Sisir Kumar Dutta Gupta also came there.

Our cells were locked the whole day. Only one person was unlocked at a time for going to the latrine. We were not supposed to have any talk between us. Here also there was one European Warder who sat on the Verandah and one Gurkha military man was on duty on the first floor. We had no means of communication, no book or newspaper and no association. A portion of Alipore was visible from my cell, as also the back side of the jute mills inside the Jail where prisoners worked. Despite all these precautions we, however, had one means of communication. We were given a slate and a pencil for whiling away our time. So we wrote on the slate and sent it through the Gurkha to others. We wrote on it in Bengali and

exchanged our views when a good warder was on duty. Otherwise we got tired of sitting or walking inside the cell.

After a few months Naren Banerjee and I were suddenly transferred to the 44 Cells. The European ward was much better. The cells were very good and well ventilated. But cells in "44" were very bad.

This time we were detained in the jail under Regulation III of 1818. This Regulation was enacted at a time when the British rule was not well consolidated and was used as a measure to keep the revolting princes under restraint. This they were applying in the present century against their political opponents. Lala Rajpat Rai and Sardar Ajit Singh were its first victims in 1907 followed by nine leaders of Bengal in 1909. During the war the Regulation was applied freely to the revolutionaries. Out of the thousands arrested and detained in Bengal, nearly 140 persons were kept in the jails under this Regulation.

The rules of the Regulation stated in the Preamble ; " A State Prisoner is called a prisoner, because there is no other term to express the idea. The person under whose custody such a prisoner is kept will see whether the allowance fixed for him is sufficient both for himself and his family." This was the spirit of the rule framed by the Government. And what was the treatment meted out to us ?

We were kept inside the cells which had no window. There was nothing in the cell except a small mug of water, an enamel mug and a plate, one blanket and two earthen pots for easing. No reading and writing material was supplied to us even when all of us were young and came from educated middle class families. To remain confined day and night inside cells without anything to do was a terrible strain on our minds and hardly within a year and half three of us turned lunatic. Two were sent to the Lunatic Asylum. The third a Vice-Principal, was interned outside, but within a short time he died in the Medical College hospital. One person was kept in one cell and two cells on either side were kept vacant with the purpose of ensuring of absence of communication between prisoners. Vice-Principal Manindranath Sethi of Daulatpur College was on the third cell on my right. One evening he suddenly started singing a stanza from a song common in Bengal. He sang the same thing again and again and used the mug and the plate to produce the musical accompaniment. He paid no heed to the warder and the same was the case when the jailor came. The Jailor questioned me about him. But I had no personal acquaintance with him.

My father came to see me. A C.I.D. officer was with him to hear the talk and we were separated by two rows of wire partitions. This was disgusting and I finished the interview within a minute

though the allotted time was five minutes. I requested him not to come again. My father left some new clothes for me. But later when I asked for the clothes I was told to write home for that, and I refused to do so. The jail authorities gave me two small pieces of Dosuti cloth, usually given to C class prisoners on release. They were like thick loin cloth which I wrapped round my waist like a lungi.

After three persons had turned lunatic, the authorities became a bit lenient towards us. We were allowed to walk a little in the yard in the morning and evening and books from the jail library were supplied to us. This was a great relief.

The next year my uncle came to interview me. He was pleading with the C I D officer to help him in securing my release. This I resented, and I told my uncle that those were the very people who tortured me brutally to get promotion in their service.

Besides Naren Banerjee, my friend Atindra Mohan Roy, Jiban Thakurta of Faridpur, Jiban Chatterjee of Vikrampur and a relation of mine, Suresh Chakravarty and Sisir Ghose and many others were there. Atin, Suresh and Sisir participated in the murder of Rai Bahadur Basanta Chatterjee. But the police had no concrete evidence against them. Another prisoner who joined us was Krishna Lal Saha of Faridpur. He had many exploits to his credit. But for reasons best known to him he faltered from the path of the revolu-

tionaries and gave information to the police which led to the police raid of Gauhati in which there was a regular fight between the police and some other important revolutionary leaders.

A number of political prisoners used to be brought to the jail and taken out. We used to see them walking in and out of the cells. But we could not contact them. Once two Muslims came and stayed for some time in our cells. They were not revolutionaries. They were Khilafatists and were against the Britishers because Turkey was England's enemy.

The Superintendent of the Jail, Lieut-Colonel Thomson, was a dry sort of man, devoid of any human sentiment. From the beginning to the end I was never on good terms with him. He derived sadistic pleasure in oppressing not only us, the political prisoners, but also the ordinary criminals. He did not think that the prisoners were human beings.

When we were in the European ward there was one habitual convict, a non-Bengali hardened criminal. He came there as a cleaner of the Ward. When the Warder on duty was a lenient man, this cleaner would come in front of my cell and talk to me for hours on the conditions of prisoners in the jail. He also spoke of officials, warders and doctors. He was very bitter against the Superintendent, who never cared to hear any complaint of the prisoners. From his talks I got a good deal of information on

the general conditions prevailing in the jail. He was an illiterate man. On his request I used to write letters for him. These letters he smuggled out. And from what I wrote for him I knew he had intimate relations with a big gang of criminals, many of whom were in Alipore jail. He was ready to be my messenger in return. But I felt I could not trust him that much.

The Jailor, Mr. Hill, an Irishman, amassed much wealth extorting bribes from prisoners and also by stealing from the jail supplies. We were not much concerned with him and he met us very rarely. On the eve of his going home on long leave, one night he had a serious attack of high blood pressure and expired within a few hours.

