

CHAPTER TWO

RASH BEHARI BOSE AS A REVOLUTIONARY

BOYHOOD AND EARLY EDUCATION

One of the greatest leaders and architects of India's revolutionary movement, Rash Behari Bose played a most potent and dynamic role in the achievement of Independence by India in 1947. If Aurobindo Ghose is regarded as the Mazzini of Young India, Rash Behari Bose may be fitly called the Cavour of India's Freedom Movement.

Born in the village of Parala-Bighati near Bhadreswar in the district of Hooghly in the house of his maternal uncle on May 25, 1886¹, Rash Behari Bose passed his childhood in his paternal home at the village of Subaldaha in the Burdwan district under the care of his grandfather Kali Charan Bose. He received his early education at Chandernagore where his father Benode Behari Bose had purchased a house. His father, at first a Government servant in the Bengal Secretariat, later secured a job in the Government press at Simla in U. P. Never a "good" boy in the conventional sense of the term, Rash Behari in his boyhood showed in his character signs of turbulence and refused to bend his neck to authority on asking.

1. Rash Behari's own sister Sushila Devi, at present aged about seventy-eight, has recently informed the present writer when she met her at Benares that both her elder brother and herself were born in their maternal uncle's house at the village of Parala-Bighati in the Hooghly district. This view fits in also with the findings of Sri Harihar Sett of Chandernagore. But in a written statement dated April 16, 1961 Kunja Behari Mandal of the village Subaldaha in the Burdwan district, then aged about 104, categorically states on the basis of his own direct knowledge that Rash Behari Bose, the eldest son of Benode Behari Bose, his friend, was born at the village of Subaldaha (vide the Prabartak Sangha's fortnightly organ *Naba Sangha*, dated April 19, 1916, p. 1).

None was aware at that time of the immense promise that this wayward boy had in him for the future.

While a student of the Second Class at the College Dupleix (now known as Kanailal Vidyamandir) in Chandernagore, Rash Behari had a confrontation with his teachers, which soon forced him to leave that school and take new admission in the Morton School, Calcutta. But a comfortable routine life was never destined for him. His innate nature always goaded him to beat new tracks of adventure. An expert lathi-player from boyhood, he soon took fancy to the idea of entering the British army with the immediate object of learning the art of modern warfare. As the desire deepened, he fled away twice from his home to try his luck as a potential recruit in the army, but apparently having failed in his mission, he returned home with subdued feelings of frustration. The fact that a Bengali was debarred from admission into the British army on the fancied ground of his physical unfitness was a painful experience to him and this instead of cooling his enthusiasm made him more determined to remove the slur of timidity from the face of the Bengali race. From that time onwards he gave up his routine study and education in school. Disillusioned by her son's wayward life, his mother took him before long to Simla and got him employed through his father in the Government press in the post of a copyholder. Rash Behari utilised the occasion in mastering the English language as well as type-writing. But here also Rash Behari could not pull on well for a long time, and under command from his father who suspected his complicity in a press trouble, he had to resign his post. This was followed by his third flight from home, opening a completely new chapter in his career.²

2. These facts about Rash Behari's early life have been, in the main, drawn from Prof. Beion Behari Bose's (his younger brother's) Bengali work entitled *Karmabir Rash Behari* published in 1956.

RASH BEHARI IN DEHRA DUN

Having served for a short period in the Pasteur Institute of Kasauli (South-West of Simla), Rash Behari came to Dehra Dun in or about the year 1906 and was probably employed as a laboratory assistant to Sirdar Puran Singh who was in charge of the Chemistry Department in the Forest Research Institute.³ While at Dehra Dun, Rash Behari at first took shelter in the Tagore Villa, the garden house of Prafulla Nath Tagore, grandson of Kali Krishna Tagore. Atul Chandra Bose (though mistakenly referred to in the I. B. Records of the Government of West Bengal as Atul Chandra Ghose), the care-taker and manager of the Tagore Villa, took kindly to Rash Behari without his master's remotest idea about it. Rash Behari stayed there for some time. Even after his change of residence he regularly frequented the Tagore Villa where a group of young men met together and discussed various topics. Sri Prasanta Nath Tagore, the third son of Prafulla Nath Tagore, informs the writer that the Villa consisting of 100 bighas of land and looked after by a redoubtable manager with his quarters situated at a remote corner of the garden and surrounded by mango and lichi trees, naturally offered a very congenial shelter to Rash Behari as well as to the Bengali young men plotting secret activities at Dehra Dun. It is also reported that Rash Behari even arranged for bomb manufacture in that garden Villa and was sometimes helped with money by its 'sympathetic' manager from funds placed at his disposal by the owner for its proper maintenance.⁴ The Intelligence Branch Records of the Government of West Bengal affirm that "Rash Behari

3. The Judgment in the Delhi-Lahore Conspiracy Case of 1914, however, describes Rash Behari as the Head Clerk of the Forest Research Institute.

4. S. N. Ganguli's article in weekly *Basumati*, August 12, 1965.

Bose, Atul Ghose, Haripada Bose and one Sailen Banerjee used to meet daily at Dehra Dun and were very friendly to each other". They further disclose that Jogindra Nath Chatterjee, a prominent pleader of Allahabad High Court, came to Dehra Dun for a change and stayed for a few months at the Tagore Villa. Rash Behari and his associates were regular visitors to Jogin Babu.

CONTACT WITH J. M. CHATTERJEE

A memorable episode of this period was Rash Behari's contact with Jitendra Mohan Chatterjee at Dehra Dun. Jitendra Mohan, a resident of Saharanpur where his father was a Government pleader, had already started there a secret society following the Partition of Bengal⁵ with the object of taking revenge against the inhuman cruelties and oppression of the British soldiers, particularly at the railway stations. In 1906, he came to Dehra Dun on the occasion of the marriage ceremony of his nephew (eldest son of his elder sister) and put up for four or five days at the house of his brother-in-law Purna Chandra Banerjee. In that *milieu* he picked up intimacy with Rash Behari who also attended that marriage ceremony. From his talk with Rash Behari Jitendra Mohan could get a glimpse of the working of the latter's mind, and the intimacy thus formed later proved a valuable asset to the revolutionary movement.

The Punjab and the United Provinces were at that time important centres of Bengali revolutionary activities. Bengal's role as an inspirer of the revolutionary spirit in the Punjab was embodied, first, by Jatindra Nath Banerjee (later known as Swami Niralamba) and then by Rash Behari Bose. After his

5. Vide *India's Fight For Freedom* (Calcutta, 1958, Chapter I) written jointly by the present writer and H. Mukherjee for a detailed account of the Bengal Partition of 1905.

split with the early band of the Bengal revolutionaries headed by Barindra Kumar Ghose, Jatindra Nath left Calcutta on a roving mission. In course of his travel he came to the Punjab in 1906 and got together a group of young men and inspired them with the ideal of *Swaraj* or Self-Rule for India even by violent revolutionary methods. This group included, among others, Lal Chand Phalok, Kissen Singh (father of Bhagat Singh), Lala Lajpat Rai, Sirdar Ajit Singh as well as Dr. Hari Charan Mukherjee of Ambala, Dr. Charu Chandra Ghose of Peshwar and Lala Amar Das of Sealkot.⁶ On his return from England to India in early 1908 Lala Hardyal also was soon drawn close to this group, and before long he gathered round himself a band of devoted workers of whom Jitendra Mohan Chatterjee was the most prominent.⁷ At that time Hardyal's major pre-occupation was political propaganda through speeches and writings, with a pronounced advocacy of boycott or non-co-operation with the alien Government. Although he did not openly preach at this stage any cult of violent revolution, yet it is mainly from him that his followers, after he had left for Europe, took their cue for a violent political fight against the British.

On Hardyal's departure for Europe in August, 1908 his mantle naturally fell on his comrade Jitendra Mohan Chatterjee whom he had chosen as the second

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6. Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee's *Biplabi Jibaner Smriti* (Calcutta, 1956, p. 301). It may be noted in this connection that in 1927-28 Kissen Singh, accompanied by his son Bhagat Singh travelled to the village Channa in the Burdwan district to pay homage to his Guruji Jatindra Nath Banerjee. Again, in 1929 Bhagat Singh, then an absconder, had also been to Baranagore to see Jatindra Nath Banerjee at the house of Bejoy Basanta Basak.
 7. Hardyal, who had gone to Oxford for higher education in 1905, paid a short visit to India towards the close of 1906 or the beginning of 1907 with a view to taking his wife to England. At that time Jitendra Mohan was introduced to Hardyal by Dr. Khudadad (then a lecturer of the Roorke College) who was a class-mate of Hardyal. Intimacy between Hardyal and Jitendra Mohan was further promoted through the latter's classmate Tara Chand (Dr.) whose wife was a sister of Hardyal's wife.

in command and whom he had so introduced to Amir Chand at the Delhi station on his way to Bombay *en route* to Europe.⁸ Amir Chand, a rich man of Delhi and school master, had already gathered round him a band of young men including Abad Behari, Bal Raj and Bal Mokand. Jitendra Mohan got down at Delhi and put up for a few days at Amir Chand's house, and afterwards returned to Saharanpur. He then plunged into the great work assigned to him by his leader. He contacted many persons with Hardyal's letters of introduction, gathered new recruits and laid down the programme of work for the party in his own handwriting. He also sent emissaries to Rash Behari at Dehra Dun, asking him to forge links with the Bengal revolutionary groups. It is through Rash Behari's medium that Jitendra Mohan got into touch with Srish Chandra Ghose described to be "the most desperate and dangerous" figure of the Chandernagore revolutionaries.⁹ Srish Chandra thereafter not only paid several visits to Saharanpur (1909-10), but also kept up correspondence with Rash Behari, sometimes under the pseudo name of 'Amir'.¹⁰ Before long unforeseen

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8. As shortage of funds appeared to be a great impediment to political work, J. M. Chatterjee and his co-worker Chiranjit Lal were engaged in 1908 in the collection of subscriptions for their party as wandering *Sadhus* or friars. In course of such missionary work, when they had once taken shelter at Sirdar Puran Singh's residence in Dehra Dun, Jitendra Mohan received a wire from Hardyal from Lahore instructing him to meet the latter at Saharanpur. Accordingly, both Jitendra Mohan and Chiranjit Lal met Hardyal at Saharanpur *via* Hardwar and thence accompanied him to Delhi, where at the station Hardyal introduced Jitendra Mohan to Amir Chand as his right hand man. Amir Chand and Hardyal, both residents of Delhi, were drawn close to each other even before Hardyal had left India in 1905. It was Amir Chand who helped Hardyal in "kidnapping" his wife for her sojourn to England in 1906-07.
 9. Home Deptt. (Poll. A) Proceedings of the Govt. of India, July 1911 Nos. 48-50.
 10. File No. 473/14 of the I. B. Records, Govt. of West Bengal, for a letter intercepted at Delhi, in which the signatory 'Amir' requested the addressee 'Manik' to come down with some money to study the situation at first hand. The Intelligence Branch authorities of the time identified 'Manik' with Rash Behari Bose and 'Amir' with Srish Chandra Ghose.

troubles arose for Jitendra Mohan with the seizure by the police of his secret MSS embodying the party's programme of work from the office of *Jhangsyal* (a journal of Sirdar Ajit Singh) and their detection of his authorship. Warrants of arrest were issued against Sirdar Ajit Singh and Sufi Amba Prasad as the real men behind the *Jhangsyal* and the *Swaraj* respectively.¹¹ Efforts were also being made for the arrest of Jitendra Mohan who in no time decided to hand over the charge of the secret party to Rash Behari Bose (1910). He summoned Rash Behari to Saharanpur, gave him every relevant information and left for England to prosecute studies in Law.¹² Needless to say, Rash Behari also had not been idle at Dehra Dun during this time; he was also busy weaving schemes of work and getting together a band of ardent spirits.

After Jitendra Mohan's retirement from the Indian scene, Rash Behari Bose naturally assumed the central command of the Punjab revolutionaries, and his Dehra Dun residence became a *rendezvous* of secret political activities. As Mr. Denham of the Intelligence Branch wrote in his report: "As far as can be ascertained at present Dehra Dun appears to have been the meeting place between the Bengal and Punjab conspirators; Rash Behari Bose had resided there for seven years and had obtained a position of importance in the Bengali community".¹³ At Dehra Dun Rash Behari's activities were canalised in two main directions, first, to secure secretly acid from his office laboratory for

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11. In 1909 Sirdar Ajit Singh and Sufi Amba Prasad absconded to Persia.
 12. It has been personally learnt from Barrister J. M. Chatterjee at Dehra Dun that it was he who introduced Rash Behari Bose to the Punjab and Delhi group of revolutionaries by providing him with several letters of introduction to various persons before he left for England. This point receives corroboration also in the Judgment in the Delhi-Lahore Conspiracy Case of 1914.
 13. Mr. Denham's third and final Report on the Rajabazar Case, dated March 26, 1914.

the manufacture of explosives, and, secondly, to purchase second-hand revolvers from the retired Gurkha officers. He also sent a letter to Jitendra Mohan Chatterjee at London with the request to arrange for the despatch of some revolvers to him through a London book-seller; but the idea did not materialize because of the sudden critical turn in the Indian situation following the Hardinge bomb outrage.

