

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CHITTAGONG SAGA

(1929-1942)

Topography

The most beautiful spot in the whole of undivided India where nature in her unstinted bounty has lavished her best treasures—the pleasing rich fields, evergreen forests on hills and hillocks running everlastingly, silently flowing streams coursing for the restless sea stretching in vast expanse nearby,—became the centre of the most heroic deed unparalleled in the history of revolutionary actions in India and elsewhere.

The political history of Chittagong from the time of resurgence of militant nationalism is a romantic one.

The name of SURYA SEN redounds to the glory of India and would become a by-word in every Indian home for everything that goes to the making up of an uncompromising, dauntless revolutionary fighter out for the emancipation of his country from foreign thralldom at the cost of bitterest suffering that leaves indelible landmarks on the difficult path leading to the goal.

The topography of the district needs a little elaboration for the proper understanding of the adventurous assault on the citadels of British power and the still more perilous task performed in the course of retreat. If the hills, forests, creeks and scattered human locations had made movement and escape difficult, they had also aided the insurgents in finding places for hiding even before the very nose of the police and the military.

The entire district consists of a long and narrow strip of coast backed by low ranges of hills, lying between the Bay of Bengal and the Chittagong and Arakan Hill Tracts. The level strip of land between the coast and the first of these ranges is

intersected by numerous large tidal creeks. The principal rivers of the district are the Karnafuli and the Sanga both of which are navigable throughout the year. The five principal hill ranges in the district are (i) the Sitakund; (ii) the Goliasi; (iii) the Satkania; (iv) the Mashkal; and (v) the Teknaf Range.

The Chittagong town is situated on the right bank of the Karnafuli, about 12 miles from its mouth.

"The town is interspersed with small hills which are very steep and with the exception of one or two no one can drive to the top of any other. Karnafuli looks like a garland of flowers from the neighbouring hill-tops. The undulating pathways look like huge snakes gliding along its own course at times disappearing at turns and wayside bushes and tall trees, and so erratic in their configuration as to render any description impossible. . . . From the summits of the main ranges the view of the apparently sea of forest is grand in the extreme. Viewed from these points, the lower jungle almost assumes the appearance of a level green plain, while in reality it is one of the most difficult countries to pass through that can be imagined."

The Background

Chittagong had all along been in the front rank of revolutionary political movement in India and it had been well represented in the deliberations relating to the political future of the country.

Along with the Congress views, revolutionary ideas were not slow to occupy the minds of a group of young men. During World War I, Chittagong did not escape incarceration of young men without trial along with hundreds of others arrested throughout Bengal. There was an attempt on the life of a spy on June 19, 1914, which killed his companion instead.

The same spirit persisted till Gandhiji came out with his weapon of non-violence for attainment of Swaraj within a year. It had got to be given a fair trial though most of the top-ranking revolutionary leaders never put any great faith in the avowal. They extended their support in the belief that revolutionary ideas and activities at most could be accepted and followed by a handful of men because of its attendant sufferings whereas for mass political consciousness Gandhiji's programme had a better chance of application.

The expected did not happen and the enthusiasts of Chittagong became impatient. A big conference was held in

Chittagong in 1922, to assess the results and to indicate a future course of action. When it was over, the supporters of violent methods decided amongst themselves to proceed along their own line and steps were adopted to secure funds for their purpose. The Paraikora dacoity was committed in 1923. A big sum of railway money was robbed on December 23 of the same year at Noapara. In the meantime efforts were made to join hands with the group that had been trying to organise a rising on an all-India basis.

The idea did not find much favour with the leaders. Moreover, they changed their mind as to the means of collecting funds through plundering of private and or public funds, as it entailed worries and expenses in defending workers with probable chances of conviction and losing an active fighter at least for a considerable period. It was decided to get the money, and if possible weapons, with the help of party men from their respective homes.

Then came another spurt in mass arrests on suspicion and detention in prison without trial in 1925. All the leaders were thrown into prison and had to wait till their release in 1928. During the period of forced idleness the prisoners had the opportunity of meeting others from different districts and to discuss about the timing of an armed rising in individual districts where the preparations had been fairly complete.

The volunteer corps in full military uniform organised in connection with the Indian National Congress held in Calcutta in 1928, served as an inspiration to Chittagong leaders and it was not very long when they had one for themselves.

The incarceration of suspects in Chittagong during the period 1925-28 did not fail to take its toll by at least one.

When the release of prisoners had just started in 1928, an internee, ANURUP CHANDRA SEN died, a few weeks before his release was expected, in internment at Mainaganj on April 4, 1928.

In 1929 the district of Chittagong became restless for action, whereas they had to face a severe opposition from supporters of non-violence.

The District Youth Conference was held on 11, 12 and 13th May, 1929, where the difference between the two groups came on the surface. It was just a manifestation of a typical undercurrent that had been agitating the political workers in every other district.

By the end of the year matters came to a head when the unfortunate incident of a murderous assault gave a foretaste of coming events.

Violence of the Non-Violent

With the realisation of a sense of failure of the Non-violent Non-co-operation Movement the leaders of the Chittagong Congress Committee thought of preparing the district for a revolutionary showdown with the authorities. It became necessary as an auxiliary measure to have effective control over the Chittagong Congress Committee and prepare the district for the coming struggle.

SURYA SEN began to organise the party for the final stage and came fully prepared for the annual general election of the Executive Committee. The election took place on September 21, 1929, and it went against the votaries of non-violence, the supporters of the oncoming Civil Disobedience Movement then in the offing. It was a stormy meeting where temper was frayed and an ugly event climaxed the day-long uneasy atmosphere. SURYA SEN, NIRMAL SEN and a young boy of 15, SUKHENDU BIKASH DATTA, were attacked with daggers by some men known to be ruffians in the locality. The injuries of Surya and Nirmal were not very serious but young Sukhendu had a severe thrust on his spinal column from a tapered bar of iron.

Sukhendu did not improve under the treatment available in Chittagong and better medical aid was deemed absolutely necessary for him. He was taken to Calcutta and admitted to the Carmichael Medical College Hospitals on October 9, 1929.

All possible medical aid was given to him but by October 23, Sukhendu showed signs of sinking very fast, his lower limb being completely paralysed. He complained of constant severe pain in his stomach and septic poisoning of the kidney was detected.

Surrounded by the top-ranking leaders of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee including Subhas Chandra Bose, the unfortunate boy breathed his last on October 27, 1929, at 10-17 p.m. His body was cremated at the Nimtolla Burning Ghat in the presence of a large number of Congressmen and affectionate friends and admirers of the lad. Thus young Sukhendu was the first victim of a movement which claimed many more in its wake.

His *sradh* ceremony was performed on November 26, 1929 at Dewanbazar.

The Armoury Raid

Preliminaries

Undeterred, the youthful enthusiasts proceeded with their preparation for a big action that would demonstrate to the world the awakening of the sleeping lion. The group under *Master-da* and his few chosen lieutenants became very active. Several centres for physical exercises of a strenuous sort were undertaken. Route march, bending of iron rods, holding a running motor-car in check, lathi, sword and dagger play, and boxing in particular were regular feature of the new spurt of enthusiasm.

Their activities did not fail to attract notice of the police. Towards the middle of November 1929, an additional staff of twenty-four constables was brought to Chittagong to keep a strict watch over the suspects.

In February 1930, a *mela* was held at Sitakund where leaders were seen dressed in khaki breeches and coat, with helmet on head and shoulder-badges like military captains.