The District Magistrate, Mr. Prentice, I. C. S. used to visit the jail once every month. But he was never in a mood to hear anything. He had a patent reply "Tell my friend, Colonel Thomson, the Superintendent." So we were also indifferent to his coming and going. Prentice developed a sentimental attachment to Bengal and its coast line. Many years later I learnt that after his death his body was cremated and the ashes were thrown into the Bay of Bengal according to his wishes.

My father had met the then Home Secretary Mr. J. G. Cummings. The latter told him that he had seen me in jail and that I was in good health. He told my father that although he was a very good man, I was very turbulent and misled. Mr.

Cummings came to see us only once. As soon as he heard my name he looked at me sharply and went away saying, "You were arrested in the Pathuria-ghata house."

Sir Walter Buchanan was the Inspector General of Bengal Jails. He also paid us a visit. The jail was cleaned and whitewashed and everything was made neat and clean. He simply passed by our ward accompanied by the officials ceremonially but did not exchange a word with me or any one of us. I spent in total nearly a quarter of a century in the Bengal, Bihar, U. P. and Punjab jails, and I never again saw such an imperial I. G. of Prisons anywhere, neither did I meet another I. G. P. with a title of Sir.

Mr. Tegart also came once to our ward ; but did not talk with any one.

Mr. Hugh Stephenson, Additional Secretary, Government of Bengal, used to pay monthly visits to the jail. He used to stay for long and had talks with individual prisoners. We all knew that he was making a keen study of the subject. He was later knighted and became the Chief Secretary and then Home Member and officiated as Governor. After retirement from the I. C. S. he became the Governor of Bihar and after that the Governor of Burma. All these visits made it clear to us that the Government was much concerned and perturbed over the actions of their direct enemies—the revolutionaries.

After Lord Ronaldshay's visit a slight change in our plight was effected. But even then our condition continued to be miserable. In all fairness it must be said here that the conditions in the New Alipore Central Jail were much better, thanks to the efforts of the Jail Superintendent, Colonel Malvini, an Irishman.

Colonel Malvini was strict in the observance of rules. He did not illtreat a political prisoner even if pressure was brought on him. Unjust directives even from the Central Government failed to change his attitude. He managed the jail affairs in England perfectly and for that reason he was given the charge of constructing the New Alipore Central Jail on the English model. After the construction of the jail he was appointed Superintendent of the jail and also acted as the Deputy I. G. of Prisons. But he had to lose his job because of his strict adherence to jail rules even in the case of revolutionary prisoners. The Government brought pressure upon him to act differently ; but he did not budge. After some years the newspaper *Forward* founded by Deshbandhu C. R. Das, published some letters sent to Colonel Malvini by Government of India. These letters gave an inkling of the plight of the political prisoners and also showed Colonel Malvini's integrity.

At the approach of the summer of 1918, almost all of us were sick and some lost their mental balance. The Superintendent wouldn't even

allow me to send an application for transfer. But eventually when it was allowed by the District Magistrate the reply came from the Government within two weeks that "Government are not prepared to transfer you." My health was so bad that a minor operation on my foot took more than a month to heal up and I was getting only one motion in a week, and that too, after taking a double dose of saline purgatives. This reply was intolerable to me. Without a sound body what would be the value of my life? The Government was determined to kill us slowly and I could not think out what was to be done.

HUNGER STRIKE

One noon no sooner was the plate of food served than I kicked the plate away. The Warder asked the reason but I was silent. The Jailor came and I told him that I would not touch food unless either I was transferred to some other jail or conditions were improved. I learnt soon that all the ten political prisoners also did the same. So it took the form of a hunger strike, though I had no such idea when I kicked away the plate. I could not even dream then that on a later occasion I was destined to break the world record in hunger strike behind

the bars. From the next day the Superintendent stopped visiting our ward. The District Magistrate came and I gave him in writing that either I must be transferred or given better treatment ; or I shall fast unto death. All others, I learned later, did the same.

For five days nobody came near me, neither the Superintendent nor the Jailor nor the Warder. On the sixth day, after noon, three of us were taken out, weighed and then locked again in the cells. In the evening we all three were marched to the jail gate with our kits. Three European sergeants took charge of us, I was sent to Rajshahi, Atin Roy to Dacca and Jiban Thakurta to Midnapore jails. Myself and Atin Roy met again at the Sealdah Station. Though we were fasting for six days, we two friends enjoyed the evening at the station after nearly two years in hell. We also took some fruits and sweets because the main grievance was redressed as we were being transferred. The victory in the fight also gave us much pleasure. What happened in the new jails we would see. The train journey I enjoyed so much that I could not sleep the whole night. In the morning we boarded a steamer on the great river Padma—a river with which I grew since my childhood. I enjoyed the steamer journey to my hearts content. My dishevelled hair, grown beard and pale face attracted the attention of other passengers, particularly because of the police guards. But I was absorbed in enjoy-

ing the steamer breaking the waves and passing from place to place. And the sweet, humid breeze from the river Padma was playing with my long hair. I felt like jumping into the water and playing a thing which we enjoyed so much in our childhood. My mind ruminated on the sweet memories of the mighty rivers. Suddenly my dream was broken at the harsh horn of the steamer and when I looked at the other passengers they were all busy preparing to get down with their baggage.

I now saw that the time was near to enter another jail. Who knows what would be the situation there? At any rate shortly I would again be locked behind the high walls, only heaven knew for how long!