INITIATION IN THE CULT OF ATMA-SAMARPAN

In early 1911 Rash Behari came down to Chandernagore on receiving the news of his mother's illness, and thanks to Srish Chandra Ghose, he was before long introduced to Moti Lal Roy, the then leader of the Chandernagore group of revolutionaries. A devoted follower of Aurobindo Ghose and the founder of the Prabartak Sangha at Chandernagore, Moti Lal Roy cast a great influence on his junior colleague. Rash Behari was inspired with the Gita ideal of *Atma-samarpana* or self-surrender and he took the solemn vow of dedicating himself wholly and completely to the supreme cause. As Moti Lal Roy puts it:

"I remember the day when Rash Behari Bose first came to me with my revolutionary disciple and colleague Srish Chandra Ghose. We were sitting together closetted in the small historic room where Sri Aurobindo sat hiding a few months before during his abscondage at Chandernagore. Inspiring words seemed to pour out of me, while I was explaining to him the spiritual Yoga of *Atma-samarpana* that had been revealed to me by Sri Aurobindo. Rash Behari seemed to drink in the spiritual message in deep silence. Then suddenly at the end of the discourse, he burst forth in ecstatic exclamation:

'It is God's instrumentality—a spiritual automation—isn't Motilal! I have to move about with my

head held in the palm of my hand. So, indeed, shall I do!''¹⁴.

In the meantime Rash Behari's mother died and as his leave expired, he returned to Dehra Dun for some time. This, however, was followed by his long leave probably from September, 1911 and his return to Chandernagore. During this period fruitful discussions were held among Moti Lal Roy, Srish Chandra Ghose and Rash Behari Bose, on the one hand, and Pratul Chandra Ganguli of the Anusilan Samiti, on the other. In course of these discussions, precisely after the annulment of the Bengal Partition at the Delhi Durbar in December, 1911, the idea of throwing a bomb at Lord Hardinge, the then Viceroy of India, caught the imagination of this young group. The evident object of the plot was to demoralise the British bureaucrats in India by striking terror into their heart and to demonstrate in the most convincing way possible that the Government's new repression-cum-conciliation policy would not pay in the long run.

RASH BEHARI AND THE HARDINGE BOMB PLOT

According to Moti Lal Roy, the idea of throwing a bomb at Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy of India, sprang from Srish Chandra Ghose's brain, and Rash Behari immediately took it up to give it a practical shape.¹⁵ With that end in view, he brought to Dehra Dun along with him a young man, Basanta Kumar Biswas, ostensibly as his cook and personal attendant. Basanta Biswas and Manmatha Biswas were two cousin

14. Moti Lal Roy's statement printed on the cover of J. G. Ohsawa's *The Two Great Indians In Japan* (Calcutta, 1954).

15. The truth of Moti Lal Roy's statement dated 29.6.55 is also borne out by Pratul Chandra Ganguli of the Anusilan Samiti. In a written statement dated July 4, 1955 Pratul Chandra Ganguli says that the plan of throwing a bomb at Lord Hardinge was hatched by Moti Lal Roy's Chandernagore group of revolutionaries then working in close co-operation with the Anusilan Samiti of which Ganguli was himself an important leader.

brothers of Poragacha in the Nadia district and had for some time been staying with Amarendra Nath Chatterjee of Uttarpara as workers of the "Sramajibi Samabaya", a Swadeshi workshop housed in the present Y. M. C. A. building at the junction of Harrison Road (Mahatma Gandhi Road) and the Collège Street, Calcutta. Opened in 1908 as a business concern through the joint efforts of Amarendra Nath Chatterjee and Khirode Ganguli, the Swadeshi shop soon grew into a centre of revolutionary activities with Moti Lal Roy and Srish Chandra Ghose of Chandernagore as among its regular visitors. The Biswas brothers, originally enlisted for the "Sramajibi Samabaya" by Khirode Ganguli, the Headmaster of the Poragacha School, were afterwards handed over to Moti Lal Roy by Amarendra Nath Chatterjee for the revolutionary cause. Moti Lal introduced them to Rash Behari who selected Basanta for his secret mission.

Having trained up Basanta for several months at Dehra Dun with the utmost care and precision, Rash Behari escorted him to Lahore and got him employed, thanks to Bal Mokand's help, in the Popular Dispensary as a Compounder. On or about October 13, 1912 Rash Behari held a secret meeting in a room adjoining the Agarwal Asram, where, besides himself, Abad Behari, Dina Nath and Bal Mokand were present. "At that meeting it is said that a plan of campaign was formed, and that it was decided to issue leaflets and organize the throwing of a bomb and that Abad Behari, Dina Nath and Bal Mokand were appointed heads of the organization"¹⁶. Shortly after this Rash Behari visited Chandernagore to give a finishing touch to his preparatory work. During this short visit he met one day Sri Nalini Kishore Guha at

16. The Judgment of M. Harrison, the Additional Sessions Judge in the Delhi-Lahore Conspiracy Case, dated October 5, 1914.

88, Upper Circular Road (where a mess of the Anusilan Samiti opposite to the Rajabazar centre of Amrita Lal Hazra was situated) and asked him to write an article in the *Swadhin Bharat* denouncing the celebrations proposed to be held in honour of Lord Hardinge's State-entry into Delhi as very much detrimental to the national honour and interests of Indians. Rash Behari also provided Sri Guha with instructions typed in a small piece of paper kept hidden in the folded cuff of his shirt. Nalini Kishore Guha acted accordingly, although he was unaware at that time of the underlying plot.

According to plan, Basanta Kumar Biswas left Lahore for Delhi by December 21, 1912 and Abad Behari also followed suit in no time. Basanta Kumar at Delhi put up at the house of Amir Chand, and it appears that Abad Behari also was away from Lahore at the time of the outrage¹⁷. On the fateful day of December 23, 1912 Rash Behari also appeared in Delhi in order to conduct the bomb-throwing operation under his personal guidance. As the Viceregal procession was entering Delhi in right royal pomp engaging everybody's attention, suddenly cracked a bomb on the elephant on which the Viceroy was seated, killing instantaneously an attendant and injuring the Viceroy seriously. In the ensuing pandemonium both Rash Behari and Basanta successfully disappeared from the scene. Although the plot in its fulness could not be executed (which aimed at killing the Viceroy), yet the effect produced was nonetheless significant. A

17. *Ibid.* The Judge states in this context thus: "The evidence on the subject is entirely circumstantial and consists in the fact that Basanta Kumar Biswas left Lahore a couple of days before the bomb was thrown under suspicious circumstances, that Abad Behari was also away from Lahore at the time, and that Dina Nath, the approver, had a conversation with Abad Behari which showed that the latter knew the details of how that bomb was thrown.... Both of them returned in January 1913, and Abad Behari remained in Lahore.... from January to June, 1913".

feeling of horror swept over the country and the Government, after an initial set-back, resorted to more rigorous repression.

As regards the incident of bomb-throwing at the Viceroy different views have been expressed by the leaders connected with the plot. Moti Lal Roy has stated: "The youth who actually threw the bomb in the guise of a beautiful lady spectator from a housetop at Chandnichak on that gala occasion was the late Basanta Kumar Biswas—a recruit from Nadia, who was sent to me by Shree Amarendra Nath Chatterjee of Uttarpara at my call for two youths required for this action and I was requested by Rash Behari to allow Basanta whom he selected, to accompany him to Delhi. There he was put up in the house of Amir Chand as arranged by Rash Behari, whence dressed as a young lady with the name of Luxmee Bai, he went to the place of occurrence along with Rash Behari. After the bomb-incident, Basanta threw off the woman's dress and melted away in the crowd".

Amarendra Nath Chatterjee in his unpublished Bengali MSS *Bharater Swadhinatar Itihas* has said: "The general idea is that Basanta threw the bomb from a house-top in the guise of a woman. It is wrong. It was Basanta Kumar who threw the bomb from the street—Rash Behari did not throw it. Rash Behari by arranging for Basanta Kumar's escape returned to Dehra Dun by night" (p. 36). This piece of information Amarendra Nath derived from Basanta Kumar who met him at the "Sramajibi Samabaya" on his way to Nadia *via* Calcutta some time after the Hardinge bomb outrage.

From the above statements it is apparent that Basanta Kumar as a trusted agent of Rash Behari threw the bomb at the Viceroy. He was to put on a woman's dress according to a previous arrangement. But a closer second thought of the difficulties that

might arise from the contemplated course probably prompted Rash Behari to make a last-minute change in the operation plan.

But this view is contested by some on the strength of a statement made by Rash Behari Bose himself in 1943: "Thirty years ago I threw a bomb at the Viceroy"¹⁸. Apparently, the critics consider the statements of Amarendra Nath Chatterjee and Moti Lal Roy about Basanta incompatible with Rash Behari's own statement. But rightly understood, there is hardly any inner contradiction between the two views. That Rash Behari was the life and soul of the Delhi bomb outrage goes without dispute. It was Rash Behari who selected Basanta for the special purpose and trained him up for it. Rash Behari was also physically present at Delhi on that fateful day to guide Basanta in the working out of the plot. Thus it is evident that Rash Behari was the moving spirit on the scene in connection with the bomb-throwing. Even without throwing the bomb himself (the last act in the plot) he might have very truthfully claimed that he had thrown the bomb at the Viceroy. Basanta was his chosen instrument, and it was Basanta who actually threw the bomb as clearly stated by Amarendra Nath Chatterjee. Denham's statement that "Basanta was, in fact, Rash Behari's 'jackal', and Rash Behari himself appears to have kept clear of any direct participation and acts of violence, devoting his attention principally to propagandism and the engineering of the conspiracy" throws further light on the issue in question¹⁹.

Immediately after the bomb outrage Rash Behari fled to Dehra Dun and organized a meeting of the

18. Rash Behari Bose's statement entitled "Our Struggle" (1943) as incorporated in *Rash Behari Basu: His Struggle For India's Independence* (Calcutta, 1963, p. 222).

19. Mr. Denham's third and final Report on the Rajabazar Case, dated 26.3.1914.

employees of the Forest Research Institute in which he vehemently condemned the criminal attack on the Viceroy. He adopted this policy even in public meetings also, the obvious motive being to hoodwink and befool the police, and in this he was very much successful²⁰.

On account of his pronounced pro-Government speeches and actions at Dehra Dun Rash Behari won very soon the favour of the police officers of the U. P. and the Punjab. One of them, Sushil Chandra Ghose, picked up intimacy with him, probably with the object of eliciting information from him about his relative Srish Chandra Ghose, the political suspect of Chandernagore; but Rash Behari also in his turn utilised this contact with the police for his own purposes. He pursued his policy with such an ability as to mislead even the spying Bengali police officer from Dehra Dun to report about Rash Behari that "it is the general belief there, amongst the Bengali community, that Rash Behari was a police spy and used to supply information to the C. I. D. officers".²¹ In the battle of wits Rash Behari obviously proved the stronger. The trying Judge in the Delhi-Lahore Conspiracy Case observed that "Rash Behari was an even cleverer man than he is generally supposed to have been, and that he made use of his connection with the police to further the ends of this conspiracy". Rash Behari, by his speeches and actions, produced at that time such a

20. It is worthwhile to notice in this connection what Lord Hardinge wrote in his book entitled *My Indian Years: 1910-16* (London, 1948).

At Dehra Dun "when driving in a car from the station to my bungalow," wrote Lord Hardinge, "I passed an Indian standing in front of the gate of his house with several others, all of whom were very demonstrative in their salaams. On my inquiring.... I was told that the principal Indian there had presided two days before at a public meeting at Dehra Dun and had proposed and carried a vote of condolence with me on account of the attack on my life. It was proved later that it was this identical Indian who threw the bomb at me!" (p. 83).

21. The Weekly Report of the Intelligence Branch, Bengal, dated July 29, 1914.

favourable impression on the police as he was even allowed to enter the Circuit House at Dehra Dun when the Viceroy Hardinge had come there for treatment following the Delhi outrage.

THE LAHORE BOMB OUTRAGE (1913)

The second overt act committed under the inspiration of Rash Behari Bose was the Lahore bomb outrage on May 17, 1913. The target of this bomb was Mr. Gordon, the former Sub-Divisional Officer of Sylhet, under whose orders the police raid on the Jagatsi Ashrama of Swami Dayananda was conducted (1912), killing Mahendra Nath De, the ex-Head Master of the Habiganj National School, and for taking whose life Jogendra Chakravarty of the Anusilan Samiti had sacrificed his life at Maulavibazar (March 27, 1913). The schemer of the details of the plot was Abad Behari and the thrower of the bomb was the same Basanta Biswas, both being Rash Behari's trusted lieutenants. Two or three days before the incident, Abad Behari received clear instruction from Rash Behari through his letter written to Dina Nath.²² He thought out the details of the operation plan and at the scheduled hour when a group of Europeans including Mr. Gordon, then an Assistant Commissioner of the Punjab, were seated at the bar in the Lawrence Gardens, both Abad Behari and Basanta Biswas appeared on the scene, secretly carrying a bomb with them. But as Basanta's courage failed at the last moment, he placed the missile on the Library Road instead of throwing it at Mr. Gordon, thus eventually causing the death of one unfortunate *chaprasi* on his way back home. Although not a single bit of evidence could be obtained in connection with the Delhi outrage, clues were found out of the Lahore bomb incident.

22. The Judgment in the Delhi-Lahore Conspiracy Case, dated October 5 1914.

Consequently, a conspiracy case was instituted in 1914 against eleven persons of whom Amir Chand, Abad Behari, Bal Mokand and Basanta Biswas were ultimately hanged.

NATURE OF THE DELHI-LAHORE BOMBS

Different sources indicate that the Delhi bomb was supplied to Rash Behari Bose by the Chandernagore group of revolutionaries then headed by Moti Lal Roy. It was a picric acid bomb of the Dalhousie Square and Midnapore type (used on March 2, 1911 and Dec. 13, 1912) manufactured by Manindra Nath Naik of Chandernagore and finally tested by Suresh Chandra Datta of the Ripon College (now the Surendra Nath College), Calcutta. Sri Naik has informed the writer that an experimental bomb exactly similar to that sent to Delhi was caused to burst in the presence of Rash Behari and Srish Ghose in the bamboo bush behind Rash Behari's Fatakgora house in Chandernagore on the Kali Puja night (November 8) in the year 1912.²³ Satisfied with its potency, Rash Behari sanctioned it for use in the proposed Delhi outrage. The Lahore bomb was also similar to the Delhi bomb, and in the opinion of the Sessions Judge in the Delhi-Lahore Conspiracy Case, the Lahore bomb was in all probability supplied by Rash Behari Bose. That the Delhi and Lahore bombs were almost identical in composition is clearly pointed out in the following letter of the Chemical Examiner to the Government of the Punjab and North Western Frontier Province to the Superintendent of Police, Lahore, dated May 22, 1913. Referring to the Lahore bomb he writes:

23. Vide the writer's interview with Sri Manindra Nath Naik, who was in those days in charge of bomb making at Chandernagore. Sri Naik states that the Delhi bomb was brought to Calcutta by Nalin Chandra Datta and, having been tested by Professor Suresh Chandra Datta of the Ripon College, was taken to Delhi (or elsewhere) by Jyotish Sinha of Chandernagore.

