



**NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE : FIGHTER, STATESMAN
AND DIPLOMAT**

Netaji parlayed on terms of equality with nine Powers of the world including Japan, Germany and Italy after establishing the Provisional Government of Free India on 21st October, 1943, for the first time in Indian History since British Rule began.

Frontispiece

UNTO HIM A WITNESS

THE STORY OF
NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE
IN EAST ASIA

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*TO ALL
KNOWN AND UNKNOWN WARRIORS
OF
INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE*

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P R E F A C E

WHY THIS BOOK?

INDIA today stands at the crossroads of her destiny. She is no doubt free, but her freedom is threatened both from inside her borders and from outside. The growing conflict within the country between the forces of conservatism and reaction on the one hand and the forces of anarchy on the other, threatens to destroy the newly-won freedom. A more formidable menace to India's two-year-old Sovereign Democratic Republic is the attempted division of the whole world into two warring camps; each of these two camps feels that it must destroy the other for the ultimate good of humanity, and demands the loyalty of all the unattached nations; and, both of these camps, each for its own reasons, could and might destroy smaller countries audacious enough to remain neutral if and when the Third World War comes.

India, under the leadership of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, has chosen the path of peace and is bent on averting war. But, what will happen to her if she fails to bring about peace between the two rival World Powers? Not only her neutrality, but her freedom itself would be at stake in the event of another world war. It is in this sense that India today stands at the crossroads of her destiny.

But ten years ago, also, India faced a similar crisis in her history. The only difference is this: Now the question is how to keep her freedom? Ten years ago, the question was how to win her freedom? One of her most illustrious sons faced the crisis ten years ago with the overwhelming support of nearly three million Indians in East Asia, won a number of battles though he lost the war, and scored an overall moral victory over the mighty British Empire. He waged an armed war for India's Independence to supplement the heroic, unarmed and unequal war of the people inside

India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose formed the first Government of Free India outside India's borders in October 1943 and led an Indian Army of Liberation against the alien rulers entrenched in Indian soil. What might have happened if Netaji and his Indian National Army had not fought the British, could be left to the speculation of future historians. Suffice it to say that Netaji *did* wage India's Second War of Independence, and hastened India's Freedom by at least ten years.

The crisis was over in August 1947. The British rulers quit India, though allegiance to the British King continued till January 1950, when India proclaimed herself a Sovereign Democratic Republic with a Constitution of her own making.

I was also a humble participant in the Indian Freedom Movement led by Netaji in East Asia in the years 1943 to 1945; in fact, I had the exceptional good fortune to be very near him during the historic twenty-four months when Netaji toiled day and night to open and fight a Second Front against the British across India's eastern border.

Being an eye-witness to the manner in which Netaji faced that crisis in India's history, I have ventured to write this book in the firm belief that it might be of some small service to the India of today—standing once again at the crossroads of her Destiny, as she did ten years ago.

Netaji's life and achievements have a message for the Indians of today and for the generations of Indians yet unborn. More of this later.

I flew to Bangkok in November 1940, fifteen months after the outbreak of World War II, as Reuter's Special Correspondent, to report on the gathering war clouds in East Asia; Japan came into the World War on December 8, 1941; I tried to escape to India but failed; Rash Behari Bose, the veteran Indian Revolutionary and political exile in Japan, launched the Indian Independence Movement and made Bangkok his Headquarters in June 1942; M. Sivaram, the only Indian newspaper editor in Thailand for ten long

years, threw up everything and enlisted under Rash Behari's banner and dragged me also along with him; the Headquarters were shifted to Singapore in March 1943, thirteen months after the British surrender of Singapore to the Japanese; Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose arrived in Singapore in July 1943 and assumed the leadership of the Independence Movement; the exquisite grace with which Rash Behari Bose handed over the leadership of the historic movement to Subhas Chandra Bose will remain one of the unforgettable chapters in the history of India's struggle for Freedom.

RASH BEHARI BOSE

Whatever the merits or demerits of the way Rash Behari handled the Japanese, even his worst enemy had no reason to question his burning love for India till the last breath of his life; his only ambition till the last was to lay his tired bones on the soil of liberated India; and, in spite of his frail health, the old man toiled to realise this dream, in the face of heavy odds, gloom and many a crisis.

The old man rose to his highest stature in the eyes of all Indians in East Asia at that momentous meeting of five thousand representative Indians at the Cathay Cinema Hall (Singapore) on the 4th of July 1943, when he handed over the leadership of the INA and the IIL to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in a sporting and magnanimous speech. It was also Rash Behari's last public utterance. True to his word, he then effaced himself in favour of Netaji and was content to remain in the background and to follow Netaji as a true soldier.

With natural ease, he rose high above petty-minded men, petty thoughts, petty jealousies, petty intrigues, and petty back-bittings.