By the end of March 1930, there came a further additional force of twenty-two constables to keep vigilance under a new scheme. Activities of the ex-detenus and their associates increased very much about that time necessitating a constant special watch over them. They were seen, even at odd hours of night, going round in khaki dress and in military costume, collecting funds, learning motor-driving, purchasing big torchlights and water-bottles, etc.

The police was happy to the extent that these young men could keep the notorious goonda element in the town and suburbs under control and highway outrages, assault, robbery, kidnapping, molestation and the like were reduced to the minimum.

At the Satyagraha meeting held in the Jatra Mohan Hall on March 21, 1930, the speakers declared that they were going to break the Salt Law and the Law of Sedition shortly and appealed to the audience to help them in their noble mission in every possible way.

Leaflets were widely distributed in the town and at various other quarters supporting the views expressed in the meeting.

At 2-45 a.m. on March 29, 1930, TRIPURA SEN, one of the suspects, was seen clad in khaki shirt and coat with soft hat on head and a torchlight in hand coming on cycle from the north of the Municipal School. No sooner had he found a watcher on his way, in a moment he took a separate bylane and disappeared.

The usual meeting places were the Congress Office, Sadarghat Physical Culture Club, Sadarghat Jetty, Lotus Cinema, Cinema Palace and the house of one of the leaders.

The party, better known as the *Indian Republican Army*, Chittagong Branch, made arrangements for watching the District Intelligence Branch Office, through trusted and highly intelligent members of the Party. At a secret meeting of the principal leaders, 'the day' (*der tag*) was fixed and the followers were given an S O S call to get ready for something great that might lead either to glory or to grave.

Preparations were delayed by the explosion of a bomb in February 1930, in the house of RAM KRISHNA BISWAS when he and AMARENDRA NANDI got severely burnt all over. This was followed by another with ARDHENDU DASTIDAR. Ram Krishna and Amarendra were incapacitated due to their wounds to join the Party, while Ardhendu participated in 'the Raid' when he had not fully recovered.

• The Assault

Everything was ready for the assault. A chart containing details of the point of attack was prepared. It also showed mobilisation and disposition of forces, arms and explosives.

The plan was to simultaneously attack and capture the armoury, magazine, guard's room and the barrack of the Police Line;

to attack and to seize armoury, magazine and the guard's room of the British Auxiliary Force located in Pahartali Polo Ground;

to attack and to destroy the Telephone Office, the Telegraph Office and to snap wires of both systems of communication wherever seen;

to tamper with the railway lines at Dhoom to prevent succour coming to the authorities from Calcutta and Dacca;

to carry out massacre of Europeans to strike terror into their hearts so that instinctively their first attempt would be to leave Chittagong and not to come to the help of the Police.

The *Indian Republican Army*, Chittagong Branch, was composed of about sixty-two men of which the bulk was composed of teenagers, mostly from the schools and new entrants to the colleges. The arms consisted of fourteen pistols and a dozen of .12-bore breach-loader guns and a few bombs and nothing more.

Motor cars were essential for deployment of soldiers and maintaining contact with different points of attack and a powerful one necessary for storming the gate of the Armoury. Cars were secured by overpowering their drivers by physical force and with the help of chloroform. One car was purchased on the day of occurrence.

The time was fixed at 8-30 p.m. of April 18, 1930. For certain difficulties in securing the requisite number of cars which was done by killing Nazir Ahmad, a taxi driver, and the assault started at 10-30 p.m.

The two main attacking parties met at Nizam Paltan at the appointed hour. The army Generals and some of their lieutenants were fully dressed in military uniform with star and other decorations giving them a smart look worthy for the great event.

Leaders with the requisite and available number of men arrived at their respective points of attack and the storming was started punctually at 10-30 p.m. as scheduled.

The Police Line Armoury was located in one extremity of the town. The insurgents appeared in their car and on being challenged by the sentry shot him dead. The others made good their escape leaving the raiders to do as they pleased. Arms and ammunitions were looted, the Union Jack was pulled down and all vestiges of British authority were obliterated.

Similar attack was carried on in the Auxiliary Force Headquarters. The sentry was shot dead. Sergeant Major Farrel was also killed. The armoury room was forced open by tying rope to the lock of the door and fastening the other end of the rope to the back of the newly purchased motor car and setting the car in full motion.

The opposition to the ransacking of armouries was easily overcome and the two groups met together to rejoice over their success.

The cars that passed by the Pahartali Road were attacked by the raiders. The District Magistrate happening to come that way narrowly escaped by leaving his car behind. His *orderly* was killed by a bullet.

The rail line between Doom Dooma and Jararganj, fifty miles from Chittagong, was successfully tampered and a wagon was derailed to block the way.

The telegraph and telephone offices were raided and the two centres of communication were completely destroyed. There being nobody in the European Club due to Easter, the party came back in a depressed mood.

The insurgents were having their way for about four hours when they were attacked from the side of the Water Works with machine-gun fire. This was replied with almost continuous firing by the raiders which, ultimately, silenced their enemy.

The successful *Indian Republican Army*, Chittagong Branch, formed itself into a Provisional Revolutionary Government under the Presidentship of SURYA SEN on April 18, 1930. The immediate task was to uphold and defend the victory just achieved over the enemy, to intensify the struggle for emancipation of the entire country and to take all necessary steps towards their end.

There was again an attack with machine-gun which was promptly and effectively repelled.

Help to the Government came from the Double Moorings Jetty Armoury. But this was also successfully resisted.

Turning Point

During the attack on the Police Line Armoury, a boy, caught fire (p. 471) and had to be removed from the place of occurrence. In removing him four other soldiers had to leave the arena and they finally got detached from the main army, till they met again as accused in the dock.

The enemy, after the first stunning blow, came to gather strength from various sources but they could not do it before some time had elapsed. It was April 20, when Gurkha armed

policemen could be brought from outside and were seen moving about in search of the fugitives. The Gurkhas were strengthened by a contingent of Army to meet the revolutionary forces which had so much undermined British prestige.

The Retreat

By April 21, the police got on the trail of the insurgents who were not more than two miles away from the police scouting squad. The Government received heavy reinforcement by the arrival of the Surma Valley Light Horse and the Eastern Frontier Rifles composed of about 1500 Gurkha soldiers.

The fugitives passed April 19, on the Shulukbahar Hill. On the 20th, they shifted to Fatehabad Hill and with great difficulty secured scanty food, absolutely inadequate for the whole lot of hungry and thirsty warriors. With the best of efforts and at the face of great risk emissaries were sent to town to make an assessment of the situation and to try to establish contact with the other group. The efforts failed.

Jalalabad

It was necessary to get out of the labyrinth of the pathless hills and to find out a place of safety. The morning of April 22 found them near the Jalalabad Hill only three miles from Chittagong.

Here spies and informers were able to notice their presence in the localities. The message was immediately communicated to the headquarters. The heroes of Chittagong were now surrounded on three sides by the police and the military in their lair.

They came by train and other transport and took their position in the neighbouring hill with Lewis gun and rifles. The fight started at 5 p.m. There was a sharp exchange of shots. It was a real military encounter which the British forces had long forgotten to fight in India.

The first martyr was a young lad HARIGOPAL BAUL (TEGRA) who when pierced by the bullet asked his comrades to carry the fight on and not to surrender. Harigopal was clad in dhoti and shirt. He had three wounds, (i) on the right chest measuring 6 in. by 3 in., (ii) on the left thigh and knee, and (iii) a circular

wound in the right knee. He participated in the assault of the Police Line Armoury.