“It is hardly necessary for me to note the similarity between this bomb and that used last December in the attempt on the life of His Excellency the Viceroy at Delhi. The same explosives were used in both cases, and the small fragments of tin foil, jute carding needles, and pieces of wire were exactly similar in both. There can be no doubt that the two bombs were practically identical in composition and construction”. He further traced the identity of the Lahore bomb with the bombs used at Midnapore and Maulavibazar in December, 1912 and March, 1913 respectively.²⁴

A fair idea of the Delhi-Lahore bombs may be formed from the following report of Major J. W. Turner, Inspector of Explosives to the Intelligence Branch, Bengal, dated January 8, 1914, on the unexploded Chandernagore bomb (a like-type of the Delhi-Lahore bombs) thrown at the Bhadreswar Thana on December 30, 1913.²⁵ Major Turner writes in his report thus:

“The bomb, a perfectly constructed specimen of its kind, is cylindrical in form, measuring $3 \times 3^3/16$ inches, weight about 1 lb. 11 ozs., and consists of the following parts:

(a) A cigarette or tobacco tin (W. D. & H. O. Wills) containing the explosive.

(b) Two iron discs, one perforated, inside the tin.

(c) Four iron clamps, about $3/4 \times 1/16$ inches x 3 inches.

(d) A number of jute carding pins of varying sizes, laid point to point between the iron clamps.

(e) Iron or steel wire about 17 W. G. bound round the whole.

(f) About 11 ozs. of an explosive substance consisting of, so far as I have been able to ascertain by

24. Home Political Proceedings of the Govt. of India, Part B, No. 379, March 1915.

25. File No. 1/14 of the I. B. Records, Govt. of West Bengal.

practical tests, a mixture of Picric acid and Chlorate of Potash, with a piece of guncotton wool for igniting the charge.

(g) The paper cover or frill".

The explosive charge generally consisted of (i) either Picric Acid and Potassium Chlorate or (ii) Ammonium Picrate, a compound from Picric Acid, both in powder form. On the outside of the tobacco tin were two layers of loom needles (i.e., jute carding pins) kept in place by iron wire. Then the tobacco tin fitted with the loom needles was kept intact by means of four clamps. At the bottom of the tin inside were a number of needles (about 25) passing through a perforated iron disc placed over them. Then the explosive substance was filled in and a second iron disc with a hole in it was placed. A hollow tube with guncotton inside went through a hole in the lid of the tin and then passed through the hole of the disc thus touching the explosive charge. Two processes were generally applied for detonating the bomb—, first, by putting phosphorus solution on the gun-cotton before the bomb was thrown and, secondly, by placing a paper cap containing potassium chlorate, antimony sulphide and red phosphorus, on the top of the tin. The cap by its contact with the earth used to burst.

'LIBERTY' AS RASH BEHARI'S ORGAN

The next important event in the life of Rash Behari was the publication of the English leaflet, *Liberty*. It has already been noted that in the meeting at Lahore (October, 1912) presided over by Rash Behari Bose, an important decision was taken towards the publication of anonymous leaflets with the object of fomenting discontent in the people against the British Government. A positive step in this matter was the issue of a leaflet in English, named *Liberty*, in May, 1913 following a resolution adopted at another

meeting held by Abad Behari, Bal Mokand and Dina Nath (April, 1913). The leaflet was written by Abad Behari, printed at Kapurthala and distributed from Lahore in Northern India, preaching such ideas as the following:

“Revolution has never been the work of men. It is always God’s own will worked through instruments. Those who are commissioned to bring about mighty changes were full of the force of *Zeitgeist*. Spirit enters into them. God Himself worked through Khudi Ram Bose, Prafulla Chaki, Kanai Lal Dutt, Madan Lal Dhingra and others (Hallowed be their sweet memories). The thrower of bomb on the representative of the tyrannical Government at Delhi was none else but the spirit of the Dispenser of all things Himself. . . . The debt we owe to the noble spirits of the martyrs will be paid only when young men of India will begin to come forward in numbers, each to prove a worthy successor of these departed sons. . . .

“A grim Revolution is the greatest need of the times. Rise, brothers, in spirit. Individual incidents like the one at Delhi may strike terrors into the hearts of the tyrants but they cannot bring you the desired goal. They are helpful to a very great extent; but let us not forget the end and should lose no time for the real work. Let us be up and doing for the great work of Revolution, our cherished ideal”.

The ideas expressed in the leaflet were so much akin to his own that Rash Behari sent a message of congratulation to Dina Nath stating: “Now big work should be done in the Punjab”.²⁶ It needs be noted in this connection that by “big work” Rash Behari obviously meant armed rising in that sector. The second series of *Liberty* embodying a call to revolution was issued in July, 1913.

26. The Judgment of Mr. M. Harrison, the Additional Sessions Judge in the Delhi-Lahore Conspiracy Case of 1914.

RASH BEHARI ON LONG LEAVE

After the bomb outrage at Lahore when intensive police search was going on, Rash Behari, prompted by prudence, came down to Chandernagore in August, 1913 taking long leave on medical grounds. During this leave he frequented the Calcutta centres of the Anusilan Samiti and kept close touch with its important members. One day in September, 1913, while he was at the Badur Bagan mess in company of Pratul Chandra Ganguli, he happened to examine a few revolvers recently brought from Dacca by Biren Chatterjee. To the surprise of all one of them suddenly sent off a cartridge causing a violent sound and injuring the third finger of Rash Behari's left hand. Blood was oozing profusely from his finger. But without caring a little for the bleeding wound, he at once covered it with a bed sheet and went straight with Pratul Ganguli to the Rajabazar centre for having first aid and then left for Chandernagore at night.²⁷ It may be observed in passing that those revolvers were meant for murdering the Head Constable Haripada Deb, which was soon effected in College Square by Pratul Chandra Ganguli in alliance with Rabindra Nath Sen and Nirmal Kanta Roy on September 29, 1913.²⁸

SACHINDRA NATH SANYAL AND THE BENGAL
REVOLUTIONARIES

In 1913, Sachindra Nath Sanyal, the leader of the Benares group of revolutionaries, came into close con-

27. Vide Moti Lal Roy's *Amar Dekha Biplab O Biplabi* (Calcutta, 1957, p. 101) and the writer's interview with Sri Nalini Kishore Guha of the Anusilan Samiti in April, 1965. Sri Guha has narrated to the interviewer that he was present in the Rajabazar centre when Rash Behari along with Pratul Chandra Ganguli went there just following the accident.

28. Pratul Chandra Ganguli's serial articles entitled *Biplabir Jiban-Darshan* published in the monthly *Prabasi* during 1367-68 B.S. See the *Chaitra* issue of 1368 B.S. in this connection. The fact noted above is also corroborated by Sri Prafulla Kumar Biswas of the Anusilan Samiti, now residing at Sodepur near Calcutta.

tact with the Bengal revolutionaries. As early as 1908 Sachindra Nath had started a society at Benares, called the Anusilan Samiti, the objects of which were the promotion of the physical, moral and intellectual qualities of its members. After the Anusilan Samiti of Dacca had been proclaimed as an unlawful institution, Sachindra Nath renamed his society as the Young Men's Association within which he developed an inner circle of close following. This innermost group led by Sachindra Nath was imbued with the ideal of working out the country's liberation by blood and fire, and were therefore sceptical of the moderate views of the parent organization. At the close of 1912 or early 1913, Sachindra Nath seceded from the parent body and "formed a new party the object of which was to get in touch with the Bengal anarchists and to carry on a similar work in the United Provinces. The obtaining of arms and ammunition, the manufacture of bombs, the distribution of seditious literature, and tampering with the loyalty of the troops were among the means to be employed. From this time the activities of Sachindra and his friends became definitely criminal in character. Sachindra did in fact get in touch with the Bengal anarchists through one Makhan Babu who introduced him to Sasanka Mohan Hazra, and Sachindra used to visit Bengal from time to time and obtain both funds and bombs from that source. In the autumn of 1913 seditious literature was distributed by hand to a number of schools and colleges in Benares, while some members pasted seditious leaflets on walls, and other copies of leaflets were distributed through the post".²⁹

According to Denham's Report on "Benares as a Centre of Revolutionary Activity" (June, 1915), Rash

29. The Judgment in the Benares Conspiracy Case, as reported in the *Statesman* of February 15, 1916.

Behari secretly met the Benares revolutionaries during his visits to that place in course of 1912. Both Nalini Mohan Mukherjee and Bisweswar Goswami of Benares have informed the present writer independently that they met Rash Behari for the first time in Benares as early as 1912. It is therefore almost certain that Rash Behari also met Sachindra Nath at Benares about this time. But Sachindra Nath was not drawn close to Rash Behari until his visit to Calcutta in the later part of the following year (1913). As Sachindra Nath's interview with Makhan Lal Sen bore no fruit, he went to the Rajabazar centre of Amrita Lal Hazra (alias Sasanka) and Pratul Chandra Ganguli of the Anusilan Samiti who in their turn introduced him to Srish Chandra Ghose, Moti Lal Roy and Rash Behari Bose of Chandernagore. Already by 1912 a close alliance had been forged between the Anusilan Samiti and the Chandernagore revolutionaries through the instrumentality of Pratul Chandra Ganguli and Amrita Lal Hazra. Soon after Sachindra Nath was drawn close to Rash Behari and incorporated into his inner circle. Rash Behari Bose attributed the name of "Lattu" to him in appreciation of his restless nature. It was in this *milieu* that the possibility of organizing a revolution in India jointly by the Bengal, Punjab and U. P. revolutionaries was seriously discussed and assessed by them.

Besides, during this period (1913-14) intimate personal contact was also established between Rash Behari Bose and Jyotindra Nath Mukherjee through the instrumentality of Amarendra Nath Chatterjee at the "Sramajibi Samabaya". In 1913 was arranged a secret meeting of these three revolutionaries under the *Panchabati* trees at Dakshineswar near Calcutta, where they discussed and devised a plan of armed rising, modelled on the Rising of 1857, with the help of the British Indian Army. After this, Rash Behari had

also been to the Fort William to sound the feelings of the local Sepoys and Havildars³⁰, but could not make much headway in that direction. A passion for revolution had by this time seized his mind and was goading him on. His contact with Jyotindra Nath Mukherjee added a new impulse to his revolutionary zeal. In him Rash Behari discovered a real leader of men and so he asked him to take charge of the Bengal front should such an eventuality arise in the future. Rash Behari also requested Moti Lal Roy to pay a personal visit to Pondicherry in order to obtain the blessings of Sri Aurobindo for the contemplated armed rising. In pursuance of this request Moti Lal Roy set out for Pondicherry in the guise of an Englishman with Sudarshan Chatterjee as his waiter. After three months' stay with Sri Aurobindo (Sept.-Nov., 1913) Moti Lal returned to Chandernagore with the latter's moral sanction to the cause.

BENGAL REVOLUTIONARIES ON TOURING MISSION

According to plan, Pratul Chandra Ganguli, accompanied by Sachindra Nath Sanyal, came to Benares to examine the suitability of Benares as a centre of future plotting. He put up at Sachindra Nath's Bengalitola residence, and after touring in Ayodhya, Lucknow, Cawnpore and Agra he returned to his base at Calcutta³¹. Next, Rash Behari set out to visit Benares, Delhi and Lahore with the object of mobilising the scattered forces into a revolutionary upsurge. According to Amarendra Nath Chatterjee, Jyotindra Nath also accompanied Rash Behari to Benares to forge

30. The letters of Amarendra Nath Chatterjee dated 4.8.54 and 4.9.54 incorporated in Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee's Bengali work *Biplabi Jibaner Smriti* as well as the former's unpublished Bengali MSS on "*Bharater Swadhinatar Itihas*" (p. 34).

31. *Prabasi, Chaitra*, 1368 B.S. for Pratul Ganguli's article entitled *Biplabi Jiban-Darshan*.

personal contacts with the Benares group of revolutionaries then led by Sachindra Nath Sanyal. But Rash Behari's work in that sector was cut short by the Delhi searches of February, 1914 resulting in the arrest of Amir Chand, Abad Behari and a few others as well as in the issue of a warrant for his arrest (February 20, 1914). Immediately after this Rash Behari fled to Chandernagore, a French colony, to escape imprisonment. During this period a constant companion to Rash Behari was Srish Chandra Ghose who tried his utmost to protect his revolutionary comrade from all possible peril. The room of his house in which Rash Behari put up at this time was constantly kept under lock and key from outside, and Rash Behari had to perform his daily ablutions under cover of darkness. Food was also supplied to him with the utmost secrecy. On March 8, 1914 his house was suddenly searched by the Calcutta police headed by Mr. Denham and Mr. Tegart, but in spite of their best efforts no trace of Rash Behari could be obtained, although Rash Behari was not then far away from his dwelling house. About this police raid the Weekly Report of the Bengal Intelligence Branch dated July 29, 1914 states that "he (Rash Behari) was present at home on the night his house was searched at Chandernagore, and actually watched the search from behind a mango tree in his garden close by". This report finds corroboration also in Bejon Behari Bose's articles on "Nirav Viplavi Srish Chandra" as published in monthly *Pravartak* during 1958-1959. There the writer observes that Srish Chandra Ghose who could somehow anticipate the coming danger, managed to keep Rash Behari in hiding in the vicinity of his house at midnight, and as soon as the police had left the premises, the much-wanted man appeared on the scene. The same source also relates that following this police raid Srish Chandra arranged for Rash Behari's stay

at Hatkhola for some time under the care of Narendra Nath Banerjee.