When I first met him at a hotel in Bangkok in May 1942, I did so under peculiar circumstances. I went to him with an amount of prejudice against him, and full of doubts and suspicions about his real intentions. He offered me a seat across the table. I sat down. He looked straight

into my eyes and, with a disarming smile, came straight to the point.

“Well, Mr. Ayer, I am told you have been Reuters Correspondent here till now. Now I want you to be our Correspondent.” (He meant, of course, that I should become a publicity man for the Indian Independence Movement). I failed to realise at that moment the great import of that great man’s words. In my small mind, there was confusion—some little satisfaction that I was going to do some important work, and a great deal of doubt and fear about what it all really meant and where it would land me. But, thank God, this wretched state of my mind did not last more than a few days. I met him almost every day and discussed the day’s news with him and sought his guidance on the line to adopt for the Independence League Broadcasts addressed to India. I successively became a fascinated listener, an ardent admirer and an unto-the-last loyal man of Rash Behari Bose. I owe a debt of gratitude to my friend, comrade and colleague in the Propaganda Ministry of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, M. Sivaram, who has already established a reputation for himself in post-war India as an expert on Far Eastern Affairs. Sivaram coaxed, cajoled and literally dragged me to Rash Behari much against my will. Not even a hundred Sivarams could have dragged me away from Rash Behari after that first meeting. Rash Behari had a specially warm corner in his heart for Sivaram because, unlike me, Sivaram threw himself heart and soul into the movement from the moment Rash Behari reached Bangkok. And the old man being very human first and last, responded to this gallant gesture of Sivaram with a love and affection which would bring out tears even in the eyes of brutes. And Sivaram, for his part, today carries the sacred memory of *Sensai* in the warmest corner of his heart, and sustains himself with it night and day, wherever he may be.

Rash Behari was *Sensai* (meaning "teacher," in Japanese) to all of us, his Indian followers and admirers, and to most Japanese who gave him this popular title.

Free India must find time to remember her patriotic sons who spent their lives in exile in the hope that one day she may be free. Then Free India will perpetuate the memory of Rash Behari Bose with a suitable symbol which would express India's gratitude to the Japanese nation for giving him a life-long asylum and ultimately a piece of her soil for his grave. His ashes must be brought to Free India and interred here with due solemnity; only then his soul will rest in peace; only then India will have done her duty to herself.

How Netaji fought for India's Freedom from the day he took over the leadership from Rash Behari Bose (July 4th, 1943) till the day of his fateful flight from Saigon (17th August, 1945), will take a volume to fill; it has already been written at various lengths by men of the INA and others in India. Therefore, for the purpose of this introduction, I shall touch only on the outstanding aspects of Netaji's achievements in those twenty-four momentous months in the history of India's struggle for freedom.

He revitalised the Independence Movement in East Asia by uniting the Indians numbering nearly three million under the banner of the IIL; he then gave them the slogan of "*Chalo Delhi*" (On to Delhi) which fired their imagination, and called for Total Mobilisation to make that slogan a reality; he proclaimed to the world the formation of the Indian National Army, and organised an army of Indian women also and named it the Rani of Jhansi Regiment after the illustrious Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi who drew the sword against the British rulers of India in India's First War of Independence in 1857; he then established the Provisional Government of Azad Hind (the first in India's history for two centuries); this Government was accorded recognition by nine world Powers, including Japan, Germany and Italy; he hoisted the Flag of Free India on Indian territory in the

Andaman and Nicobar Islands and renamed them Shaheed (Martyr) and Swaraj (Independence) Islands; he established radio stations of the Provisional Government in Burma, Thailand, Malaya, Indo-China and Japan from which he broadcast direct to his countrymen at home; he shifted his headquarters to Rangoon, and, from there led the INA to the Burma-India border and up to the gates of Imphal and Kohima (Assam). He came within an ace of driving the British Power out of Bengal and Assam; then came reverses, and retreat; but, less than six months later, when the historic INA Court-Martial in the Red Fort in Delhi began unfolding this Saga day after day, all India went mad with joy and the RIN rose in mutiny against the British; that dealt the last blow at British rule in India.

Netaji is not in our midst today; but, the dream of freedom is today a reality, and Netaji and his INA made their own humble contribution towards the fulfilment of the dream.

This book is by no means a history of the INA, nor is it anything like a biography of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose; I am afraid the task of compiling two such publications will have to be undertaken by persons more competent and more fortunate than I.

When I reached Japan after her surrender to America in August 1945 and sat on a bench under the tall trees in the Omiya Park (Tokyo), day after day, with the Bible in hand, I read and re-read The Acts. I prayed for the strength of Peter and I prayed for an opportunity to bear humble and truthful testimony to Netaji's miraculous achievements. My prayer was duly answered. I was flown from Tokyo to Delhi in three and a half days, and I gave evidence in the Red Fort Trial.

Since the fulfilment of my prayer of Omiya Park, I have wished to give a pen-picture of Netaji as I saw him shine in all his resplendent glory in East Asia. I wanted it to be a purely personal tribute from a disciple to his Master.