TRIPURA SEN was the next victim. He hailed from Dacca. He had one penetrating wound right through the middle of the chest; no exit wound was found. He was dressed in khaki coat, shirt, short and stockings. He was with Harigopal in the attack of the Armoury.

Now it was NIRMAL LALA, the youngest of the lot. He was not identified by his relations. His last words uttered to a comrade were, "I am going, brother, don't worry. I will receive you there." He was party with Harigopal in storming the Police Line Armoury.

BIDHU BHUSAN BHATTACHARYYA was the fourth man to die. He had one penetrating wound on the left thigh and a bullet wound on the left side of the head. He was clad in khaki short and shirt.

NARESH RAY next collapsed mortally wounded by machine-gun fire. He suffered from one penetrating wound right through the chest. He was clad in khaki short, shirt and stockings. He hailed from Mymensingh. He was deployed to attack the European Club.

Among those who lost their lives on the memorable day on the Jalalabad Hill were SASANKA DUTTA, MADHUSUDAN DATTA, PULIN BIKASH GHOSH (of Gosaldanga), JITEN DAS GUPTA (Goirala) and PRABHAS BAUL.

The battle stopped at 7-30 p.m. when before the heavy firing from the Chittagong heroes the military and the Police had to retire.

They came early on the next morning of April 23, to find ten dead bodies. Among the seriously wounded was MATILAL KANUNGO who when asked just gave out his name. With the last word, *Haribole*, he expired. He had a bullet wound on the left side of his stomach going out by back above the spine a few inches above the waist. He had another bullet wound on the left chest. He was clad in khaki short and shirt.

The dead bodies were collected at one place and cremated on the top of the Jalalabad Hill which became the most sanctified place in the whole of undivided India.

Disintegration

When the military force retired from the locality the *Indian Republican Army* became separated by force of circumstances and each group in its own way sought shelter in various parts of Chittagong. One group made their way for Calcutta, one absconded to Burma. There were further casualties at different places in encounter with the police and the military and each occasion deserves special mention.

Stray skirmishes with heavy loss in the ranks of the fighting units of the Chittagong Division of the *Indian Republican Army* followed the abortive attempt to hold the town under control. The Government forces gained the upperhand and the game for the revolutionaries was lost. It was an example of great ingenuity and courage on their part to keep up the fight as was possible with danger beset all round. Materials were collected to blow up police head-quarters and military barracks, to cause a breach in the prison walls and rescue the captive heroes. On May 11, 1931, an unclaimed and suspicious looking parcel, said to have come from Digara Lost Property Office, was sent to the District Magistrate by the Assam Bengal Railway administration. When it was opened before the Sub-Divisional Officer, it was found to contain 300 live and 20 ball cartridges.

In a vacant house at Jamalkhan rented by men under assumed names, the female members going to clean the room found some wires peeping out of the floor. Following the trail the police who arrived on information, found three canisters wrapped up in oilcloth meant to contain high explosive materials. They were just like the canisters found on the Cutchery Hill a few days before.

Revolutionary to the Marrow

ARDHENDU DASTIDAR belonged to the second group. In his early teens he left the roof of his father due to difference of opinion in political matters with him. He became an active member of the revolutionary party of Chitagong under the able leadership of *Master-da*. Just a few weeks before the storming of the Armoury, he got severely burnt due to an accident in manufacturing picric acid powder meant for high explosive bombs. He had not fully recovered from his injuries when he joined the party that carried out the raid on the Police Line on the 18th. With the main body of the raiders he retired to the Jalalabad Hill. He happened to be the sixth man to be wounded in the exchange of bullets with the British soldiers. He received a deadly wound in his abdomen from the enemy's bullet which rendered him unconscious and he was left on the field as dead.

He regained his consciousness and found another comrade, equally left behind, trying to move himself up and leave the place. The dying man requested him to come near him. Poor Ardhendu with supreme effort hobbled a few yards on the uneven surface of the Hill with a view to gradually muster sufficient strength for leaving the place with the aid of the comrade.

It was an impossible task for him and he surrendered to fate. Seeing his friend hesitant in leaving him behind, Ardhendu importuned him to drag himself out of harm's way as expeditiously as he could. The last request to his parting comrade was to tell his revered *Master-da*, if by chance they happened to meet together, that Ardhendu remembered till his last breath his leader's words, "Liberty or Death."

Ardhendu suffered one wound in the middle of his right arm. His right little finger was fractured and he had a fatal wound on the left side of his abdomen. There was a bandaged wound on the right thigh. This was apparently due to his burns caused by the explosion.

On the next day of the fight, i.e., on April 23, a small group climbed the top of the hill to find Ardhendu Dastidar in a precarious condition. He was removed from the place before it was

10 o'clock and taken in an armoured train to the Chittagong General Hospital where he was admitted at 1-40 p.m. on April 23.

He refused to give out anything except his own and his father's name and all efforts for getting the name of his native village failed to elicit any reply. He would not say how he received the wounds. He was as stern and unbending as the rock. Then the Sadar Sub-Divisional Officer, who had already earned notoriety for easily securing confessional statement from a dying, or may be dead persons, appeared on the scene at night. He asked everybody including the Surgeon who, considering the serious condition of the case, was in constant attendance, to leave the room on the score of avoiding 'golmal' that had been causing, according to the Magistrate, great discomfort to the patient. As directed, every one, the nurse not excluded, had to leave the room. What transpired nobody knew. The Magistrate produced a full confession of gasping Ardhendu during the trial implicating a number of accused in the case.

The Assistant Surgeon had to visit the patient a number of times during the short period of life that was fast ebbing out. The prosecution wanted the world to believe that Ardhendu had made a voluntary confession to him.

Ardhendu struggled with death a few hours more and expired at 1-50 a.m. on April 24, 1930 (the continuing night of April 23).

Penalty for Negligence

When the Auxiliary Force Armoury had been successfully raided, it was decided to set it on fire so that the arms left at the place would be rendered absolutely useless.

HIMANGSU BIMAL SEN took upon himself the task of spraying petrol inside the Armoury to facilitate the work of destruction through fire. He did it all right but in the process he must have sprinkled a quantity of petrol, however small, on his own (clothing) kit. No sooner he had lit the fire, both the Armoury and his body were ablaze.

He got severely burnt all over the body and was bodily lifted and carried to a place away from the place of occurrence by four

of his comrades of whom two were top-ranking 'Generals' in the assault as well as for carrying out the entire plan.

The injured man was taken to Chandanpura area in an abandoned house and left to the care of friends and admirers who might be available for the purpose.

On information the police came in search of the place on April 19, 1930. The officer saw the front door of the house locked and became doubtful about the presence of anybody in the house. Accidentally he heard the sounds of movement of a person on a bedstead inside the house.

He knocked at the door in the front, but another was opened. A man was seen lying on a cot with extensive burns over his face, hands and feet. A young boy was sitting by the patient's bed. Both were put under arrest and removed to Kotwali after the place had been thoroughly searched. From the Kotwali he was transferred to the Chittagong General Hospital where he was admitted at 7-30 p.m. His entire body was besmeared with mud and it caused him intense agony to wash it away. Himangsu made a statement to the police on April 20, when he had been suffering from terrible pain and had almost lost control over his nerves.

The patient developed fever on April 21, indicating the approach of a septic condition from which he died on April 28, 1930, inside the Jail Hospital at 9-10 p.m.