RASH BEHARI'S LETTER TO HIS FATHER

Meanwhile the political situation of the country was rapidly taking a critical turn, and Rash Behari's stay at Chandernagore was also coming to an abrupt end. He preferred the perils of adventure to a life of safety in hiding for an indefinite period. His passion for revolution soon led him to undertake once again organizing work in Northern India. Before he went underground with the warrant of arrest dogging his footsteps and a Punjab Government announcement of a reward of Rs. 5,000 (later enhanced to Rs. 12,000 or more) for his detection, he posted a touching letter from Calcutta to his father at Simla (early April, 1914) which, in part, reads as follows:

"After crores of salutations, my submission is this that you have surely heard by this time that I am now entangled in a net of dangers of the most terrible nature. Though God knows that I am wholly innocent, yet through the influence of my stars, I am today in the eyes of all, an accused in the Delhi case. This is perhaps my last letter. But I trust you will never look upon me as faithless and guilty. I say in the name of God that I am wholly innocent. Be that as it may, everything is happening through the influence of stars and I too am being drifted along in their revolutions. What can I do? Man can never alter fate. Besides, when the most mighty Government is my antagonist, it will be extremely difficult (for me) to obtain justice in the Court. However, whatever is decreed by fate, will come to happen. I had been dreaming of how you might get happiness in the end of your life, when the terrible bolt from heaven fell. Don't waste money for nothing by engaging pleader

for me, for it is almost an impossibility to fight against the Government . . . I resign everything into the hands of God; do pray to Him for my welfare”³²

RASH BEHARI IN BENARES

Since the issue of a warrant for his arrest in February, 1914 Rash Behari Bose began to carry on his revolutionary activities from behind the scenes. After spending a few weeks at Chandernagore in concealment, he finally left Bengal and made his new headquarters at Benares. At Benares he worked as an underground revolutionary from April, 1914 to January, 1915. During this period he put up for a few months in the house of a retired health officer at Missir Pokhra. At day time he did not generally stir out of doors and would come out only after dusk to meet his comrades either at the *ghats* of the Ganges or on the river bed. The skill and ingenuity with which he kept himself concealed at this period from the gaze of the police, surprised even his enemies. The Special Commissioners appointed in the Benares Conspiracy Case observed in this connection:

“It is a remarkable fact that Rash Behari, though a reward was offered for his arrest and his photograph had been widely circulated, should have succeeded in living in Benares during nearly the whole of the year 1914 without the police being aware of his presence.”³³

At Benares Rash Behari gave a new momentum to the revolutionary forces and “practically took charge of the movement” with Sachindra Nath Sanyal as his chief lieutenant. The main plank of his operation was

32. The Intelligence Branch Records of the Government of West Bengal preserve to this day the official English translation of the afore-said letter of Rash Behari (originally written in Bengali) to his father bearing the Calcutta postmark and reaching his father at Simla on April 9, 1914.
33. The Judgment in the Benares Conspiracy Case dated 14.2.1916 as reported in the *Statesman* on the following date.

to organize an armed rising by the Bengal, Punjab and U. P. revolutionaries acting in unison with the British Indian army. Among the persons who used to frequent the Missir Pokhra residence of Rash Behari we come across Sachindra Nath Sanyal, Nalini Mohan Mukherjee, Narendra Nath Banerjee, Preo Nath Bhattacharya, Bibhuti Bhusan Haldar, Ashutosh Roy, Manmatha Biswas etc. To these persons Rash Behari often explained the mechanism of bombs and revolvers as well as the technique to operate them. The bombs were of the Chandernagore type whose cap remained detached from the main body of the bomb and only at the time of throwing it the cap was attached to cause percussion. On November 18, 1914, while Rash Behari was examining some bombs recently brought from Calcutta, two bomb caps suddenly exploded producing an alarming sound and causing severe injuries to Rash Behari's person. Sachindra Nath Sanyal also was slightly wounded.

PINGLEY'S CONTACT WITH RASH BEHARI

Immediately after this accident Rash Behari changed his residence from Missir Pokhra to Bengalitola in Benares and thence to a house on the Harish Chandra Ghat Road.³⁴ While living at Bengalitola, he was visited by V. G. Pingley, a Marathi young man of Telegaon of the Poona district. After the break-up of the Samartha Vidyalaya of which he was a student,³⁵ Pingley had been to America in 1911 to join the University at Seattle; but, within a short time he was caught

34. In Bengalitola Rash Behari had to change his residence frequently from Madanpura to Debnathpura, from Debnathpura to Khalispura etc. just to escape the notice of the police. Throughout his absconding life in India he used to put on masked attire, sometimes even the dress of a woman. Rash Behari in the dress of a Punjabi or a Pathan was a very common feature.

35. For a brief idea of the Samartha Vidyalaya and its connection with the National Council of Education, Bengal, see the book entitled *The Origins Of The National Education Movement* (Calcutta, 1937, p. 130) written by the present writer jointly with H. Mukherjee.

in the whirlwind of *Ghadr* politics in America, and returned home as a confirmed Ghadarite on November 20, 1914. Through the instrumentality of Satyen Sen, his companion, a nephew of Bejoy Krishna Roy of Jyotindra Nath Mukherjee's party, Pingley soon came into touch with Jyotin Mukherjee and with a letter of introduction from the latter met Rash Behari at Benares. Pingley informed Rash Behari of the arrival of thousands of *Ghadr* men in the Punjab with the avowed object of consummating a revolution in India and of the prospective arrival of a few more thousands after the movement was set on foot.

A veteran organizer of conspiracy, Rash Behari sent Pingley accompanied by Sachindra Nath Sanyal to the Punjab to gather first-hand information of the Punjab situation. It is to be observed in this connection that in October, 1914 several thousands of Sikhs of the *Ghadr* party had actually arrived in the Punjab with the mission of organizing a revolution in India. These men included Nawab Khan, Mula Singh, Nidhon Singh, Udham Singh and many others. In course of November-December, 1914 a few "actions" were planned and even attempted by these men, but all proved abortive. The two major limitations from which the exclusive *Ghadr* conspiracy in India suffered were that it lacked in leadership capable of unifying the small bands of conspirators acting under minor leaders (such as Nidhon Singh or Mula Singh or Nawab Khan) into an organised revolutionary party, and, secondly, it lacked in arms and ammunition. These *Ghadr* men hardly knew the technique of bomb manufacture and the revolvers in their possession were also too inadequate for the purpose.

PINGLEY IN PUNJAB

A natural result of these abortive attempts was a temporary lull in the *Ghadr* activities. For a time

they seemed to be groping in the dark, knowing not which way to move. At this psychological moment the despatch of Pingley by Rash Behari to the Punjab appeared as a veritable god-send. Pingley met Amar Singh, Nidhon Singh, Kartar Singh, Parmanand and Ram Saran Das in Kapurthala and held out to them the possibility of co-operation of the Bengal revolutionaries with their cause. Shortly after this an important meeting was held at the Virpali Dharmasala, Amritsar (December 31, 1914) and attended by Kartar Singh, Parmanand, Harnam Singh I, Pingley, Nidhon Singh, Balwant Singh, Mula Singh and others. From judicial records we learn that at this meeting "the revolution was discussed, the looting of treasuries again mooted, the contribution of money considered, the seduction of troops, the collection of arms, the preparation of bombs, and the commission of dacoities brought into prominence." "Part of the gathering," the judicial records state further, "adjourned to Sant Gulab Singh's Dharmasala, where an experimental bomb was made and tried with success, and the proposal originally made by Pingley to bring up a Bengali expert adopted."³⁶

Sachindra Nath Sanyal also met a number of *Ghadr* revolutionaries in the Punjab and discussed with them the prospects of bomb-making under the direction of a Bengali leader, viz., Rash Behari Bose. Not merely a resolution to the effect was adopted at the Amritsar meeting, but some positive steps in that direction were also taken. Mula Singh, the local leader of Amritsar, offered to Sachindra Nath Rupees Five Hundred (January 12, 1915) as travel expenses of Rash Behari and his party from Benares, and a house was also secured from Mussamat Atri in Amritsar for

36. The Judgment in the Lahore Conspiracy Case as delivered by A. A. Irvine, President, and T. P. Ellis and Sheo Narain, Special Commissioners, on September 13, 1915.

the purpose. Emissaries were also sent to Lahore and Jhabawal for the collection of materials for bomb manufacture.³⁷

On the return of Pingley and Sachindra Nath Sanyal to Benares a fruitful meeting was held in Rash Behari's house on the Harish Chandra Ghat Road about the middle of January, 1915. At this meeting Rash Behari exhorted his followers to get ready for the February rising and declared before them that "a rebellion was to take place all over the country and that the time had come when they must prepare to die for their country".³⁸ Rash Behari chalked out a plan of work at that meeting and announced that Damodar Swarup would be the leader at Allahabad, Bibhuti and Preo Nath would go to the Benares lines to seduce the troops, and Nalini Mukherjee would go to Jabbalpore for the same purpose. Narendra Nath Banerjee and Preo Nath Bhattacharya were to bring arms from Bengal while Vinayak Rao Kaple and Hem Chandra Datta would convey them to the Punjab. From the Punjab, it was also arranged, Vinayak would come to Cawnpore to assume the local charge of the affairs, Pingley would see the Indian troops everywhere, and the Punjabi revolutionaries would be working at Ferozepore. Kalipada Mukherjee and Ananda Charan Bhattacharya were to be kept as reserves in Benares. Rash Behari explained further at the meeting "how to blow up bridges, how to cut telegraph wires, how to destroy railway lines, and how to loot treasuries and banks". Besides, Rash Behari informed his comrades that he himself was going to the Punjab with Sachindra Nath Sanyal and Pingley to organize the revolution, of which the exact date would be later announced after his consultation with the *Ghadr* men. This meeting

37. *Ibid.*

38. The Judgment in the Benares Conspiracy Case as reported in the *Statesman* on February 15, 1916.

at Rash Behari's house was attended by Sachindra Nath Sanyal, Damodar Swarup Seth, V. G. Pingley, Narendra Nath Banerjee, Vinayak Rao Kaple, Jamna Das and Bibhuti Bhusan Haldar.

RASH BEHARI AND THE BENGAL REVOLUTIONARIES

After Rash Behari had assumed the supreme command of the Benares affairs (1914), the Anusilan Samiti of Dacca and the Chandernagore centre of Moti Lal Roy began to work in close unison with the Benares group of revolutionaries. In this connection Sachindra Nath Sanyal has stated in his *Bandi-Jiban* (Vol. I) that since the historic amalgamation of 1913 the revolutionaries all over north India from the Punjab, Delhi and Benares to Chandernagore and Dacca had been for all practical purposes united for effecting a revolutionary upsurge in India with the help of the British Indian army. The other political parties of Bengal were completely unaware of this momentous development.

That Rash Behari was bent upon organizing an armed revolution by exploiting the internal forces without waiting for the arrival of German arms is clearly reflected in his conversation with Kedareswar Guha of the Anusilan Samiti. Kedareswar Guha, sent to Germany by Naren Sen in 1912 with the object of securing German help on behalf of Indian revolutionaries, returned to Calcutta from America (October, 1914) carrying definite information from Dhiren Sarkar, his class-mate in the Bengal National College, Calcutta, of the formation of the Berlin-India Committee and the readiness of the German Government to send arms to India. Kedareswar met Rash Behari in Benares with a letter of introduction from Anukul Chakravarty (alias Thakur), then the leader of the Anusilan Samiti. On learning the message of Kedareswar Guha on a boat over the Ganges after dusk, Rash Behari plainly

informed him that in spite of the assurance of the German Government to send arms to India to strengthen the hands of Indian revolutionaries, he was not going to put off his plan in expectation of this uncertain element, but would follow up his own course of action.³⁹ Meanwhile, emissaries had always been sent from Benares to Chandernagore carrying Rash Behari's instructions to his followers during the armed rising that was coming ahead. Before Rash Behari left for the Punjab, he had called Anukul Chakravarty and Nagen Datta (alias Girija Babu) to Benares, who met him in his house on the Harish Chandra Ghat Road and found Pingley and Kartar Singh also present there. Rash Behari asked Anukul to arrange for simultaneous bomb outrages all over Bengal and to seduce the Benares regiment then posted at Dacca. On their return Girija Babu remained at Calcutta to look after Calcutta affairs while Anukul Chakravarty moved towards Dacca to carry through the task assigned to him.⁴⁰ Information was also sent from Calcutta to the districts of Malda, Coochbihar, Dinajpur, Rajsahi etc. to get ready for the eventual attack on the police lines and the treasuries on the appointed day.⁴¹ After the Mussalmanpara bomb outrage, Prafulla Kumar Biswas went to Patna, trying there to create incitement in the Danapur Cantonment.

It has to be noted also that in response to Rash Behari's invitation Jyotindra Nath Mukherjee along with Narendra Nath Bhattacharya (alias M. N. Roy)

39. Kedareswar Guha's statement incorporated in *Banglay Biplab-bad* by Nalini Kishore Guha (Calcutta, 1954), pp. 138-143.

40. Sri Anukul Chakravarty has informed the writer that he met two Rajput soldiers, Bhup Singh and Kartar Singh, of the Benares regiment on the Dacca-bound steamer and had talk with them. At Dacca he tried to seduce them, and he gave Rs. 300/- to Kartar Singh. But after sometime that regiment was transferred from Benares.