This offering of mine at Netaji's feet may have many defects, judged by ordinary standards, but I crave the reader's indulgence, because it is nothing more than an outpouring of my heart and soul. I only wish to be : Unto him, a witness.

I must frankly confess that I have two secondary motives also in writing this book. One is to rouse the conscience of the nation over the tragic plight of the tens of thousands of men who were ready to throw away their lives any moment on the bloodstained road from Singapore to Delhi. It was not their fault that they did not die with "*Chalo Delhi*" on their lips ; they are alive and in misery even long after the Tricolour has been hoisted on the Viceroy's House and even after Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has hoisted the National Flag on the Red Fort and reviewed Free India's Army inside the Red Fort—the twin dreams of the INA when it marched on to Imphal and Kohima and stood on the soil of India ; those battlefields are red with the blood of INA martyrs.

The other motive is to see that the National Government arranges for the bringing of the ashes of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose from Tokyo with due ceremony and solemnity and then consult the country as to what should be done to pay our last respects and perpetuate the memory of Netaji in or near the Red Fort.

Negotiations must be started as early as possible to buy for the nation the house where Netaji lived in Rangoon from January 1944 to April 1945 and carried on India's War of Independence. The house is small and will not cost the Indian tax payer a prohibitive amount.

Then there is another task of the utmost sanctity but the time is not yet ripe to fulfil it—the re-erection of the Memorial to the Shaheeds (martyrs) of the Azad Hind Fauj (INA) on the foreshore in Singapore. Netaji laid the foundation of this memorial on July 8, 1945, and, by heroic efforts, Colonel Stracey put up the memorial in an incredibly short time after Japan's surrender. Almost the first thing the

British did on landing in Malaya in September was to demolish this sacred edifice, a piece of vandalism without parallel in international warfare.

India will have to wait until the British quit Singapore and then request the permission of Independent Malaya to re-erect the memorial; otherwise, we must try and obtain the consent of the British to undo the wrong they have done to our dead.

That India's army of liberation is still wandering in the wilderness reflects no credit on the newly-born Republic of India. Netaji and the INA may also claim to have made some contribution to the achievement of India's independence.

Then why penalise the INA so heavily by keeping it as a body out of India's Army, to which they belonged when they were sent to East Asia in 1940-41 by the then British rulers of India? Is it because less than a handful of senior officers of the INA talked or acted indiscreetly at some time or other? But, that can be no excuse at all for the grave injustice done to thousands of men who have not said a word or done an act that is objectionable in any way.

This blot on Free India's escutcheon has got to be removed without further delay.

Writing in the *Harijan* of April 14, 1946, Mahatma Gandhi said :

"Though the INA failed in their immediate objective they have a lot to their credit of which they might well be proud. Greatest among these was to gather together under one banner men from all religions and races of India and to infuse into them the spirit of solidarity and oneness to the utter exclusion of all communal or parochial sentiment. It is an example which we should all emulate."

Is it, in any event, far too late to reinstate these brave soldiers of Freedom in Free India's Army because of the lapse of five years? The fault is not of the soldiers at all. So others must make amends. The least that the authorities might do now is to make a frank admission of their initial error and give a token compensation in addition to paying

the arrears of the soldiers' hard-earned pay or allowances. If, for purely financial reasons, they could not find even this small amount, let the authorities say so, and the soldiers would gladly announce their willingness to forgo all their dues and die of starvation, if necessary, for the sake of the nation.

By the way, why did the authorities not make a real effort to reinstate the INA right at the beginning? I have heard it suggested that at that time some Senior Officers of the Indian Army strenuously opposed the idea and took up an attitude that was unnerving. I do not wish to comment on this as it would not be in the public interest to do so. I only wish the authorities had taken a firm stand and done what they considered fair and just.

There is one other aspect of this crying injustice. It is an injustice done to India herself. She could ill-afford to lose the services of all the INA officers for the fault of less than a handful. The majority of the officers have a right to be back in the Army which is the only place where they will fit in. And, as for outstanding figures among them, I would only mention Shah Nawaz, Sahgal, Dhillon, Rathuri, Meher Das, Mahboob Ahmed, Gulzara Singh, Thakur Singh and Pritham Singh. I know these officers very intimately. It is India's special misfortune that she has been deprived of the services of these heroes for no fault of their own.

Take Shah Nawaz, for instance. There are few among the INA officers in India who could claim to be a nearer approach to Netaji than Shah Nawaz, with his indomitable courage, intense love for India, and uncomplaining sacrifice. I am told that he is scratching some land on a farm near Delhi as the only honourable occupation for himself for the time being. Mark my words: watch Shah Nawaz! He will be a great leader in India one day. Brave patriots and military leaders like him are born and not made by mere training in Dehra Dun or Sandhurst. By his transparent sincerity, fiery patriotism and Subhasian courage, Shah Nawaz will one day charm the millions in India into doing

his bidding. I know that he himself wishes to be left alone in his obscurity and forgotten ; but that is a different matter and there are reasons for his wish. I do not propose to go into them for the time being.