"Died of Wound Self-Inflicted"

Young AMARENDRA NANDI was with the party that had stormed the Police Line Armoury and had somehow managed to stray away from the main party. He was not safe, like all his comrades-in-arms, as the police had been keeping a watchful eye over every nook and corner of the town.

He was noticed on April 24, 1930, in the Graduate High School, which was at the moment lying vacant, with a revolver and a pistol in his hands. The police began a chase after him. He left the school building and running along the highway (Sadarghat Road) took shelter under a culvert in Alkaran Lane. The police instantly appeared on the scene. Amarendra, though

handicapped by his peculiar position, offered a stiff resistance by discharging his firearms with difficulty. He was repeatedly asked to surrender which he refused to do. When Amarendra was silent the police brought him out of his improvised shelter with bullet wounds on his person. He died within a short time after removal to hospital. His wounds were suicidal according to the report of the Civil Surgeon because one of the bullets shot at the chin passed through the head; secondly, because of the blackening of the skin.

There was another injury on the chest. As this did not cause his death, in the opinion of the Civil Surgeon, Amarendra took a second chance which was successful.

Kalarpole Fight

Detached from the main body of the insurgents the absconders in small groups planned for attacking individual centres of power of the Government. One such small party consisting of six young boys, viz., SWADESH RAY, RAJAT SEN, DEBAPRASAD GUPTA, MANORANJAN SEN and two others started from their place of hiding, took a *shampan* on May 6, 1930, to reach the European Club for an attack.

The news of suspicious movements of some men in a *shampan* on the Karnafuli reached the Kotwali P.S. and some officers with a number of armed men rushed in a boat and followed the *shampan* which landed the young men at Lamboor Hat.

When the police boat had reached the middle of the stream a torch was flashed on them. The pursued reached the other side of the river and the police could see five or six such men receding from the bank towards Kalarpole.

The villagers including the President of the Union Board, a Mahomedan, noticed some six men hurriedly passing along the village road. They were variously dressed and each seemed to have a pistol in his hand. The runaways were closely followed by the villagers and challenged at odd crossings. They fired a few shots to avoid arrest which accidentally killed two men at an interval of a few minutes.

Two persons, one of whom was Phanindra Nandy, were apprehended by the villagers. A constable, Prasanna Barua, in trying to arrest one of those men was shot, from the effects of which he died on May 9, just after midnight. The four others who now could be clearly seen proceeded towards east through the field as persons had then been streaming from the west. The race continued and in the meantime a large armed police contingent reached the place under a high police official. As the chase continued men came along the track in driblets and a fairly big crowd proceeded by the route covered by the fugitives. The police party reached a place called Julda, where they were shown a clump of bamboos or a bamboo grove where four persons were seen lying on the ground very close to each other.

A little before daybreak, at Samirpur village, there was sharp exchange of shots for a short while and firing from the bamboo grove completely stopped. At dawn when the police reached the place of shelter taken by the young men and found three of them Debaprasad, Rajat and Manoranjan already dead and the fourth man Swadesh in dying condition. He was arrested but could evade all further troubles as death came handy to him within a few hours of his arrest.

It was found that in addition to other injuries almost every one of them had some homicidal wounds indicating that they had preferred death with their own weapons to falling captives in the hands of the police. All these boys had participated in the Great Raid of April 18, 1930, that had made history in another field of battle. Swadesh and Manoranjan had share in the attack on the Police Line and Rajat, on the Auxiliary Force Armoury.

In the case that was instituted by the Government against the two persons arrested at Kalarpole together with ten others as conspirators, judgment was delivered on March 1, 1932, and all the twelve accused were sentenced to transportation for life.

Chandernagore Raid

Passing through hair-breadth escapes and untold sufferings a party of four insurgents reached Calcutta. They were warmly received as far the circumstances permitted and after several changes in secret shelters, particularly at 6, Raja Basanta Ray Road, Kalighat, they were ultimately lodged in a two-storeyed house in Chandernagore, a French possession in India.

The house was situated in an isolated position, 120 yards west of the river Hooghly, in a place called Gondalpara. It was reached by several narrow lanes off the Grand Trunk Road and was surrounded by a low wall.

On the roof of the second storey was a room used as look-out post. There was a tank inside the compound on the south surrounded by a low mud wall and another on the north of the house, lying beyond the boundary wall.

A party of police, fully armed, started from Calcutta at midnight under their chief and reached Chandernagore at 2-45 a.m. on September 2, 1930. Groping through darkness with the help of veiled torchlight the police got into the compound of the house jumping over the wall and surrounded the house preventing all possible chances of escape.

According to previous arrangement with the French Administration, the chief of the attacking party started to contact the police in Chandernagore and to ask them to be present during the raid and render help if there be any need for it.

He had not proceeded far when firing from both sides broke out and he returned to the place of occurrence.

The inmates of the house could see that strangers had been entering the compound at dead of night and there was no delay in realising the exact position without the least shadow of doubt. All the four of them tried to escape by the back door on the south bordering the tank while simultaneously firing at the police. There was a sharp exchange of shots for a minute or two when one of the besieged party was noticed in a bush on the bank of the tank and was arrested. Two others were arrested within a few minutes without fight. While the fourth man, JIBAN, *alias* MAKHAN GHOSHAL, in an attempt to escape was wounded on

the brink of the tank by the police. He fell into the water and was drowned.

In the room occupied by the absconders were found implements of various sorts, such as, vices, files, saws, chisels, lead lumps, large quantity of aluminium alloy and yellow clay.

The persons arrested at the place were taken to Chittagong and were joined as accused in the main Armoury Raid Case, then proceeding before a Special Tribunal.

Partial Fulfilment

With existence hanging in a slender thread, the heroes of the 'Raid' of the 18th April, could not think of giving up the fight that had begun. From their place of hiding they would try to keep in touch with the world of the police, secure news of their movement and follow them as often as would opportunity come in their way.

The news of a tour of inspection of the Inspector General of Police reached them and decision was taken in secret to attack him during his itinerary. RAMKRISHNA BISWAS and his associate were entrusted with the task. They came out of their shelter with all the attendant risks dogging their footsteps.

After finishing his tour of Chittagong the Police Chief started for Dacca *via* Laksham and Chandpur by the Calcutta bound mail. The train reached Laksham at 2 a.m. Tarini Mukherji, an Inspector attached to the Government Railway Police, boarded the train at Laksham to receive the Inspector General at Chandpur. Finding all the second class compartments occupied, Tarini got into a first class coupe adjoining that of his chief.

One of the assailants, was covered with a green and the other with a red wrapper. They came from the direction of the stall, passed by the Inspector General's compartment and entered a compartment ahead of the one occupied by the I.G. The train arrived at Chandpur at 4 a.m. on December 1, 1930. As soon as it stopped Tarini Mukherji, the Inspector, opened shutters of his coupe and asked the Sub-Inspector of the Chandpur Government Railway Police to open his door.

When this was done Tarini got down from his compartment with the face towards the guard-van and he was saluted by the officers present at the station. In a few seconds two youngmen appeared at the place from the side of the third class compartment and fired several shots at the Inspector from the back. The wounded man staggered and ran towards the overbridge to take shelter under its steps and fell down on the platform. The Sub-Inspector, guard of the Police Officer, disappeared and took shelter in the station room for safety. He was followed a few steps while retiring by the young assailants each with a revolver in hand.

The Inspector General on hearing the sound of firing opened the window of his compartment and saw the attack on the prostrate body of Tarini. He fired through the window but missed the mark and at the second attempt his automatic pistol got jammed and failed to function. His attendant also fired a few shots at the fugitives but missed.