41. *Agnidiner Katha* by Satis Pakrasi (1947), pp. 46-47. Sri Nalini Kanta Ghose has informed the present writer that he was then in charge of the Rajsahi district and that it was he who gave orders to blow off the Police Training College at Sardah, Rajsahi, in the February Revolt of 1915.

and Atul Krishna Ghose travelled to Benares to meet him. Rash Behari not merely disclosed his plan to Jyotindra Nath, but also asked him to take the command of Bengal⁴², and himself went to Amritsar to assume the direction of affairs there with Mula Singh as his right-hand man.

ATTEMPTED REVOLUTION BY RASH BEHARI

By the middle of January, 1915 Rash Behari arrived in Amritsar and put up at Mussamat Atri's house in Chauk Baba Atal, maintaining strict secrecy and receiving revolutionary workers at the Sant Gulab Singh's Dharmasala. No sooner had he come to Amritsar than he plunged himself into the preparatory work including bomb manufacture and employed Amar Singh and Ram Saran Das as his assistants. He also sent emissaries to Benares who "returned bringing a biscuit tin with bombs in it". Besides, a bomb factory was set up at Jhabewal, which was afterwards transferred to Lohatbadi. At this stage several political dacoities were committed at Jhanir, Rabhon, Sahnewal and Mansuran, and as a sequel of the Chabba dacoity (February 2-3, 1915) in which the dacoits had to encounter police resistance, Rash Behari at once shifted his headquarters from Amritsar to Lahore on February 2, 1915. At Lahore Rash Behari's major pre-occupation was to devise ways and means for the seduction of troops, and to send emissaries to Jullundhar, Bannu, Kohat, Rawalpindi, Peshwar, Jhelum, Kapurthala, Ferozepore, Meerut, Ambala etc. in order to influence both the infantry and the cavalry men. After having obtained the information of their ready response Rash Behari announced on February 12 that the general rising from Peshwar to Bengal would take place on February 21 and a tri-coloured flag

42. Atul Krishna Ghose's statement as incorporated in *Banglay Biplab-bad*, p. 320.

—yellow (Sikh), red (Hindu) and blue (Muslim)—would be hoisted on that date. Intimation was sent to different cantonments and every possible arrangement was perfected for the armed rising. As the *Sedition Committee Report* of 1918 puts it: Rash Behari went to Lahore and “sent out emissaries to various cantonments in Upper India to procure military aid for the appointed day. He also tried to organize the collection of gangs of villagers to take part in the rebellion. Bombs were prepared; arms were got together; flags were made ready; a declaration of war was drawn up; instruments were collected for destroying railways and telegraph wires. In the meantime, however, in order to raise funds for the financing of the enterprise, some Punjab revolutionaries had committed various dacoities”.⁴³ It was also arranged that an outbreak in Mian Mir would serve as the signal, and it appears that simultaneous risings were designed at Lahore, Ferozepore and Rawalpindi, spreading to Jabbalpore, Benares and other places in quick succession. The *Sedition Committee Report* further states that “at least two or three revolutionaries in Eastern Bengal were on the 8th of February aware of what was in contemplation, and were arranging for a rising at Dacca if the Sikh revolt materialised.” But unfortunately, the rising did not take place, as the signal for the outbreak was never struck due to the treachery of a man, Kripal Singh, who allowed himself to be used as a spy by the police. His suspicious movements near the Lahore station on February 15 at a time when he was expected to be in Mian Mir to convey Rash

43. It is to be noted that the said declaration of war was entitled ‘Yuddha Ghosana’ written in Hindi. It was drafted under Rash Behari’s instructions by one of his followers, and after its correction by Rash Behari, hundreds of copies of the same were made on the duplicator. As to the flags referred to above, Sir Michael O’ Dwyer writes in his *India As I Knew It* that four rebel flags were captured by the police raid on Lahore on February 19, 1915, one of which Sir Michael claimed and held as a souvenir (p. 202).

Behari's message to the troops, caused serious misgivings in the mind of some revolutionaries who happened to see him. Gifted with a rare sense of realism and insight Rash Behari at once changed the date for the contemplated rising from February 21 to February 19, and hurriedly took all necessary steps in that direction. But, again, the whole programme fell through as the police in liaison with Kripal Singh succeeded in raiding the Mochi Gate House of Rash Behari at Lahore on the 19th and putting several persons under arrest. Thus the whole conspiracy collapsed, but Rash Behari and Pingley managed to escape to Benares.⁴⁴

The Sedition Committee Report evaluates the whole thing in the following words:

"The success attained was extremely small, but the seed sown must have caused some tragedies had not the plan for a concerted rising on the 21st of February been nipped in the bud" (p. 110).

FAILURE OF THE PINGLEY MISSION AT MEERUT

On his return to Benares along with Vinayak Rao Kaple, Rash Behari's major concern was how to save

44. It is interesting to read what the Judgment in the Lahore Conspiracy Case said about the collapse of the movement: "On the 15th February, when there was a large meeting in Lahore he (Kripal Singh) had wired to Liaquat Hyat Khan to come up from Amritsar to arrest the gathering. The wire was delayed and the police arriving late at Lahore were met by Kripal Singh at the station, and he told them it was too late". Meanwhile his secret manipulation was seen through and the contemplated rising was ante-dated the 19th. Then the Judgment continued:

"Kripal Singh found this out on his return from Dadhir and told the Amritsar police who were in Lahore waiting for a raid on the morning of the 19th.

"He remained in the Mochi Gate house throughout the 19th waiting for the leaders to assemble before giving a signal to the Police, but by the afternoon, though the principal leaders had not collected having reason to believe those present intended to murder him he gave a pre-arranged signal to the police. The house was raided, some of the revolutionists captured and the centre of organization was broken. Rash Behari Bose appears to have fled, others of the revolutionists disappeared, others from time to time have been arrested."

his Benares colleagues from the clutches of the police. Sachindra Nath Sanyal has stated in this connection that while the Government employed all their resources to bind down Rash Behari Bose, the latter too devoted his whole energies to keep his Benares party intact. With this great task ahead, Rash Behari had to spend more than a month at Benares, safely eluding the grasp of the police who was pursuing him like a bull dog.⁴⁵

While Rash Behari was staying at Benares, Pingley came from Meerut after having felt the pulse of the troops there. Meerut was a familiar place for Pingley where he had worked in the early part of February among the 128th Pioneers and the 12th Cavalry, in company with Kartar Singh and Sucha Singh. Rash Behari was no longer in favour of 'inciting' the army, but on Pingley's insistence to have a second chance among the Meerut troops he had to concede even against his will.

About March 20, 1915 Pingley returned to Benares with Nadir Khan, an Afghan Jamadar of the 12th Cavalry, and brought to Meerut ten live bombs concealed in a steel trunk. Mr. Cleveland, the Director of Criminal Intelligence of the Government of India, writes in his *Note* on Meerut Bomb Affair that the Afghan who accompanied Pingley to Benares was taken to a house blindfolded in the dark and was introduced to a Bengali leader who, on cross-examining him and on being satisfied that he was a genuine mutineer with large following behind, "ordered that the bombs should be given and also told him various things about the plans of the revolutionaries. Among other things he said that he had made 300 bombs for the 12th Cavalry. . . He also explained to the sower the method of using the phosphorus solution to make slow fuses for the bombs".⁴⁶

45. Sachindra Nath Sanyal's *Bandi-Jiban* (Vol. II, 1925).

46. The *Note* of Mr. Cleveland, the Director of Criminal Intelligence.

According to Mr. Cleveland, this Bengali leader was no other than Rash Behari Bose himself. But as ill luck would have it, the Meerut scheme again fell through due to the treachery of the Afghan Jamadar who had accompanied Pingley to Benares. On the night of March 23 the Officer commanding the 12th Cavalry on being previously informed, suddenly raided one of the sower's quarters in his lines where he found Pingley displaying 10 picric acid bombs, 10 glass phials and a written formula for bomb making. Pingley was at once put under arrest and subsequently hanged on a charge of treason. Colonel Muspratt Williams, the Chief Inspector of Explosives to the Government of India, described these bombs as of the Delhi pattern and "of a highly dangerous character".⁴⁷ In Mr. Cleveland's view the "Meerut programme was a mere item in the big scheme of the combined Ghadr and Bengali party". He further states: "I believe that at the present moment the Ghadr party in the Punjab is disorganised and beaten. The revolutionary party in Bengal is on the other hand well-organised and flushed by success. Rash Behari who has been so active in behaving towards the Punjabis as the Germans have done towards the Turks has hitherto brought upon his dupes far more trouble than success and has also risked a disclosure of a part of the Bengali organisation in his efforts to amalgamate it with the Punjab schemes. Judging however from our experience of Rash Behari in the past it is probable that he may be quite undiscouraged by the failures and risks incurred and will forthwith seek out new centres and fresh partisans". Mr. Cleveland whose animosity to the

Delhi, dated 25.3.1915. Also see the Judgment in the Lahore Conspiracy Case.

47. It has been learnt by the present writer from Sri Manindra Nath Naik of Chandernagore that the ten Meerut bombs were manufactured at Chandernagore and thence brought to Benares by Manmatha Nath Biswas.

revolutionaries was so pronounced, was however shrewd enough to observe the distinction that was noticeable at that time between the Punjabi and the Bengali revolutionaries. According to him, the Bengali revolutionaries were made up of sterner stuff. "The Sikhs and Mahomedans of the Ghadr party", he observed, "are so prone to be ostentatious and to make statements when arrested that their Bengali allies will possibly feel nervous before long of trusting them very far. A most urgent requirement is the discovery and destruction of the nest at Benares".⁴⁸

RASH BEHARI'S RETHINKING ON THE INDIAN SITUATION

The tragic end the attempted rising met with successively at Lahore and Meerut carried important lessons for Rash Behari who now became convinced of the futility of the method he had hitherto pursued for an armed Indian rising with the help of the Indian army serving under the British. The supreme importance of foreign assistance, both military and financial, forced itself upon his mind at this stage. He began to think of undertaking a tour abroad for his mission. Once, in the year 1914, after the warrant for his arrest had been issued, Srish Chandra Ghose and other Chandernagore friends of Rash Behari urged him to flee from India to escape arrest, and even a ticket for that purpose was purchased. But as Rash Behari felt that his work in India had not yet been done, he tore the ticket into pieces. This time, however, graver circumstances counselled him to flee from the country. Rash Behari himself has narrated in his *Atmakatha* (Autobiographical Sketch) the great truth that the revolutionary parties in India were not lacking either in man-power or in "disciplined organisa-

48. Mr. Cleveland's second and third *Notes* on Meerut Bomb Affair, dated 31.2.1915 and 14.4.1915.

tion", but sadly lacking in arms and ammunitions on account of which they had to tread the dangerous path of contacting the British Indian army. Had there been sufficient arms in the hands of the revolutionaries, so argued Rash Behari, a revolution could have been effected in India by the civilians alone, notwithstanding the arrest of a few persons here and there. Hence he decided that the country should first be honey-combed with "small arms" before a second attempt could be successfully undertaken. Another factor that handicapped the revolutionaries was, in Rash Behari's view, the lack of funds. Money secured by means of political dacoities or received as gifts from a few monied men was found to be too inadequate for big work. He now clearly perceived, as Cavour did a century ago in Italy, that a subject people could not secure their independence without international assistance.⁴⁹

RASH BEHARI'S FLIGHT FROM INDIA

The news of the arrest of Pingley at Meerut (March 23, 1915) and of Srish Chandra Ghose at Howrah (about this time) dealt a severe blow to Rash Behari's mind. The shock seemed unbearable for a time, and profoundly disturbed in mind, he left for Chandernagore along with Nalini Mohan Mukherjee. From his house at Tripurabhairavi Brahmapuri in Benares Rash Behari and Nalini Mohan started for Bengal. They were received by Jyotish Sinha (alias Pasupati) at the Mogra station who escorted them to Chandernagore. Rash Behari passed a few days in that French colony in absolute secrecy and firmly decided in consultation with Moti Lal Roy to leave for Japan. It was further decided that he would travel in the name of P. N. Tagore, posing as a relative of

49. *Rash Behari Atmakatha* as published in the *Prabartak* monthly for *Jaistha*, 1331 B.S.

Rabindra Nath Tagore whose journey to Japan was scheduled for the near future, in order to create a general impression in interested circles that P. N. Tagore was preceding Rabindra Nath only to make necessary arrangements for the poet's reception in that foreign land. During this period of his Chandernagore stay, Rash Behari lived in the house of Sagar Kali Ghose like a "Bhatchaj Brahmin" with a big sacred thread on and a long *tikki*. Meanwhile, while his preparations for Japan tour were under progress, he spent the interim period of over a month at Nabadwip along with a Marathi young man. Anukul Chakravarty (alias Thakur) who was then at Nabadwip was sent by Rash Behari to Dacca for securing money. With money from Anukul Chakravarty Girija Babu soon came to Nabadwip after which Rash Behari, in consultation with Girija Babu, Sachin Sanyal and Pasupati, decided to go to Calcutta via Chandernagore.⁵⁰ A few days before his steamship *Sanuki Maru* would leave the Calcutta port, Rash Behari reached Calcutta and a ticket was purchased for him. He met some of his associates, viz., Sachindra, Damodar, Bibhuti, Pasupati etc., in a room on the second floor above the Dharmatala post-office, exhorting them to vigorously continue the organizational work under the guidance of Sachindra Nath Sanyal and Girija Babu during his absence.⁵¹ On May 12, 1915 Rash Behari departed from India. He reached Japan on June 5 and after some initial difficulties settled down to work for the supreme cause of India's liberation.

50. Sri Anukul Chandra Chakravarty, aged 77, has communicated to the writer on 8.7.1966 that he sent money from Dacca to Rash Behari Bose at Nabadwip through Girija Babu, but he does not remember whether he met Rash Behari at Nabadwip. So far as he can recollect, he had left Nabadwip before Rash Behari went to that place.