Sahgal might have been anything in Free India's Army but he should not have been compelled by circumstances to become a small cog in the big wheel of Srivastava's Mills in Kanpur (though all credit to Sir J. P. for offering Sahgal a billet without the expectation of anything in return except his money's worth in daily work). "Prem" Sahgal is a precocious youngster who was truly Netaji's right-hand man on the organisational and administrative side of the INA. What a waste of military genius on mill labour and routine ?

Here I must say a special word about Major General J. K. Bhonsle, Chief of Staff, INA. He did not go to the fighting front, it is true, and he was a victim of misunderstanding on this score. It was a matter of deep conviction with him that as Chief of Staff he could be a hundred times more useful to the Army and to the cause if he was at Singapore or at any rate in Rangoon than if he went to one of the fighting fronts and got stuck there. Whenever he differed from Netaji he told him so, and very bluntly too. Netaji was more puzzled than annoyed or angered. Bhonsle has a reputation as a first rate organiser and tactician. He ought to be somewhere high up in the Army Headquarters today instead of wasting his talent on refugee camps in Bombay State, where he is undoubtedly rendering yeoman service. More than he, India is the loser. There can be no valid reason for keeping him out of Free India's Army. Not even the old Indian Army prisoners of war from East Asia have anything to say against him.

All talk of illwill of a small section of the Indian Army officers was first engineered by Lord Wavell, Lord Mountbatten and Sir Claude Auchinleck as an insidious piece of propaganda against the INA as a whole, and some of our front-rank leaders who came into frequent and intimate

contact with this British trio because of the Cabinet Mission's presence in Delhi unfortunately swallowed the propaganda.

I am under no illusions. A front-rank Indian leader is quoted as having remarked: "Well, the INA officers and men are *not all* of them heroes." I agree with him, but no responsible INA officer or man made that claim either. I have myself heard that some INA officers, after their capture and during detention, behaved or talked in a manner unworthy of a soldier. I say by all means ignore all such officers and those few who talked or behaved in an objectionable way after their release from the Red Fort and Kabul lines. Still, justice ought not to have been arbitrarily denied to the other officers and to the thousands of the rank and file who even today bear an unblemished record and of whom any country would be proud.

Am I being told that apart from the misdemeanour of some officers in India, there are some reported to be fighting on the side of Pakistan against us? This is a very unsporting taunt; it is a hit below the belt. I reply by asking the question: Who created Pakistan? Not the INA, anyway. These INA officers found themselves the subjects of a State which had been created whether they wished it or not. And the convention of the INA held in Kanpur officially enjoined upon the INA nationals of Pakistan to be loyal subjects of their State. There was no other honourable course before the convention. I ask, further, what of those who did not wish to leave us and go to their homes in Pakistan? I know of at least one such gem of an officer, and we drove him into the arms of Pakistan. There is one other officer who would be an ornament to any army in the world who is still with us, whose family is still in Pakistan, and whose life is not worth a minute's purchase if he is not on the alert on the rare occasions he visits Pakistan. I hope and trust that we have heard the last of this unfair taunt about some officers having "gone over" to Pakistan. We created the State of Pakistan and presented it with

ready-made subjects out of the reservoir of India's population.

As for Netaji's ashes and a memorial to him, not a day should be lost now in planning and acting on the plan.

I revert to the main objective of this book for a moment, that is, my bearing witness unto my beloved Leader Netaji. I profoundly hope that the youth of the country will read my humble effort with interest and aspire to model their lives on Netaji's. If I have failed to impress the youth of India adequately with the many-sided greatness of Netaji, the fault is entirely mine. Let me only hope that a more capable disciple will come forward in time to undertake the task.

At any rate, I set out to give the youth of India glimpses of Netaji's outstanding personality, courage, optimism, daring statesmanship and spiritual pre-eminence. I have heard Netaji described by some of his earlier associates as a striking combination of the qualities of Akbar, Shivaji and Vivekananda. Well, that is only an understatement of the real truth as we saw it in East Asia.

It is a thousand pities that we have not tried to derive full advantage from invoking the name of Netaji and emulating him in tackling the many difficult problems that face the country. He found a way out of every difficulty that confronted him in East Asia. He won the undivided loyalty and matchless devotion of a whole army and nearly three million civilians scattered over the eight countries extending from the Indian ocean in the West to the Pacific in the East, namely, Burma, Thailand, Malaya, Indonesia, Indo-China, Philippines, China and Japan. In spite of disappointments, reverses, and catastrophes, Indians in East Asia followed Netaji to a man and rose to still greater heights of sacrifices even when they knew that defeat stared them in the face. It is worth while to find out this secret of Netaji and use it to solve our acute problems of today. The will has to be there : a way can be found.