The Inspector General with his armed *orderly* chased the assassins who ran towards the north of the station where a row of wagons obstructed the view of the pursuers and the fugitives disappeared in darkness.

Tarini expired on his way to the local hospital. The pursuit of the young men was continued by other police officers who had in the meantime been informed of the tragic incident. The Additional Superintendent of Police proceeded towards Chandpur in his motor car. When he had just passed the Meherkali Railway Station, about twenty-two miles from Chandpur and the same number of miles from Comilla, he noticed two young men with green and red wrappers on trying to evade him. They were overtaken and the replies they gave to the queries of the Police Officer failed to allay the suspicion that had already overtaken his mind.

A casual search of the body of Ramkrishna disclosed a hard substance seemed to be concealed in his waist-cloth. When the shirt of his comrade was raised a revolver fully loaded was noticed. When Ramkrishna was similarly treated another revolver was discovered on his person together with an aluminium bomb. They were put under arrest at 12-45 p.m.

Both the prisoners were placed before a Special Tribunal on

January 3, 1931. Judgment was delivered on January 24, 1931, sentencing RAMKRISHNA BISWAS to death and his accomplice to transportation for life.

The case was referred to the High Court for confirmation which sat on March 17, and delivered its verdict on March 27, 1931, confirming the sentence passed by the Special Tribunal.

RAMKRISHNA BISWAS was executed at about 1 a.m. on August 4, 1931, in the Alipore Central Jail.

Ramkrishna possessed a combination of great qualities in him. He was a brilliant student in school and stood first in the Matriculation Examination of 1928, in the district. He was a good sportsman and in every type of physical endurance he left his mark. About his revolutionary urge it may be mentioned that he got severely burnt before 'the Raid' in producing picric acid for use in the manufacture of bombs. He overcame it all right inasmuch as such a serious danger to life could not deter him from following the path he chose for his activities.

Simultaneous Release

Like so many younglings who had incurred the wrath of the authorities, SUBODH DE (17) of Chittagong was arrested in connection with the Armoury Raid of April 18, 1930. He was detained under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act in Chittagong when he was transferred to the Presidency Jail in November 1930.

He fell ill and the case was diagnosed to be one of typhoid. There being no signs of improvement under medical treatment in the jail, he was removed to the Medical College Hospital in the first week of April. The case further deteriorated and the patient expired on April 15, 1931. Just a few days before his death, when the physicians had declared the case to be hopeless, the Government were pleased to release him as if to allow him to pass on to the other world without the fetters of the police round his feet.

He was taken to the Nimtolla Burning Ghat by his sorrowing relations and friends and cremated there under a pall of gloom.

Sharp Shooting

From his hiding place, with his life in the palm of his hands, Surya Sen conducted operations of warfare through his 'soldiers', young lads, ready to sacrifice their lives for the cause of the Motherland. He planned for the murder of Ashanulla, Inspector of Police, and selected a boy for the action. He taught his 'pupil' the technique of handling a revolver and shooting at a target.

There was a fixture on August 30, 1931, of a match between the Town Club in which Ashanulla was interested and the Kohinoor team. The game was over. Ashanulla was overjoyed at the victory of his team and annexing the Railway Cup, when all on a sudden a young lad, came close to him, whipped out a revolver and fired four shots, one piercing the victim's heart. Ashanulla fell on the ground with his face downwards and blood gushing out on his back. The man was selected for assassination because he was responsible for conducting the investigation and preparation of the brief of the Armoury Raid Case. He showed excessive zeal in collecting information relating to absconders.

After the incident the assailant did not try to escape. There were three persons standing very close to each other from one of whom Ashanulla had been receiving a warm congratulatory handshake. The boy stood there almost motionless to be sure that his sharp-shooting had secured a definite goal. By the time the victim kissed the ground, the playground had become so desolate that it was not possible for him to get mixed up and lost amongst the throng of spectators standing around the field.

He was arrested by a police officer who came to the place. He was beaten up in the most inhuman manner and removed to the thana in an unconscious state.

Now hell was let loose on Chittagong and the suburbs. Houses of a particular community were visited by the police in accompaniment with the most notorious ruffians known in the town and the countryside. Males between fourteen and forty-five were mercilessly belaboured and literally dragged through the streets to the police station.

The lock-up where these arrested men were put helter-

skelter, like heaps of bags one over the other, blood literally flowed on the floor towards the outlet.

Shops and other private properties were ransacked and looted and in several cases fire was set to them. It was given the name of a 'communal riot' which raged with unparalleled fury for three days and nights without any succour coming from the preserver of peace and order. Reports of stray assaults and dagger thrusts unceasingly reached the headquarters.

Charges of murder and of unlawfully possessing fire-arms were framed by the Sadar Sub-Divisional Officer against the accused on September 16, 1931, and he was committed to the Sessions.

The jury by a majority gave a verdict of 'not guilty' on October 14, 1931. The judge disagreed with the view. The case was referred to the High Court, which, due to the tender age, sentenced the accused to transportation for life on December 22, 1932.

Dire Calamity

Knowing fully well the risk involved in harbouring absconders, respectable ladies with family not unoften came forward to provide shelter to those whose heads carried heavy rewards. Shifting from place to place Surya Sen with his two valiant lieutenants, NIRMAL SEN and APURBA SEN and another young boy came to Dhalghat, a place about four miles north of Patiya Military Camp and ten miles from the Chittagong town.

About 9 p.m. *Master-da* and his comrades almost finished their dinner. A young girl of the house, and in such matters the youngsters of each family had shown considerable tact and discipline, signalled the arrival of a large number of unknown men in the locality.

The house, a two-storeyed mud-built one, was surrounded by the police, and Captain Cameron of the 2/8th Gurkhas and a Havildar, the leader of the party, being almost certain about the presence of the suspects in the second storey went up by outer stairs.

Surya Sen and his young comrade got on the top of the corrugated roofing of the cook-shed by a bamboo ladder and jumped on the ground and disappeared.

The Havildar was ahead of the Captain and while passing through a narrow door was pushed off the stairs and fell to the ground below. A young man, Apurba Sen, armed with revolvers confronted Cameron at a range of a yard and shot him through.

The armed man then dashed down the stairs and was challenged by a rifleman in the compound. As he attempted to escape, the rifleman fired at him killing him outright.

Meanwhile another man, Nirmal, in the upper storey was seen trying to escape by climbing through a window. He was fired at and wounded. He at once got inside the room for protection.

It was late at night when the Havildar thought of bringing in reinforcement from the Patiya Military Camp. He came back with fifteen additional riflemen and a Lewis gun. He increased the guard around the house and started his operations against the room that sheltered the fugitive. He aimed his Lewis gun at a window of the room. Three revolver shots were fired from the window but they failed to hit anybody.

The firing from the Lewis gun continued for some time more and all signs of movement in the room ceased.

The guards remained at their posts for the rest of the night. In the morning in the hedge by the side of the house was found the body of a man who had attacked Cameron. There were two revolvers with him, one in his hand and the other in waist belt.

In the upper storey Nirmal Sen lay dead with several wounds on his body.

The widow, her son and two other inmates of the house, who had given shelter to the absconders were tried and each was sentenced to four years' rigorous imprisonment on October 24, 1932. (*Vide* p. 494)

In Apprenticeship

A mere lad came in contact with the veterans some of whom had been directing operations from secret haunts. SUKUMAR KANUNGO expressed his intense desire to become a member of the revolutionary party with all its attendant dangers.