51. The Judgment in the Benares Conspiracy Case. Also see *Rash Behari's Atmakatha* in the *Asar*, 1331 B.S. issue of the monthly *Prabartak*.

MIRACULOUS ESCAPES OF RASH BEHARI

The political career of Rash Behari was full of perils and adventures. He found himself repeatedly in the thick of apparently insurmountable difficulties but thanks to God's blessings he tided over them in no time. All the resources of the British bureaucracy were pressed to bind him down under the iron rigours of law but they came to naught in the long run. His escapes from peril seem to be a riddle to ordinary human intelligence. He could see things so clearly and fully as to foresee the future. He was endowed with a rare anticipating vision which was mainly responsible for his miraculous escapes from imminent danger through life. All other Indian revolutionaries had to face at least once or twice the miseries of imprisonment at the hands of the British, but Rash Behari stood out as a clear exception to the general rule. He had an unswerving faith in God and believed in the Gita doctrine of *Nishkama Karma* or selfless work. His idealism was superb and was never allowed to be tainted by petty considerations of self or ego. He dedicated himself wholly and unreservedly to the divine mission of the country's liberation and he was saved from uttermost difficult situations which repeatedly threatened to overpower him as if under the guidance of the Providence Himself.

It is most amusing to note that in February, 1914 when police searches at Delhi had been vigorously set on foot, leading to the arrests of Amir Chand and Abad Bihari as well as to the discovery of Rash Behari's some belongings, Rash Behari was spending his days in a carefree manner at Lahore without the slightest knowledge of the swift developments at Delhi. But when he came to learn of Dina Nath's arrest at Lahore from a student of the D. A. V. College Boarding in the evening, Rash Behari in his clear-sighted vision anticipated the

coming things and left the place that very night, thus frustrating the very object of the police swoop at his residence at the following day-break.

Rash Behari arrived at Delhi from Lahore for safety but being informed on the way by Amir Chand's servant of the arrest of his master, he at once left bag and baggage for Chandernagore thus eluding again the grasp of the police.⁵²

Information gradually reached the Bengal police that Rash Behari had been hiding in his own house at Chandernagore. They laid a trap to catch their prey by making a surprise swoop at his residence on March 8, 1914 but were befooled again by the man who warded off the danger by concealment. The failure of the police search led the authorities to believe that their prey had already left Chandernagore for Upper India. The Punjab police therefore issued a circular dated March 9, 1914 against Rash Behari Bose, announcing a reward of Rs. 5,000/- for the capture of Rash Behari or any useful information relating to him. A vivid description of Rash Behari's physical features and movements were provided in the circular which reads in part as follows:

"Fairly tall; stoutish; large eyes; moustache recently shaved; third finger of one hand stiff and scarred as result of accident; aged about 30. Dresses sometimes as Punjabi and sometimes as Bengali. May probably be wandering about in the guise of a Sannyasi. Frequent Rawalpindi, Multan, Ambala, Simla, Amritsar, Gurudaspur, Ferozepur, Jhelum and Lahore. Bengali *Kalibaris* and Colonies and Hindu Shivalas, & c., should be carefully scrutinised, as well as all Sarais and Railway Stations".⁵³ Intimation was also transmitted to all the steamer companies of India to co-operate with

52. Sachindra Nath Sanyal's *Bandi-Jiban* (Vol. II).

53. Vide File No. 430/14 of the I. B. Records of the Government of West Bengal.

the Government with regard to a man of the above description, and his photos were widely circulated at all railway stations. But in spite of this vigorous hunt about by the police, Rash Behari reached Benares safe and sound in April, 1914 and settled down to work for his political objects even in concealment. It appeared surprising to the judges of the Benares Conspiracy Case that Rash Behari could safely stay in Benares for about the whole of 1914 without the police being aware in the least of his presence there.

A shrewd observer of men and matters, Rash Behari could assume the role of any person in his natural setting. He was thus an adept in assuming pseudo-names in pseudo-dresses.⁵⁴ In the *milieu* of the Lahore conspiracy he was known to his colleagues in the Punjab in various names such as *Fat Bengali*, *Satindar Chandar*, *Chuchandra Nath Dutt* and *Satis Chandar* and never disclosed his real name to them. Rash Behari could speak Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi and English fluently.

After the Lahore Conspiracy had fallen through (February 19, 1915), Rash Behari spent a few days at Lahore, then in the grip of the civil and military authorities, without allowing himself to be detected by his enemies. He decided to proceed towards Kabul in the guise of a Mahomedan and even began reading *Kalmas* with Maulvis. But suddenly in an intuitive flash he foresaw the coming dangers and set out for Benares without delay in the dress of a heavily-turbaned Punjabi. His house at Lahore was searched the next day of his flight from that place.

At Benares, Rash Behari developed a new tactics of assuming the role of a woman as a measure of protection against his enemies. Sri Bisweswar Goswami,

54. This qualification was an acquisition of Rash Behari even from his early youth at Simla where he associated himself with many theatrical organizations, and once he amazed the audience while playing in the role of Lawrence Foster in *Chandrasekhar*.

a junior colleague of Rash Behari at Benares, has informed the present writer that at least on two occasions,—once in the house of Bibhuti Bhusan Haldar and then in the present house of Bisweswar Goswami,—Rash Behari easily broke through heavy police cordon placed at those houses, putting on woman's dress.⁵⁵

Rash Behari in the role of a Bhatchaj Brahmin at Chandernagore was such a natural performance as to attract even a police spy, out in the pursuit of Rash Behari, to offer *pranams* to him by stretching his body on the floor, without being able to know the real man.

On the eve of his travel to Japan, Rash Behari, dressed as P. N. Tagore, went to the Police Commissioner at Calcutta to receive his identity card.⁵⁶ For him at first a second-class ticket was purchased. But at the last moment Rash Behari changed his ticket for first-class on account of which, as he himself narrated in his *Atmakatha*, he could avoid search at numerous points, and even at Hongkong where any Indian intending to leave that port was required to have a permit from the Police Superintendent, he managed to secure a permit for himself in the name of Preo Nath Tagore.⁵⁷

THE EARLY YEARS OF RASH BEHARI IN JAPAN

The failure of the *Maverick* and *Henry S* plot (March-July, 1915) to smuggle big cargo of arms into India to help the Indian revolutionaries had in the meantime convinced the German Consulates in the Far East of the enormous risks involved in the large shipment of arms to India. But the idea of smuggling

55. The letter of Sri Bisweswar Goswami of D/30/65 Debnathpura, Benares, dated 21.6.66. The present writer had an interview with him to the same effect at Benares in October, 1965. Sri Somendra Nath Roy of Santiniketan has also informed the present writer that Rash Behari employed the same tactics in Japan too during his underground life there (1915-23).

56. This bit of information was supplied to Sri Somendra Nath Roy in Japan by Rash Behari himself.

57. *Rash Behari's Atmakatha* in the monthly *Prabartak* for *Agrahayan*, 1331 B.S.

small stocks of arms through overland routes—through Siam and Burma,—was not ruled out altogether. A major pre-occupation of Rash Behari in Japan was to keep constant contact with the German Consulate at Shanghai which favoured the smuggling of small stocks of arms to India with the help of some German agents. One A. Neilson was very active in this matter. He used to collect arms and purchase chemicals for making explosives, and four houses occupied by Neilson in Shanghai were traced by the Municipal Police, Shanghai, at 108 Chaotung Road in the International Settlement, 32 Yangtsepoo Road, another in Siccawei Road and a fourth one in Autung Road, Chapei District and were found to have contained arms and explosives.⁵⁸

In Japan Rash Behari came into contact with Bhagwan Singh, a seasoned revolutionary, and went to Shanghai to devise ways and means to smuggle arms to India. In Shanghai he put up at Neilson's Yangtsepoo Road house⁵⁹ and in liaison with Neilson engaged two Chinese to carry arms to Bengal and hand them over to Amarendra Nath Chatterjee. The Intelligence Branch Records of the Government of West Bengal show that on October 16, 1915 the Shanghai Municipal Police happened to arrest two Chinese suspects and "found in their possession 129 pistols and 12,000 rounds of ammunition, which the suspects declared had been made over to them by a local German firm to be packed and sent to Calcutta". It is further revealed by the same source that the said persons were to deliver the smuggled goods to two persons in Calcutta viz., Amarendra Nath Chatterjee of the "Sramajibi Samabaya" and Manmohon Bhattacharya of the Hindusthan

58. Letters by J. W. Seigne, Captain, R. M. L. I. to the Commander-in-Chief, H. M. Ships and Vessels, China, dated Shanghai, March 6 and March 16, 1916.

59. Home Political Proceedings of the Government of India. Nov. 1916; No. 44 Deposit, for the statement of Abani Nath Mukherjee.

Co-operative Bank.⁶⁰ This fact is also referred to by the *Sedition Committee Report* (p. 85) which mentions that the two Chinese in possession of 129 automatic pistols and 20, 830 rounds of ammunition "concealed in the centre of bundles of planks" were arrested at Shanghai in October, 1915. Besides, Rash Behari arranged for the despatch of a messenger to India to communicate closely guarded secrets to his friends and colleagues. Abani Nath Mukherjee who had then been living in Japan was selected by Bhagwan Singh for the mission and was sent to Rash Behari at Shanghai. Abani Nath was fully instructed by Rash Behari as to his assigned role in India, and was also supplied with a list of names which were noted down in his diary, but unfortunately, in course of his Indiaward journey he was arrested at Singapore in September, 1915. Besides, Rash Behari, introduced to the German Consul at Shanghai as the "Chief Indian Revolutionary leader", also arranged with his help the despatch of two ship-loads of arms to India which were confiscated before they reached their destination.⁶¹

On his return from Shanghai an important work of Rash Behari was the organization of a meeting in a Tokyo hotel at Ueno Park (November 27, 1915) in collaboration with Heramba Lal Gupta, Lala Lajpat Rai and Dr. Syumei Ohkawa (a bitter critic of the British Administration in India) and attended by many Japanese gentlemen. On that occasion the Japanese national flag was unfurled and their national anthem sung. The fiery speeches delivered at the meeting, particularly by Lajpat Rai condemning the British policy in India, enraged the British ambassador in Japan so much as to bring British pressure on the

60. The letter of Mr. Cleveland, the Director of Criminal Intelligence, Delhi, to the Police Commissioner, Bengal, dated Simla, the 21st October, 1915.

61. Rash Behar's written statement entitled "Our Struggle".

Japanese Government then bound as allies by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902-21). Under pressure from Britain, an Extradition Warrant against Rash Behari Bose was soon issued by the Government of Japan. As soon as the news reached his ears, he went into concealment in a baker's workshop in Tokyo with the help of the old Samurai leader Mr. M. Toyama. The baker referred to was no other than Mr. Aizo Soma who later gave his daughter in marriage to Rash Behari mainly for political reasons. Although the Extradition Warrant was withdrawn after about four months (April, 1916), yet Rash Behari remained hemmed in with dangers from the British Embassy in Japan, necessitating his change of residence as many as seventeen times during the eight years following (1916-23). At every turn he stood in danger of either being kidnapped or killed by the British agency.⁶² So, he had to maintain strictest secrecy about his whereabouts during this period. But then it was not a period of his complete isolation from the current of world politics. Even during this period of concealment his plotting activities continued. Mr. D. Petrie who was deputed in 1916 as Intelligence Officer of the Government of India in the Far East, wrote a very interesting and important Report on the Indian revolutionary activities in the Far East in 1917. Regarding Rash Behari Bose, the Petrie Report says :

“Indeed, the only person of real importance who appears to be left is Rash Behari Bose *alias* P. N. Thakur, who, however, is living under aegis of the Japanese Government, and who, by reason of the secrecy maintained as to his existence and the restrictions imposed upon his freedom of movement, may be almost regarded as no longer borne on the ‘active list’. It is not, of course, implied that Bose is inactive, but

62. J. G. Ohsawa's *The Two Great Indians In Japan* (Calcutta, 1954) pp. 10-18.

the conditions imposed by his very method of existence are bound to detract greatly from his usefulness to the party". The Report then continues: "Towards the latter part of July Bose disappeared completely from Tokyo, where his place of refuge had become known to the British authorities. Almost at the close of December 1917 Mr. Davidson, His Majesty's Vice-Consul at Yokohama was able, after an exhaustive and most skilfully conducted inquiry, to rediscover him at Okitsu, a village in the vicinity of Katsura, a town on the East coast. Bose, after his discovery, almost immediately left for Tokyo, where he is believed to be concealed in the compound of the house of the Lord High Chamberlain to the Emperor, although it is possible that it is merely some retainer of this high official who is harbouring Bose without his master's knowledge". Rash Behari adopted the pseudo name of Hayashi Ichiro at that time.

About Rash Behari Bose's underground activities in Japan the Petrie Report goes on to state further:

"Intercepted letters to Bose show conclusively that he is still in close touch with the heads of the conspiracy in America such as Narendra Bhattacharji and Ram Chand and that he is still devoting himself to revolutionary work, so far as the disabilities imposed by his position will permit". It is further revealed that Rash Behari was also in touch with Mr. Tarak Nath Das while the latter was in Japan for four months in 1917. Tarak Nath Das looked up to Rash Behari, in the words of Mr. Petrie, "as some one greater than himself". Both are said "to have evolved a scheme for the sinking of ships by means of explosives to be placed on board". But the scheme did not proceed far beyond the discussion stage.⁶³ The seizure by the police of a holograph writing from Rash Behari Bose

63. The Report of Mr. D. Petrie, dated Shanghai, January 10, 1918.

in course of the searches of Tarak Nath Das's room at 44, Portola Street, Newyork, in connection with the famous San Francisco Trial of 1917-18, offers another proof of the closeness of intimacy between these two Indian revolutionaries. Dr. Chandra Kanta Chakravarty, a leader of the Indo-German conspiracy, has informed the present writer that he too received letters from Rash Behari Bose during his stay in America in this period.