Perhaps his imaginative and daring technique, for instance, might have snuffed out black-marketing and hoarding in six months' time, and prevented their running through our nation like a canker; perhaps, in his own inimitable way, he might have put up a National Front the moment we became free by roping in all the diverse elements in the country—but on one condition that they acknowledged the unquestioned supremacy of the *national* interest in the *broadest sense of the term*. Labourers, agriculturists, the middle and upper classes might have pledged themselves to follow him on the difficult path ultimately leading to peace and plenty; he might have inspired the entire nation to work, work and work without a murmur and without a selfish thought for at least five or six years before they looked for any comfort, ease, or luxury.

Am I day-dreaming? No, not at all. I underrate Netaji when I say he "might have." I know beyond the shadow of a doubt that he *positively would have* done those things were he alive today.

Far be it from me to indulge in any invidious comparisons. I am not interested in them. My heart bleeds at the sight I see all around me. As long as India lives, what matters it if individuals die; but who lives if India dies?

The country is far greater than all its illustrious sons like Gandhi, Vallabhbhai, Subhas and Jawahar put together. The existence and well-being of the country as a whole must not be lost sight of in a will-o'-the-wisp comparison of personalities, however great they may be in themselves.

If Netaji's spirit could serve India today it must be invoked without a moment's delay and without any considerations which could influence only smaller minds.

I know that wisacres will shake their heads, and, with a knowing wink, mutter to themselves, "Ah, the elections are coming." But I may remind them that elections can only change the government of the day; they can never change the fundamental attitude and outlook of a whole

nation. So, I am trying to see far beyond the next elections and those to follow them once every five years. After all, I also remember the elections of February 1946; I am not in the least bitter that anybody forgot Netaji's name soon after those elections; I am only sad beyond words, for the sake of the nation.

The hands that control the locks of the dam, must willingly and handsomely open the floodgates of the spirit of Subhas and let it submerge all the scrubby and dangerous undergrowth of dissension, disunity, jealousy, sectional selfishness, conflict, greed and mass discontent. These will be uprooted and washed out into the vast ocean of oblivion in no time; only the beautiful flower and fruit-bearing trees and stately palms of patriotism, unity, faith, sacrifice, national discipline, and the will to *national well-being* will survive and take sustenance from the thick silt of the spirit of Subhas left by the floods in their trail. The hands should not tremble at the thought of opening the floodgates and delay the act.

Else we might have the mortification of seeing the withering area of frustration expanding steadily until it became a desert of despair and ultimate disruption. I am not a pessimist; I only wish to be a realist.

NETAJI AND MYSELF

I worship Netaji. To me, he is India's saviour; and, alive or dead, he will tenderly watch over the well-being and happiness of Free India; he achieved in two brief years what would have taken any other mortal easily two decades or more to achieve; he brought to bear on his task a super-human abundance of energy, concentration, enthusiasm and bravery with the sole aim of delivering India from bondage in a matter of months.

In my own mind, I have no doubt as to the verdict that the historians of the future will pronounce, and that will be: "This man of destiny *hastened* India's freedom by at least ten years."

Netaji was kind to me personally throughout ; I have been saying to myself crudely that he thrust " greatness " on me ; he did this from the beginning till the end ; literally, he showered rare honours on me ; when he landed in Singapore on July 2, 1943 I was the first Indian to greet him ; (I had met him last in India some time in 1940 at the house of his Bombay host, Nathalal Parikh, at Jyoti Sadan, Marine Drive, now named Netaji Subhas Road, following a resolution of the Bombay Municipal Corporation sponsored by Nathalal); when I met Subhas Babu after a break of three years at the Sambawang aerodrome (Singapore) I ventured to embrace him ; he gave me a warm hug in return. Since that day, he had marked me out for a large measure of his confidence ; I felt overwhelmed by this kindness and I was not at all sure whether I deserved even a fraction of it all ; before he arrived in Singapore to assume the leadership of the movement, I was Secretary of the Publicity, Press and Propaganda Department of the Indian Independence Movement, and Director of the IIL Broadcasting Station, Singapore.

I was the first and the only League worker whom he invited to dinner on the day of his arrival. After dinner, he took me upstairs and we were about to settle down to a quiet chat on the political situation in India and in East Asia, but it was interrupted by the announcement of some visitors' arrival.

From then on, he singled me out for expressions of personal confidence ; nearly every day he would ask me to go up to the bungalow for a chat at 11 p.m. Whenever the telephone rang at our Mess round about 9 p.m. my colleagues used to say in a banter : Your 11 o'clock invitation is coming !

He made me Minister of Propaganda in addition to other offices I was already holding.