He was allowed to handle a revolver and given lessons in target shooting. On the fateful day he had finished his practice and retired to a tank for taking his bath with two comrades. Sukumar was under the impression that he had discharged all the bullets from his revolver and was toying with it aiming at his throat demonstrating to his friends the manner which he would follow in case of emergency to shoot himself before he was taken a prisoner. He touched the trigger which released the last unspent bullet and it penetrated through his throat killing him outright.

Out of Remorse

Working amongst his comrades SAILESWAR CHAKRABORTI gradually came to be recognised as one capable of being entrusted with responsible duty.

It was arranged that the Pahartali European Club should be raided on a particular date in September 1932. Saileswar was charged with keeping himself hid in a convenient place very close to the Club premises and to appear with bomb and other weapons at a fixed time.

The time arrived, also the men selected for the attack, but not Saileswar. It was a tense situation for those who had assembled there with only one purpose. Taking stock of the weapons ready at hand and after analysing the whole situation it was decided to disperse.

Saileswar was ready at the place and time but for some reasons or other he missed the right moment.

He joined some of the retiring band who instead of going to their houses took shelter in an abandoned hut. They apparently went to sleep which was reluctant to come after the excitement of preparation and frustration for inaction.

One of the comrades before falling asleep saw Saileswar lying on the mat on his chest with a pen in hand and scribbling on a piece of paper. When it was about 2 a.m. Saileswar was seen in the same position with a drooping head, the face touching the ground. On examination, he was found dead, a small quantity of scattered white powder indicated that he had committed suicide by taking potassium cyanide.

Naturally after retirement he was asked about the cause of his failure to turn up in time but nobody accused him on that score. The cause guessed after the event was that for the first time he was put in charge of the attack on the day of "The Raid". As it was Easter holiday the Club remained closed and the party had to retire without any action.

Now it was a second occasion when the raid failed and it was attributed principally to his remissness. He told his friends in joke that he must have been an 'inauspicious' person and unworthy of doing any responsible work. The idea must have weighed heavily on his mind and goaded him to end his life with his own hands.

A Lady's Turn

The turmoil following the Armoury Raid had abated considerably and the Europeans and Anglo-Indians breathed more freely. Between thirty and forty people assembled at the Assam Bengal European Club, called Pahartali Institute, three miles from Chittagong on September 24, 1932, at 10 p.m. and some of them sat down to a whist drive. Suddenly at 11-30 p.m. a bomb thrown through an open window descended on the floor of the hall creating utmost panic in the assemblage.

The first bomb was immediately followed by others and a succession of shots from muskets and revolvers. About ten or twelve persons were injured as a result of explosion and revolver and musket firings. An old European lady died due to a bullet penetrating her body.

The raid was carried out with lightning rapidity by about fifteen people differently dressed and mostly in masks. The raiders retired quickly before anybody was able to realise the

situation and take any action against the raiders. The hall was now loud with groans of the injured.

All the raiders escaped except a lady in male attire found lying dead about 100 yards from the place of occurrence. It appeared that she died of poisoning self-administered.

The lady was subsequently identified as PRITILATA WADDEDAR, a graduate of the Calcutta University and the Head Mistress of the local Nandankanan Girls' School. She was found missing since the Dhalghat incident on June 14, 1932, where she was definitely present during the raid but was able to effect her escape.

A search around the place showed strewn about three live police musket cartridges, several rounds of revolver ammunition, an empty automatic pistol magazine and several used musket and revolver cartridge cases. One unexploded bomb on the verandah and another in the billiards room were discovered.

A further intensive search of the locality resulted in the seizure of several leaflets, in red ink, issued by the *Indian Revolutionary Army* calling upon youths to join the party and kill Europeans and Anglo-Indians. These were widely distributed in the evening of the day of occurrence.

One of the leaflets began with *Chittagong and Hijli Wrongs*, and referred to the terrible Monday, the 31st August (meaning thereby the Chittagong disturbances following the murder of Ashanulla), while another ended with "Whoever may send Europeans or Anglo-Indians, dead or alive, to the head-quarters of the *Indian Republican Army*, will be rewarded."

A collective fine was imposed on the area on the plea that the local people had not adequately helped the authorities in the arrest of the raiders.

The Reckless Band

If the absconders had been alert the police also became very active. On information supplied by informers and spies the police all on a sudden surrounded a dilapidated house at Jangal-khain near Patiya on November 27, 1932, for some Armoury Raid absconders. Everything seemed to be quiet. The police warned the inmates to keep the peace and surrender without any resistance.

A young man, SHYAM KUMAR NANDI, tried to break through the cordon and was shot dead while another escaped.

The house was searched and a youth with burning wounds, and a doctor were found inside a room. They were put under arrest and brought to the town.

Some acids indicating bombs in the process of manufacture were seized in the house.

Novice's Fate

With the arrest, trial, imprisonment and execution of some of the leaders, the plan for further action was being pursued by the remaining leaders in hiding and for the purpose fresh recruit was always needed.

BIREN DE, quite a young boy came into touch with the absconders and expressed his earnest desire to be of any the least help to those who had been suffering untold privations. He was being trained in target shooting. He did not know that his revolver had still one live cartridge undischarged. Accidentally it went off and penetrated his left groin. Medical or surgical aid was difficult to have. Firstly, from unchecked haemorrhage and secondly, from poisoning of the wound the boy breathed his last leaving his work unfinished to the chagrin of everybody concerned.

'Master-da'—The Master Mind

The celebrity that Chittagong acquired in regard to military preparations and exploits was mainly due to the brain of SURYA SEN that had worked out the plan with a few comrades and made it possible of execution by a band of youngsters mostly in their teens. After the first set-back the Government forces gathered strength and began to ravage the city and the countryside in search of the insurgents.

The frail man, a teacher in a village school, had to take shelter under different roofs when open encounter became inexpedient and out of all possibility. The police was running after Surya Sen with the entire machinery at their command and the story of his evasion from arrest became almost legendary in the neighbourhood. To suit different emergencies he would pass as a Mahomedan hawker, a common cultivator, a woman and what not.

He appeared to have almost a charmed existence as on more than one occasion he was within an ace of being captured, particularly on June 13, 1932, at Dhalghat where he lost two of his most trusted and able lieutenants.

After the Ashanulla outrage on August 30, 1931, the police squeezed out a confession from the assailant that his *Master-da* had chalked out the plan of action for him as also provided him with the weapon itself. The police relentlessly followed up the slightest clue which proved abortive. On the other hand those who could supply the information refused to do so because of danger to their lives or more because of their admiration and reverence for him.

Surya Sen with three other comrades took shelter in Goirala, a village about five miles from Patiya P.S.

A party of 2/9th Gurkha Rifles was drawn to the spot on February 16, 1933, by a traitor who had passed information to the police of the presence of some absconders near about his house. While the military had been cordoning the shelter a torchlight was flashed upon them and three persons were seen firing on the troops with their revolvers from the northern side of the house. The fire was returned and the cordon hurriedly completed. After a little pause on both sides two persons fired again and tried to

force their way through the cordon. The troops had to desist lest they should hit one of their own party.

It was 11 a.m. when *Master-da* succeeded in negotiating the fencing that surrounded the house on the north but landed himself in the front of a waiting Havildar and was captured forthwith.

The besieged party also fired shots from the southern side of the house which was replied by the Military. A shriek and a splash in a tank were heard by the attacking party but nobody could be secured; in the morning trail of blood could be traced for some distance when it disappeared. A blood-stained sari, a woman's garments, a pair of sandals and incriminating documents were also seized. The jungles in the vicinity of the house were cleared and a ditch was baled out resulting in the recovery of certain papers. Other inmates of the house were arrested at dawn and removed to the town.