It needs he noted that the period of factual concealment for Rash Behari did not terminate until the year 1923 when he came to acquire Japanese citizenship. Being happy over this priceless acquisition, Rash Behari wrote the following from Japan to Srish Chandra Ghose: "You will perhaps be glad to know that I have got myself naturalised here. This will enable me to travel in any part of the world except the British possessions". From that time he appeared on the public scene in the politics of Japan and began to work and organize with his new base at Tokyo the forces for the liberation of his mother-country from British thralldom.⁶⁴

In Japan Rash Behari soon qualified himself as a distinguished Japanese citizen. By associating himself with many universities and academies, by writing books and delivering speeches in Japanese, by introducing features of Indian life and culture, he strengthened and fostered the ancient bond that had existed between India and Japan. He identified himself with the life of the Japanese so completely as to draw admiration even from men of great cultural standing. Mr. Kawabata-ko, a famous collector of Japanese painting, once advised Sri Binode Behari

64. The pursuit of Rash Behari by the British agents did not end even after 1923. At least two more attempts were made by them to kidnap him (1926 and 1932-33) which were frustrated through the efforts of Mr. Toyama and his friends.

Mukherjee, the renowned artist of Santiniketan who had been to Japan in 1937, to meet Mr. Bose if he wanted to learn Japanese etiquette. Very few Japanese stood on a par with him in this respect, said the Japanese gentleman.⁶⁵ Thus Rash Behari was outwardly a full-fledged Japanese, but at heart he was a true son of Mother India whose political liberation was his supreme objective. At Tokyo he erected a tablet in the pine bush of his house wherein were inscribed the names of those of his colleagues in India who had laid their lives in the cause of the country. Rash Behari used to sit and meditate near this tablet in his leisurely hours. Sri Somendra Nath Roy of Basic Teachers' Training, Santiniketan, who spent three years in Japan (1934-1937) to learn collotype photography and lived in *Asia Lodge*, a boarding house founded by Rash Behari in or about 1934 for Asian students, still possesses a number of photos of Rash Behari sitting beside the above-mentioned tablet.

THE I. I. L. AND THE I. N. A.

A born fighter and grim revolutionary, Rash Behari did not aspire after peace or rest even in his life of exile in a foreign land. The liberation of the country from alien thralldom was the first passion with him to which everything else, even life itself, was subordinate. Driven by this consuming passion he set himself before long to the organization of the kindred spirits in South-East Asia and founded the Indian Independence League (1924) having Tokyo as its headquarters with branches spread out in neighbouring lands in order to promote the cause of Indian independence. For over long seventeen years he ceaselessly

65. Binode Behari Mukherjee, before he set out for Japan, was advised by Rabindra Nath Tagore to seek help from Rash Behari Bose in his difficulties and to show respects to him in the same way as he did to the poet.

toiled through I. I. L. explaining the political condition of India before East Asians and emphasising the supreme importance of Indian independence as a factor of Greater Asian freedom and unity. His slogan of "Asia for Asians" roused the East Asians from slumber and inspired them to rise to a man for expelling Western imperialism from Asia. It is not a little due to Rash Behari Bose that they began to look upon the political emancipation of India as a stepping-stone to Greater Asian liberation from bondage, and that they became sympathisers with the Indian cause in large numbers. He also promoted Indo-Japanese co-operation, good-will and understanding on the political level, just as Rabindra Nath Tagore did it on the cultural front after the World War I.⁶⁶

The spectacular military rise of Japan in the 'thirties and her entry into the Axis combination (1937) was a momentous development in world politics. The British imperialism all over the globe stood before a most menacing crisis from the Axis combination. In these international complications Rash Behari saw the future salvation of his motherland. In his political psychology the enemies of Britain were the friends of India, no matter what their ideology or internal administration was. Never a doctrinaire or a fashionable philanthropist, Rash Behari was a hard-headed realist and could grasp the fundamentals of politics more clearly and precisely than many of his Indian compatriots. The promotion of the interests of his motherland was his principal concern and he did never allow foamy philosophisings or vague isms to get the upperhand in him. This explains the difference in his reaction to Japan's

66. Rabindranath by his visit to Japan in 1916, 1924 and 1929 as well as by other means tried to promote Indo-Japanese cultural co-operation on a durable basis.

undeclared war against China since July 7, 1937. Moved by humanitarian impulses many Indian leaders then began to vehemently condemn Japan for her military action against China, but Rash Behari approached the whole thing like a *real-politiker* and was very much distressed by the unpolitical anti-Japanese propaganda by Indians through press and platform, for he considered such propaganda highly inimical to the national interests of India. So he sent the following cable to Rabindra Nath Tagore: "Indian merchants, students and residents here request you to prevent Congress and Pandit Nehru's anti-Japanese activities for the sake of Indian interests and Indo-Japanese friendship". To this Rabindra Nath sent a very decent reply dated October 10, 1937, from which an extract is quoted below:

"Your cable has caused me many restless hours, for it hurt me very much to have to ignore your appeal. I wish you had asked for my co-operation in a cause against which my spirit did not protest. I know in making this appeal you counted on my great regard for the Japanese, for, I, along with the rest of Asia, did once admire and look up to Japan and did once fondly hope that in Japan Asia had at last discovered its challenge to the West, that Japan's new strength would be consecrated in safeguarding the culture of the East against alien interests. But Japan has not taken long to betray that rising hope and repudiate all that seemed significant in her wonderful, and, to us symbolic awakening, and has now become itself a worse menace to the defenceless peoples of the East".⁶⁷

Rash Behari could not see eye to eye with Rabindra Nath, and himself began to work to counteract the evils of this anti-Japanese propaganda by Indians by organizing meetings in Japan and advocating Indo-Japanese

67. *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*. October 11, 1937.

collaboration under the auspices of I. I. L. He organized a convention of Asian youths at Sankaido in Tokyo (October 28, 1937) and raised the slogans "Asia for Asians", "Go Home White" etc.

In November, 1938 Rash Behari Bose issued a manifesto in which he called for a revision of India's foreign policy. He asked the Indian leaders to be realistic in their approach to foreign affairs *vis-a-vis* India. "For the last few years, especially after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese conflict", the manifesto said, "it has almost become a fashion for some of the Congress leaders to attack and condemn and abuse the Fascist countries indiscriminately. They do not know what harm they do to the cause of Indian freedom by their unwise action. The other day Pandit Nehru during the course of his tour in Europe did irretrievable damage to the cause of India by his wild utterances against the totalitarian states. His was a most unwise action and it only served to create more enemies for India". With regard to the objective of India's foreign policy, the manifesto stated: "India's foreign policy ought to be to make as many friends in the world as possible and to avoid creating enemies. Particularly they should follow the principle, 'England's enemies are our friends'. They fail to take cognisance of the fact that by creating enemies of the first class Powers in the world, they simply help the British and the prolongation of the British rule in India".⁶⁸

Japan's declaration of war against the Anglo-Saxon races and her bombing of Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941 opened a new chapter in the history of Asian struggle for emancipation from Western colonialism. It set in motion forces which Rash Behari now strenuously sought to utilise to strengthen the cause of Indian Independence. To quote his own

68. B. K. Sarkar's *The Political Philosophies Since 1905*, Vol. II, Part II, Lahore 1942, pp. 356-358.

words: "Happenings on the international chess-board during the past more than ten years have been suggesting that such a world-wide conflict was inevitable. It was also apparent that the question of Indian freedom could be successfully solved only when Japan rose in arms against British Imperialism". With reference to Japan's declaration of war in the Far East he continues: "Realising this very important fact and our duty towards our Motherland at this most important juncture, we in Tokyo promptly met on the 8th of December 1941 at the Rainbow Grill and decided upon a programme of action. My compatriots formed a committee and asked me to lead the movement and I gladly agreed to abide by their decision. We at first undertook to consolidate Indian opinion in East Asia in favour of a definite fight from without. Meetings were held in different centres of Japan and resolutions were passed emphasising the solidarity of our compatriots, the great need of declaring Independence of India by destroying British Imperialism, and expressing confidence in our work.

"On the 26th December 1941, for the first time in the history of Indians in Japan, a Conference of nearly fifty representatives of the Indian residents in Kobe, Osaka, Yokohama and Tokyo—all the four cities where Indians reside—was held at the Railway Hotel in Tokyo to consider the problems. A Resolution was passed calling upon the Indians to realise the gravity of the situation and the danger ahead of India.... Our representatives were sent to Shanghai and on 26th of January this year a huge gathering of Indian residents of Shanghai was held in Young Men's Association Hall when similar resolutions as passed in Tokyo were very enthusiastically passed and our movement was given unanimous support.

"In the meantime we established contact with the military and civil high commands in Japan and began

to impress upon them the necessity of helping India in her struggle for freedom for the very achievement of the great object for which Japan has declared war against Britain and America. We made it clear to them that so long as British Imperialism in India continues Japan cannot expect a final victory in this war. At last we succeeded in prevailing upon them, and General Tojo, the Prime Minister of Japan, openly declared before the Imperial Diet that his Government was prepared to help the Indians in our efforts to free our country from the long bondage".⁶⁹ Among the principal collaborators of Rash Behari during this period were Swami Satyananda Puri (or Prafulla Sen) of the Anusilan Samiti and Sirdar Pritam Singh, a follower of Amar Singh, both being engaged in political work for Indian Independence with Bangkok (Siam) as their headquarters.

Encouraged by the offer of active help from the Japanese Government to Indian nationalists, Rash Behari organized two successive conferences at Tokyo and Bangkok (March and June, 1942) of representative Indians in South-East Asia and formulated a programme of action. It was at the historic Bangkok Conference that the Indian Independence League was reorganized with its base at Bangkok (later transferred to Singapore) to conduct the Indian Independence Movement from outside India and a Council of Action was formed with Rash Behari as its President. As an integral part of the I. I. L. and under the complete control of the Council of Action, the Indian National Army which had its humble beginning since December, 1941 was reformed and was to be accorded from the beginning, in terms of the Constitution at the Bangkok Conference, "the powers and status of a free National Army of an Independent India, on a footing of

69. The Presidential Address by Rash Behari Bose at the Bangkok Conference.

equality with the armies of Japan and other friendly powers".⁷⁰ Thus the Indian National Army was reorganized at the Bangkok Conference and Rash Behari played a great role in its initial stages. "As I was perfectly aware of the position of Indians during and after the war", writes Rash Behari, "I had a clear understanding with the Japanese Government on this matter and it was through this process that Major Fujiwara asked for the co-operation of Indian patriots and our late beloved Sirdar Pritam Singh took a major part in the pageant of the Malaya campaign. Captain Mohon Singh joined hands with Sirdar Pritam Singh on 12th December, 1941, with a party of a few persons. Sirdar Pritam Singh being a civilian and Major Fujiwara being a Japanese Officer, did not know very much about the Indian soldiers and so the administration and command of Indian military personnel was given over to Captain Mohon Singh".⁷¹

After the Bangkok Conference Rash Behari threw himself heart and soul into the organization of the I.I.L. and I.N.A. on a firm foundation. He viewed the Indian Independence movement not as an isolated event detached from the whirlpool of world politics but as its integral part and parcel. When the Second World War broke out, particularly after its extension in the Far East in December, 1941, Rash Behari saw in the new international complications the chance of India's Freedom movement. He was never a believer in the efficacy of non-violence as a weapon in Freedom's battle nor did he ever believe that India's Freedom would come through our own strivings alone. He was shrewd enough to perceive that the future of India very largely depended on her will and power to utilise the new emerging world forces in her favour. Japan

70. *Ibid.*

71. Rash Behari's statement entitled "Our Struggle".

then in alliance with Germany and Italy was the deadliest enemy of the Anglo-American empires in the East and was determined to annihilate them by all means in the interests of Asia for Asians. In the terrible organizational strength of Japan Rash Behari found the most potent antidote to British imperialism and hence entered into an entente with the Japanese Government which had given recognition to the Council of Action of which Rash Behari was the President. But the course of affairs in the Council was not a smooth sailing for Rash Behari. After a short time a crisis threatened the very existence of the Council mainly because of the personal aggrandisement of General Mohon Singh, G.O.C., Indian National Army. Mohon Singh had risen to that position of importance as an accredited agent of the Council whose overmastering predominance over the I. N. A. was an acknowledged fact. It is regrettable that Mohon Singh, in whom Rash Behari had reposed unstinted confidence was fired by personal ambition and sought to use the I. N. A. as an instrument of his personal aggrandisement. Even his allegiance to the Council of Action, the directive body of the I. N. A., became questionable. Within the Indian National Army of which he was the G. O. C. his policy became more and more despotic and high-handed and he gradually began to abrogate to himself the rights and powers which constitutionally belonged to the Council. By a secret understanding with the Japanese military officers (without having any prior consultation with the Council), he arranged for the transfer of some I. N. A. troops to Burma for military training and even sent an advance party to Rangoon for the purpose. As soon as these ambitious designs of Mohon Singh came to light (November, 1942) Rash Behari decided that the Council of Action "should immediately take control of the policy regarding the Army and all questions of major importance

should be decided by the Council and not by the G.O.C". He even wrote to Col. Iwakura to that effect to avoid misunderstanding over this matter. The crisis deepened further at this stage with the sudden resignation by all the members of the five-man Council except its President on the plea that a clear assurance of co-operation in Indian interests had not yet been obtained by Rash Behari from the Japanese Government. Thus on December 9, 1942 all powers of the Council of Action devolved on Rash Behari pending fresh election by the Committee of Representatives of the I.I.L. Four days later (December 13, 1942) Mohon Singh intimated the President in course of a letter that the I. N. A. were pledged to him and to him alone by name and that the Army under the existing circumstances could not serve their motherland through the I. I. L. in East Asia and had accordingly thought it fit to sever their connection with it. He even waited for approval of his action by the Japanese military officers who however stuck to the Bangkok resolution by recognizing the Council of Action, and not Mohon Singh, as the Supreme Body of which Rash Behari was then the only surviving member. Under these circumstances Mohon Singh was dismissed by the Council from his office as G. O. C. of the I. N. A. This firm decision taken by Rash Behari was a momentous step in the history of India's liberation movement in East Asia. He not only saved it from imminent peril but took steps rapidly to remove the misunderstanding between him and many of his colleagues that was then growing. In a declaration addressed to the Indian brothers of East Asia (December, 1942) he explained his conduct before them in these memorable words:

"I have from 9th December onward taken control of the movement; and I once again pledge to serve the cause of Indian Independence without fear and without favour, loyally and conscientiously and to the utmost

of my ability.... It would have broken my heart, if at this moment, I had let this movement die, because some of my colleagues took it into their heads, that unless on every point they had their way, they could not go on. On the other hand, I believe that if there are difficulties in the movement, they can and shall be rectified. If there are doubts and fears, they can and will be cleared. If there be even actual obstruction in our path, it is my firm conviction that it should be removed and the way made clear for achieving our object, the much longed-for and long-awaited Independence of Hindusthan. The co-operation or otherwise of any nation, however valuable it may be, is not a rock on which the ship of Indian Independence should founder. We shall fight our battles with such help, if possible, but without it if necessary.