After the Headquarters shifted to Rangoon, he wanted me to feel that my shoulders were broad enough to take on quite a few more offices. In all humility and sincerity I pointed out to him my physical and intellectual limitations. But he brushed it all aside and said simply : " Oh, you

needn't have to be an expert on everything; exercise your commonsense and steer clear of pitfalls; then you will find you can do much more than you imagine now." Because of so many senior IIL and INA officers moving to the front in February and March 1944, and because of himself shifting his Headquarters to nearer the Burma-India front, he asked me to take up a whole chain of additional offices. All I could do then was to offer a silent and solemn prayer to God every day that I may not let Netaji down very badly. I was convinced that some little letting down was inevitable because of the crushing burdens which he placed on me and which I accepted often under protest but with a promise that I would try my best.

In addition to being Secretary, Press, Publicity and Propaganda Department, IIL, and Minister of Propaganda of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, he asked me to be the Finance Secretary, IIL; Chairman, National Bank of Azad Hind; Senior Vice-President, IIL in East Asia; Representative of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind during Netaji's absence from Rangoon; Officer to supervise the Rani of Jhansi Regiment Camp on his behalf; officer in charge of Netaji's household; Member of the War Council of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and, finally, Chairman of the Netaji Fund Committee.

Mr. N. Raghavan (now Indian Ambassador in Switzerland) is a very understanding friend; soon after he arrived in Rangoon in May 1944 and took over the Finance Ministership, and Mr. B. K. Das relieved me of Finance Secretaryship, Raghavan said to me in joke: "In the midst of your multifarious activities, it is a wonder that you didn't reduce the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and the League to bankruptcy!"

On top of all these various offices I had been asked to hold, I had been staying with Netaji in his bungalow for well over a year, in my capacity of Acting Secretary to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind: (Netaji was a stickler for "correctness" in everything; so, he wanted me only in

my capacity of Secretary to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind to stay with him and help him with his work as Head of the State and Premier of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind). On more than one occasion, in his capacity of Foreign Minister, he sent important personal messages through me to the Premier and Foreign Minister of Burma, as also to the Japanese Embassy. My personal contact with Netaji in one or the other of my various capacities, daily grew closer and closer.

But I am quite sure that I never took undue advantage of my position ; on the contrary, I took care not to go nearer Netaji than absolutely necessary. I never went to him unless I was called or unless I had important official business with him ; as a matter of fact, I showed him all the respect due to him as Head of the State whether in the Drawing Room at a conference; in the Dining Room, sitting immediately to his left ; playing badminton with him ; having a light after-dinner chat with him all alone on the open terrace above the porch ; or taking some urgent instructions to be sent to IIL Headquarters or INA Supreme Command, which he would slowly dictate, sitting on a chair in his bedroom stripped to the waist, and with only a small Turkish towel round his waist. If, of course, he cracked a joke or said something witty, then I would also talk freely, laugh, and indulge in lighter vein. One night at dinner, in the presence of a large company, he turned to me and asked me a very mischievous question. (It must be remembered that his baldness and mine were very pronounced). " What do you think of bald men trying to cover their baldness by brushing a few strands of surviving hair from temple to temple across the top of their heads ? " I was sitting immediately to his left. He looked me full in the face and asked the question with perfect ease and a broad smile. The whole company round the table sat up and turned in my direction.

I replied : " Sir, that is the one thing I loathe ; it is cheating and downright hypocrisy ; a man with an egg-bald

head looks honest and dignified when he shows the baldness as it is; but to snatch a few strands of hair from around one's temple and to drag them over the top of the head and pat them down there with something sticky or other is an effort that may perhaps evoke sympathy, but not the slightest admiration of friends or foes. Why, then, create this artificial appearance of hair which simply doesn't exist ? ”

He laughed his agreement; so did the guests at the table. . . .

Now to return to this book.

I started writing it in March 1947. I am trying to complete it five years after the Red Fort trials, and three years after I began writing. Domestic circumstances were primarily responsible for this delay. But I must admit I was also not in a great hurry myself. Now I have looked at Netaji against the background of these five eventful years. In 1945 or 1946 I would not have had this advantage. The far-reaching events of the past five years—August 15 (1947), Partition, the holocaust, millions on the move, the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, the transition from Dominion Status to Sovereign Democratic Republic, the social and economic upsets and adjustments, India's full-fledged membership of the Councils of World Nations, the uneasy and disturbed relations with Pakistan, the reactions of the people to the attainment of freedom, the passing of Sardar Patel—I have watched this cavalcade of events and my outlook on men and affairs is mellowed by experiences, pleasant and unpleasant, heartening and depressing. The intervening five years have been very valuable to me in getting this book cast in the right perspective. In any case, I did not wish it be a mere lifeless narration which sounded like something distant and unrelated to the realities of present day India. I will have taken Netaji's name in vain, if this book is to be a mere recital of a piece of forgotten history, useful for refreshing one's memory of something that happened sometime ago, but of not much use in the

context of the present or the future. Labouring under many handicaps, I at times wondered whether I would ever be able to finish writing and publish it. I am grateful to my wife, who, like "Balan" (P. B. Nair), went on goading me lately to complete the task ; to N. S. in Kirkee (in February, 1948) and to Vinayak, my INA comrade in Shivajinagar (in August, 1950) for giving me a quiet corner and all facilities to do my writing ; to Shri Rao and Shri Pohekar, the idealistic "twins" of the *United Asia* fame, for sparing so much of their valuable time and encouraging me to go ahead with the work ; to Sivaram for editing the manuscript ; and last but not least to the publishers for doing all they could to see that this book came out with the minimum delay.