Surya Sen was removed to a train some distance away from the place of the incident and taken down at Sholasahar, a suburban Station and thence escorted in a motor-car to the town.

While in jail the ingenuity of the master mind could manage to establish contact with his comrades outside and it was possible for him to smuggle out instructions and other papers including manuscripts which were discovered in the course of a search and seized at Dhalghat. From the papers it was definitely proved that *Master-da* and Pritilata Waddedar were present when the police and military raided the house.

A most daring attempt was made to dynamite a portion of the jail and rescue *Master-da* which was discovered when preparations were nearly complete.

Surya Sen and TARAKESWAR DASTIDAR, arrested on May 19, 1933, and accused of shooting an Inspector of Police on March 16, 1931, were placed on trial before a Special Tribunal on June 15, 1933, in the heavily-guarded old Collectorate building of Chittagong. *

At the trial the history of the whole incident from the Armoury Raid up till the Pahartali Outrage was recounted and *Master-da* was declared unquestionably to be the leader of the revolutionary party and the *Indian Republican Army*, Chittagong Branch.

The principal accused took upon himself the entire responsi-

bility for waging unrelenting war against the Government by every possible means. In his composition *Biraha*, seized by the police and produced as evidence, he referred to the organisation as one with which "I am inseparably mixed and to which I have been attached with all my heart from the beginning" and "I have seen Bijoya (in his writing *Bijoya*) of many intimate friends and affectionate brothers and sisters and have taken full responsibility for the same."

Against the other accused, Tarakeswar, it was said that he had connection with conspiracy from its inception. He was in charge of the Party at Gohra and at that time actively assisted in carrying out the conspiracy for waging war after Surya Sen's arrest. The trial ended on August 14, 1933, and both the accused, and nothing else was expected, were sentenced to death.

When *Master-da* was asked at mid-night of January 12, 1934, to get ready he was deeply absorbed in meditation and had to be brought to the hard realities of the situation. He got up and on his way gave a full-throated shout of *Bande Mataram* which reached all the corners of the small Chittagong Jail and echoed and re-echoed in each cell that held a prisoner connected with the Raid and its aftermath. The inmates realised at once that the final hour had struck and they warmly and enthusiastically responded.

The jail authorities were not prepared for this contingency. The warders freely used batons and lathis on the frail body of the prisoner every time he shouted *Bande Mataram* and this continued till he became unconscious due to merciless beating. The jail resounded with the shouts of other prisoners who had been held like so many caged lions.

The accredited General of the revolutionary war of Chittagong where many battles were fought, and one whose name would be associated with the most successful exploits against a mighty force, was beaten senseless or done to death. There was nobody to ascertain the truth but it was a fact which could not be concealed that the prostrate body of one whose name had sent shiver to the marrow and spine of the most valiant in the British forces stationed in India and made the administrators in the stronghold of administration in far off Calcutta tremble in their shoes, was helped to the gallows and the noose was put on the neck of Surya

Sen the condemned prisoner who had tried to free his country from foreign domination.

A lifelong comrade of his, Tarakeswar Dastidar followed his leader in the same night, January 12, 1934, in the Chittagong Jail. There was suppressed sigh of relief in the hearts of the upholders of law and order in India. But even then dead mortal remains of the two posed a serious problem to the authorities. If consigned to fire, from his ashes might rise Phoenix-like hundreds of heroes who would fight the sworn enemy of the Motherland.

Surya Sen and his comrade's dead bodies were placed before dawn on a battle cruiser, of the East India fleet, *H.M.S. Epingham*, which was rushed to the high seas where, fully tied to heavy weights, were lowered to the bottom of the seas to serve as food to the monsters of the deep.

Patiya Outrage

When Chittagong had been honeycombed with police and military forces and almost every young man was being closely watched the informant relating to the hiding place of Surya Sen and his associate could not be allowed to go unavenged.

The Officer-in-Charge of the Patiya Thana, Makhanlal Dikshit, was the man held responsible for the arrest of *Master-da* and Tarakeswar Dastidar. On his communication to the headquarters a military detachment comprising thirty-five sepoy, three Assistant Sub-Inspectors and three constables under a European high military officer started for Goirala for action against the suspects.

The remnants of the Chittagong fighters in due course came to know of the part played by Makhan in the arrest of *Master-da* and on March 26, 1933, just after dusk, at 7 p.m. they shot Makhan dead in his quarter and left the place without being noticed by anybody.

Surprise Attack

At great personal risk family men had sheltered absconders on whose head heavy rewards had been announced.

Sometime after midnight the police surrounded Purna Talukdar's house in Gohira village, Anwara P.S. near Parki Lighthouse on the Bay of Bengal, about 13 miles from Chittagong.

The police gathered information that there were six 'wanted men' in hiding in that house including TARAKESWAR DASTIDAR and MANORANJAN DAS and surrounded it on May 19, 1933. Becoming cognisant of the arrival of police the absconders opened fire which the police promptly replied. In the confusion two of the suspects were able to escape. About 4 a.m. the police called upon the besieged men to surrender. The firing stopped and four persons were arrested from the house.

Two men, PURNA CHANDRA TALUKDAR, the owner of the house and an absconder MANORANJAN DAS, were killed by police bullets. The body of Purna was given to his relations for cremation. The body of Manoranjan Das at the time was not identified by anybody not even by his kith and kin.

TARAKESWAR DASTIDAR was later placed on trial for his complicity in the Armoury Raid and was sentenced to death on January 12, 1934.

In the Desert Air

The Detention Camp in Deoli, Rajputana, claimed many victims during its short existence.

A prisoner in the Hijli Detention Camp, SAILESH CHANDRA CHATTERJI, suffered from occasional attacks of Malaria and continued loss of weight. He was transferred to Deoli on September 12, 1932. Objections to this transfer were voiced by Sailesh as well as by his relations which went unheeded. Sailesh, according to the police and the confidential camp report, was an important member of the revolutionary party and his presence in Bengal was deemed unsafe for security of the State.

The unfortunate father of Sailesh Chatterji then at Comilla, was telegraphically informed by the District Magistrate that his son had expired in the jail hospital on October 17, 1933. It transpired that the patient had an attack of malignant type of tertian malaria and was administered intravenous injection of a heavy dose of quinine by the doctor against the advice of an experienced compounder and the patient expired within an incredibly short time.

Cricket Ground Outrage

A cricket match held on January 7, 1934, in the European Club Ground (Paltan) attracted a large gathering of Europeans including women and children. The match had just ended and the spectators were divided in small groups unmindful of what was going to happen to them.

After witnessing the match the Superintendent of Police, a European, retired to the Club. While driving back to his bungalow about 5-30 p.m. he noticed two young men dressed as labourers by the side of the Club. It aroused his suspicion and he stopped his car to search them when one of them threw a bomb at him. It exploded but it did not hit him. Two other bombs thrown by him did not explode.

The police officer at once came down upon his assailant NITYA RANJAN SEN and grappled with him and his chauffeur shot Nitya killing him outright and causing a slight injury to the officer in his hand.

There was a great sensation over the incident and in the confusion that followed between the car and the slope of a hillock, another fellow, HIMANGSU BIMAL CHAKRABARTI was able to extricate himself and dashed out of the group that had gathered around him. He was shot twice of which the second proved fatal.