“...I must assure every branch of the League and also the Indian National Army that, my taking over on myself the rights, duties and responsibilities of the Council of Action, need not in any manner mean changes in the constitution, organisation or development of the civil and military institutions that we have endeavoured to create, nurse and nurture during the last few months. I guarantee to them that I shall not be a party to any act that will jeopardise their interests or the interests of our Motherland. Their interests have always formed by sole objective in the work that I have undertaken on myself.

“I know I have the trust and confidence of my brothers and sisters in the arduous work ahead. If my opponents call me a puppet, let them do so. But let me assure them that they are sinning against a man whose only end and aim in life is to see his country free, absolutely free, and independent, who is as proud of his birthright as any Indian alive, and who has staked his all and who will stake the last drop of his blood in upholding the honour and integrity of Hindusthan. I

seek nothing from life except the success of our mission".⁷²

Thus the insurmountable difficulties that confronted Rash Behari were soon tided over by him with the tact and skill of a consummate politician. By April, 1943 he not only set matters right but also could boast of a military training centre at Kuala Lumpur where about one thousand civilians were then undergoing training in the modern arts of warfare. But the severe strain which he had to bear all these weeks and months began to tell badly upon his health, and he eagerly looked forward to the day when Subhas Chandra Bose would appear in the East to assume the reins of affairs. It was through his instrumentality that an official invitation was sent to Subhas in Germany requesting his participation at the Bangkok Conference, and what is more, a resolution was also passed there urging upon the Japanese Government to take every step to make the resolution a success. The resolution read as follows :

"This Conference requests Sjt. Subhas Chandra Bose to be kind enough to come to East Asia, and appeals to the Imperial Government of Japan to use its good offices to obtain the necessary permission and conveniences from the Government of Germany to enable Sjt. Subhas Chandra Bose to reach East Asia safe". Needless to say, it was through a secret arrangement between Germany and Japan (then both of them bound in alliance) that Subhas Chandra Bose had a safe passage to Tokyo in June, 1943.

RASH BEHARI AND SUBHAS BOSE

Although a Congressite in party affiliation, Subhas Chandra Bose (later known as Netaji) was a revolutionary in his fundamental political faith. More often than

72. *The Two Great Indians In Japan*, pp. 59-65.

not he went off at a tangent to the path followed by the Congress and refused to ally himself with the compromise-seeking or moderate policy of the Congress. In 1938, he was elected President of the Indian National Congress and his influence grew by leaps and bounds. He strove hard to infuse a new spirit into the national movement and to give it a radical turn. In his approach to foreign politics he was not indiscriminate in his denunciation of the so-called Fascist countries then organized in the *Dreieck* as a powerful anti-British combination. It was mainly through his influence that at the Haripura session in February, 1938 a resolution was passed by the Congress dissociating itself from any imperialist war undertaken by Britain against Germany, Japan or Italy. Interrogated by press reporters at Lucknow in November, 1938 about the Congress policy in the event of a war, Subhas Bose as President of the Congress observed as follows: "Before we can decide our policy with regard to China in the event of the British Government and the U.S.A. joining hands to crush Japan, we shall have to consider whether by helping Great Britain, we shall save China for the Chinese people or for British imperialism".⁷³ At a time when many Congressites of importance, including Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru were carrying on a bitter anti-Japanese propaganda against the totalitarian states as such, Subhas Bose stood for a more sober and realistic line of action or policy for the country. The veterans of the Congress looked askance at him and began to work secretly to oust him from power in the next Presidential election. Even Gandhiji threw in the weight of his voice against him. He sent Subhas Bose a wire asking him not to contest in the next election. To this Subhas Bose politely replied: "Bapuji bless me for the coming election".⁷⁴

73. B. K. Sarkar's *The Political Philosophies Since 1905*, Vol. II, Part II, pp. 358-59.

The victory of Subhas Chandra Bose in the election caused a painful shock to his political opponents who were now bent upon ousting him from power. The Right-wingers of the Congress who then dominated the Working Committee began to pursue an obstructionist policy. At a meeting of the A.I.C.C. a deadlock arose over the composition of the Working Committee and Subhas had to resign from Congress Presidentship "in a spirit of extreme helplessness" (April 29, 1939). Four days later (May 3, 1939) he founded a new party within the Congress—the Forward Bloc—to give shape to his own political programme. But ere he could work out his programme through the new party, he was arrested and put into prison in connection with the Holwell Monument movement (July 2, 1940). He painfully realized that the whole country was nothing but a big prison which would afford him neither liberty nor opportunity for independent political work. A feeling of frustration seemed to overwhelm Subhas at this stage, and he saw no way out for India's deliverance from slavery so long as he remained in this country. His conversation with V.D. Savarkar at Bombay and his talk with Sri Hem Ghose in the Presidency Jail in 1940 toned up his drooping spirit and gave a definite direction to his wandering mind.

Rash Behari had all these years been watching with keen interest the political developments on the Indian scene. In the years preceding the World War II he kept up correspondence with V. D. Savarkar whom he described as one of his elderly comrades-in-arms, and under whose inspiration he founded the Japan Branch of the Hindu Mahasabha with himself as its President. Rash Behari in course of his correspondence with Savarkar kept the latter informed from time to time of the political developments in Japan and her prepara-

74. *Desh*, Sahitya issue, 1372 for Sudhakanta Roy Choudhury's article entitled "Subhas Chandra and Rabindra Nath".

tions for future war against Anglo-American imperialism. "It may be mentioned here", wrote Sri Bal Savarkar, Private Secretary to V. D. Savarkar, in 1954 "that it was at a private and personal meeting between Netaji Subhas Babu and Savarkarji at Savarkar Sadan, Bombay, that a definite suggestion was made to Subhas Babu by Savarkarji that he should try to leave India and undertake the risk of going over to Germany to organise the Indian forces there fallen in German hands as captives and then with the German help should proceed to Japan to join hands with Sri Rash Behari Bose. To impress this point Savarkarji showed to Subhas Babu a letter from Sri Bose to Savarkarji written just on the eve of Japanese declaration of war".⁷⁵ The letter of Rash Behari referred to here was sent to Veer Savarkar about April, 1940 through a Buddhist monk, emphasising the urgency of preparation on behalf of Indian revolutionaries, as Japan's entry into the World War II seemed already in sight.

The historic meeting between Veer Savarkar and Subhas Chandra Bose took place, as stated by Savarkar himself, on June 22, 1940, when Subhas Chandra came to seek his advice on the question of Hindu-Muslim unity after his unsuccessful interview with Barrister M. A. Jinnah. It was on that occasion that Savarkar advised Subhas Chandra to leave the country and go to Europe to organize the Indian forces fallen at the hands of Germany and Italy, and as soon as Japan declared war, to attack British India from the Bay of Bengal or through Burma and declare the independence of Hindusthan.⁷⁶ Thus it is clear that it was Savarkarji who impressed upon Subhas the urgent need

75. Letter of Sri Bal Savarkar to Sri Khitis Chandra Das, Joint Secretary of *Rash Behari Basu Smarak Samity*, dated June 2, 1954. Savarkarji himself narrated this story in many public meetings as well as in his writings both in English and Marathi.

76. See the book in Marathi entitled *Veer Savarkaranchi Abhinav Bharat Sangata Samayinchi Utkrishta Bhashane* or Veer Savarkar's Best Speeches About Abhinav Bharat, pp. 72-76.

for going out of the country and joining hands with Rash Behari Bose for organizing an armed attack against British India at the suitable opportunity. It is pertinent to observe that Savarkar was perhaps the only Indian leader who on the eve of the Second World War persistently pleaded in his speeches and writings the supreme importance of learning the art of modern warfare by Indian youths by joining the Armed Forces either in India or outside. Under his direct inspiration many a young man of India left the country at that time with this end in view.⁷⁷

Apart from the fruitful suggestion communicated by Rash Behari to V. D. Savarkar, Rash Behari also sent a similar call to Subhas in his letters to his other friends and colleagues in India. Sri Jatindra Lochan Mitra, a member of the revolutionary party and a colleague of Hari Kumar Chakravarty etc., has stated that in 1937-38 J. C. Das, Managing Director to the Ballygunge Central Bank, returned from Japan to India with a letter from Rash Behari Bose in which he had urged upon the Indian revolutionaries to send an important leader to Japan, preferably Subhas Chandra Bose. The letter, written in Bengali, also contained the following words: "Now or never, nor for ever". Jatindra Lochan Mitra who was at that time the Consulting Engineer to the Ballygunge Bank and Ballygunge Real Property and Building Society, received this letter from J. C. Das and communicated its contents to Hari Kumar Chakravarty. Another letter received by Srish Chandra Ghose of Chandernagore also contained a

77. *Savarkar And His Times* by Dhananjay Kerr (1950) pp. 253-60.

It is interesting to notice here what Subhas Chandra Bose declared later with regard to Savarkar's policy of Hindu militarisation. On July 25, 1944 Subhas Chandra declared: "When due to misguided political whims and lack of vision almost all the leaders of Congress party have been decrying all the soldiers in Indian Army as mercenaries, it is heartening to know that Veer Savarkar is fearlessly exhorting the youths of India to enlist in the Armed Forces. These enlisted youths themselves provide us with trained men and soldiers for our Indian National Army".

similar suggestion with reference to Subhas Chandra Bose.⁷⁸

The cumulative effect of all these factors together with Sri Hem Ghose's advice to Subhas in the Presidency Jail (July 2, 1940)⁷⁹ ultimately led Subhas Bose to take a firm decision to leave the country and to work from outside for the cause of Indian Independence. The decision once taken, the responsibility of translating it into practice was entirely his own, and thanks to his shrewdness, he managed to leave the country (January, 1941) unnoticed, and finally arrived at Tokyo (June, 1943) *via* Germany to join hands with Rash Behari Bose.

The advent of Subhas Chandra Bose in Japan in 1943 was a veritable god-send. A man of commanding personality, full of indomitable will and energy, with courageous adherence to conviction and consummate political ability, he was regarded by Rash Behari as the fittest person to lead the movement of Indian Independence in East Asia. So, Rash Behari joyfully made over to him the supreme honour of the Presidentship of the Indian Independence League. In a mammoth gathering at Singapore he declared (July 4, 1943):

"Friends and Comrades in Arms! In your presence today I resign my office and appoint Deshsevak

78. Sri Amar Nath Roy, the Proprietor of the Globe Nursery, Calcutta, informs the present writer that both Srish Ghose and Sri Roy had privilege of reading this letter in a room on the second floor of Sri Roy's residence at 25 Ramdhan Mitra Lane, Calcutta. Sri Roy states that during 1911-15 he (alias Smith) worked as a peon to Srish Chandra Ghose and Chandernagore revolutionaries, and that a stationery shop in the New Market run by Jatindra Mohan Rakshit and himself was the "post-box" for Rash Behari Bose. A reference to Rash Behari's letter to J. M. Rakshit, New Market, was made by Mr Denham in his Report on Raja Bazar Case.

79. Sri Hem Ghose, the veteran leader of the "Mukti-Sangha" renamed as "Bengal Volunteers" after 1920, had a long talk with Subhas Chandra Bose in the Presidency Jail at dead of night on the 2nd July, 1940, the date of Subhas Chandra's arrest in connection with the Holwell Monument Movement. Subhas Bose sought advice from his senior colleague about his future policy and got the reply: "Either you will have to rot in jail or leave the country".

Subhas Chandra Bose as President of the Indian Independence League... India's best is represented in him.

"You know I have dedicated my life, in my own humble way, to the cause of our sacred Motherland. That is my life's mission. And as long as there is breath in my body, I shall be the soldier that I have always been—the soldier in the battle for Mother India's freedom. And, of course, I shall not spare myself in giving him all that I can give him—whole-hearted cooperation, assistance and advice in the battle that is now ahead of us".

Thus the message of Sri Aurobindo "Work that she may prosper. Suffer that she may rejoice" was incarnated in the life of Rash Behari. He set a new example of spiritualized self-abandon to the cause of patriotism in keeping with the fiery idealism of the Young Bengal of 1905. Rash Behari's relinquishment of power did not mean that he had retired from politics. Far from it. His new role was now in the capacity of the Supreme Advisor to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind the best of which was represented in him. Very truthfully has he been described by Subhas Chandra Bose as "the Father of the Indian Independence Movement in East Asia since the outbreak of the Greater East Asia War".



Jyotindra Nath Mukherjee
(December 8, 1880—September 10, 1915)



Jyotindra Nath with his beloved horse Sindary