20, NAGIN MAHAL,
CHURCHGATE, BOMBAY,
21st October, 1951.

S. A. AYER.

ROAD TO RED FORT

MEMORABLE MILESTONES

NETAJI'S Historic Road to Delhi and India's freedom, from Calcutta and bondage, ran through Peshawar (January, 1941), Kabul, Moscow, Berlin (March, 1941), Sumatra (June, 1943), Penang, Tokyo, Singapore (July, 1943), Rangoon (January, 1944), Maymyo, Kalewa, Rangoon (April, 1945), Bangkok, Singapore (August, 1945), Bangkok, Saigon and Taihoku in Formosa where he died on 18th August, 1945, in a plane crash and never reached Delhi. His INA, however, reached Delhi, not as victors but as prisoners of war.

Here are the milestones on that Road to Delhi, the road of blood, sweat, toil and tears, ultimately leading through the Red Fort trials (November, 1945), and the RIN Mutiny (February, 1946) to India's Independence (15th August, 1947) and Sovereign Democratic Republic of India (26th January, 1950).

NETAJI'S DIARY IN EAST ASIA—IMPORTANT DATES

Arrived in Singapore	...	...	...	...	2-7-1943
Assumed Leadership of Indian Independence Movement in East Asia	...	...	...	...	4-7-1943
Assumed Supreme Command of INA	...	...	...	...	25-8-1943
Provisional Government of Azad Hind proclaimed	...	...	...	...	21-10-1943
Rani of Jhansi Regiment formed	...	...	...	...	22-10-1943
Left for Tokyo	...	...	...	...	28-10-1943
Received Cession of Andamans and Nicobar Islands	...	...	...	...	6-11-1943
Returned to Singapore and flew to Andamans	{ latter half of December				

Landed in Andamans	...	...	...	...	31-12-1943
Shifted Headquarters to Burma	...	...	...	...	6-1-1944
INA on Arakan front, first shot fired	...	...	...	...	4-2-1944
INA crossed frontier and stood on Indian soil	...	...	...	...	18-3-1944
Netaji's first Proclamation to people of India	...	...	...	...	21-3-1944
Opened National Bank of Azad Hind in Rangoon	...	...	...	...	5-4-1944
Netaji Week	...	...	...	...	4-7 to 10-7-1944
Provisional Government's First Anniversary	...	...	...	...	18-10- to 24-10-1944
Left for Tokyo	...	...	...	...	25-10-1944
Netaji Jayanti (Birthday Celebrations in Rangoon)	...	...	...	...	23-1 to 29-1-1945
Retreat from Rangoon	...	...	...	...	24-4-1945
Arrival in Bangkok	...	...	...	...	14-5-1945
Left Bangkok for Singapore	...	...	...	...	18-6-1945
Left Singapore for Seramban	...	...	...	...	25-7-1945
Left Seramban for Singapore	...	...	...	...	12-8-1945
Left Singapore	...	...	...	...	16-8-1945
Left Bangkok	...	...	...	...	17-8-1945
Left Saigon	...	...	...	(5-15 p.m.)	17-8-1945
Arrived in Touraine (Indo-China)	...	...	...	(Evening)	17-8-1945
Left Touraine	...	...	...	(Morning)	18-8-1945
Arrived in Taihoku	...	...	...	(2-0 p.m.)	18-8-1945
Left Taihoku...	...	...	...	(2-35 p.m.)	18-8-1945
Crashed	...	...	...	(2-38 p.m.)	18-8-1945
Admitted in Hospital	...	...	...	(3-0 p.m.)	18-8-1945
Expired	...	...	...	(9-0 p.m.)	18-8-1945

PART I

CHAPTER I

A DREAM BECOMES A REALITY

THE decisive phase of India's struggle for independence may be said to have begun with the dramatic escape of Subhas Bose from the closely-drawn net of the British secret service in India in January, 1941, and his sensational arrival in Germany two months later. How the intrepid Subhas made his way from Calcutta to Peshawar, Kabul, Moscow and Berlin has been narrated in graphic detail by Uttam Chand who secretly played host to Subhas in Kabul for one and a half months.

This astounding escape was according to plan ; and but for this escape, all his other major plans would have come to nought ; there would have been no INA from East Asia, no battle of Imphal, no Red Fort trial, no RIN Mutiny, no demoralisation in Whitehall, no Cabinet Mission, and no 15th August, 1947 (even though with the disastrous partition), and, of course, no Republic of India on 26th January, 1950.