Two other youths, KRISHNA CHANDRA CHOWDHURY and HARENDRA NATH CHAKRABARTI, jointly attacked the pavilion situated on the other side of the field by throwing bombs between the tent and the Town Inspector's bungalow which failed to explode. Harendra advanced a little and fired a shot with his

revolver which went wide and nobody was hit. He was captured with the revolver in his hand.

His colleague who was found escaping was given a hot chase and secured. On a thorough search a bomb and some articles were found in his left pocket, and a capsule in the right. It was finally discovered that the assailants were equipped with one revolver, four bombs, several rounds of capsules and ammunition.

The two arrested men, Krishna Chandra Chowdhury, an absconder in the main Armoury Raid Case, aged 21 and Harendra Nath Chakrabarti, 18, were placed on trial before a Special Tribunal and the case against them was opened on January 23, 1934, in the Durbar Hall of the Government House which was well guarded.

KRISHNA GHANDRA CHOWDHURY and HARENDRA NATH CHAKRABARTI were jointly charged, on January 26, 1934, under section 307/34 I.P.C. being liable to enhanced punishment under Sec. 6(1) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1932, for offences committed in furtherance of a common intention by throwing bombs and firing revolver on Europeans, including women and children on January 7, 1934, for which they would have been guilty of murder if any death was caused thereby;

Secondly, under Sec. 4-A and 4-B of the Explosive Substances Act for throwing bombs likely to endanger life and being liable to enhanced punishment under Sec. 5-A of Bengal Act XXI of 1932;

Thirdly, against Harendra Chakrabarti alone under Sec. 19-F of the Arms Act for the unlicensed possession of a revolvēr and live cartridges, also being liable to enhanced punishment under Section 13-A of the Arms Act and Bengal Act XXI of 1932.

The Special Tribunal delivered its judgment on January 31, 1934, and both the accused were condemned to death.

The accused preferred an appeal to the High Court which was heard on April 9 and on April 18, 1934. The High Court dismissed the appeal, upheld the judgment of the Tribunal and confirmed the sentence of death.

The two young men proved to be the first victims under the Enhancement of Punishment Act who were awarded capital punishment for attempted murder. Execution of Krishna Chandra and Harendra took place on June 5, 1934, in the Midnapore Jail.

In His Den

While on the run, now only a few left after Surya Sen's arrest, and roaming without guidance, the absconders would not fail to deal with the traitors and informers in the manner they deserved.

It was widely talked about that Netra Ranjan Sen, a landlord of Goirala with some stake, was responsible for the arrest of *Master-da* on February 16, 1933.

It was a great shock from which the absconders could hardly recover. Yet on January 8, 1934, while Netra Ranjan was enjoying his dinner at about 9 p.m. inside his house, one or two unknown young men suddenly appeared and hacked Netra to death. They disappeared from the scene with the same alacrity as they had shown in their arrival.

Release Self-Sought

Arrested in Chittagong, BRAJENDRA LAL CHOWDHURY of Kanungopara, was sent to Berhampore Detention Camp in January 1934.

When the checking of the detenus for the night had been taking place at about 9-45 p.m. on August 27, 1934, Brajendra was found missing from his room. A search was forthwith conducted and the boy was found hanging by a twisted *dhoti* from an iron bar in the roof of the common-room with an overturned chair at his feet.

Brajendra, and a host of them cannot speak and nobody except the spectre of detention for an indefinite period, can throw any light on the reasons for ending life with his own hands.

Diabolical Act

The vendetta of the police did not stop even after everything had turned normal. A mother was arranging for dinner of her son PAYAJ KANTI CHOWDHURY of Chakrasala, Paliya, when a C.I.D. constable came to his house and asked him to come to the Police Station without assigning any reason.

The distracted mother intervened and asked the constable to wait for a short time so that her son may finish his meal and go. The policeman naively told that the matter was very simple and it would not take much time to come back and take his dinner.

Payaj did not return within a reasonable time. Enquiries at the thana proved fruitless. Early next morning when the mother, who had not slept for the whole night opened the door found her son in an unconscious state from which Payaj did never recover.

Freedom the Paramount Need

A sturdy young boy of village Dhorola, Chittagong, full of promise and burning with the fire of patriotism could not fail to escape the evil attention of the police. NIRENDRA LAL BHATTACHARYA was arrested under the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act and was thrown into the local prison. Subsequently he was transferred to the Hijli Detention Camp and it was as if his future had been sealed.

An indefinite detention influenced his mind to escape and serve the Motherland as a free man. He sought the easiest way, as release coming from the Government was absolutely uncertain, and on February 27, 1936, he was found hanging from a grating of the fan-light placed in the wall of the main staircase.

Epilogue

RAM KRISHNA CHAKRABARTI at the time of his arrest (p. 481) had been suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis and was in a very weak state of health. His spirit dominated over his frail mortal frame and he was absolutely unconcerned over his future suffering.

Detention in the dark dingy room of the most infamous jail of the time, Midnapore, for a good part in bar fetters, further hastened deterioration in his health. The benign Government lodged his mother, Sabitri Devi, a co-accused in the harbouring of absconder case, in the same jail, in the female yard, the only

consolation to her being the nearness of his son resting on death-bed. She was not allowed any interview with the son in spite of repeated representations for the purpose. The lacerated heart of the mother smothered under the depressing news about the deteriorating physical condition of her son.

Ram Krishna showed signs of growing exhaustion which could not be checked and no serious effort was ever made in that direction. But his spirit maintained a high pitch of honour and it was impossible for the jail authorities to make him submit to humiliating conditions. In 1936, before his death, he had been undergoing punishment for breach of jail discipline. He developed digestive disorders, the last symptoms of tuberculosis, and one day he was found lying dead on the floor still in chains.

The mother was allowed as an act of supreme grace to have a last look of the dear son who was no more; the strong iron bars of the cell of Ram Krishna preventing her from shedding maternal tears on the corpse of her heroic son. Only a loving mother would be able to assess the poignancy of the grief of Savitri Devi, the present punishment of whom was many times more galling than what was awarded by the Court.

Inflating the List

In the fight at Kalarpole on May 7, 1930 (p. 473), four heroes lost their lives and two were arrested by the police. PHANI BHUSAN NANDI, a cousin of Amarendra Nath Nandi (p. 472) happened to be one of these two.

In the trial that ensued Phani was convicted and sentenced to transportation for life. He developed tuberculosis of the lungs in prison and expired in 1937, in the Alipore Central Jail.

'Method in Madness'

A detenu in the Hijli Detention Camp, ASWINI KUMAR GUHA, developed symptoms of insanity and was removed to the Midnapore Jail. Instead of showing any signs of improvement

his case worsened and as a last resort he was put in the Ranchi Lunatic Asylum under surveillance of police guard—the worst thing for treatment of insanity.

It seemed that Aswini could not get over the mania of suicide even in his madness. To get rid of the condition of a prisoner he managed to evade the close watch and committed suicide in Ranchi Asylum by hanging.

In Distant Land

A participant in the Armoury Raid, HARIPADA MAHAJAN, a proclaimed offender with a decent reward for his arrest, was able to cross the border of India and reach Akyab after eight months of his stay in the police-ridden Chittagong.

Haripada's destination was Burma. Suffering untold hardships with police hounds tracking his trail, Haripada was able to reach Akyab after three days from the start of his journey.

The life in Burma was full of troubles and privations for him. He struggled manfully till he succumbed to his fate, dying in 1942, away from the Motherland for the political emancipation of which he had sacrificed everything that a man longs for.