Even the stoutest opponents of Subhas would not deny the fact that the end of World War II, which Britain won as a junior partner of America, found the Congress and its leadership inside India in a mood of despondency for the moment.

What was the political situation in India a year or so before the escape of Subhas ?

Elected President of the Indian National Congress for the second successive year against all precedents and against the express wish of Mahatma Gandhi who sponsored Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Subhas was too ill to participate fully in the proceedings of the session at Tripuri in March, 1939. Nevertheless, with prophetic foresight he warned his countrymen that World War II would break out in six months' time ; the Congress should therefore give a six months' ultimatum

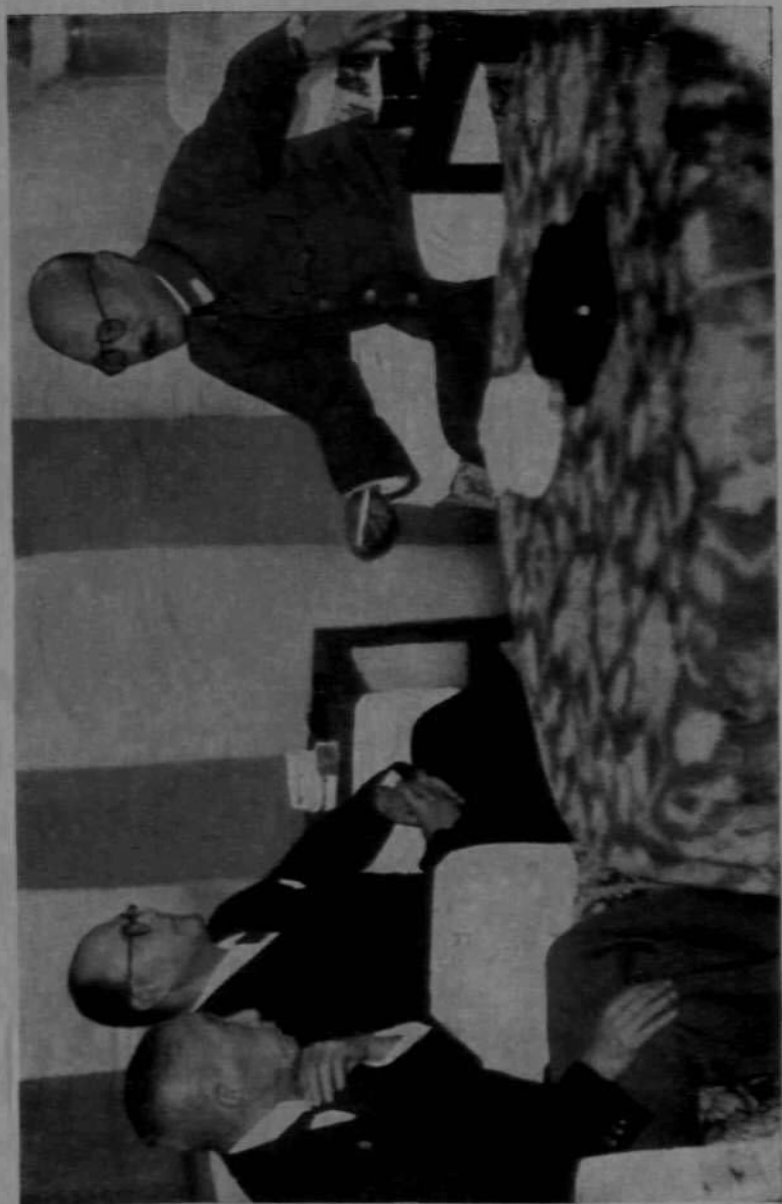
to Britain to give India complete independence; if Britain rejected the ultimatum then a country-wide fight must be launched to achieve that objective.

This advice was not acceptable to the Right Wing leadership in the Congress High Command. Subhas resigned his presidentship and made himself free to mobilise the entire nation for a revolutionary programme as soon as World War II actually broke out, in September, 1939, exactly as he had predicted.

He was too dangerous a revolutionary for the British to allow him freedom of speech or action. So it was that the British Government threw him into prison, in July, 1940, to ensure that the British war-effort in India would not be short-circuited by this revolutionary patriot.

Subhas had been waiting for World War II as the chance of his lifetime, to enlist the aid of Britain's enemies and to bring armed assistance from abroad to supplement the unarmed struggle of Indians at home. This foreign aid was out of the question unless Subhas himself could personally contact the Powers ranged against Britain. But he found himself a helpless prisoner in a British jail inside India. One day in December 1940, he took the momentous decision to go on a hunger-strike against his detention. He threatened to die in jail if he was not released at once. The British did not want his death on their hands. They released him, but kept the strictest surveillance over his movements. All the same, he escaped their vigilance and reached Berlin in March, 1941.

Now he launched his stupendous task of mobilising armed assistance for India's unarmed freedom fighters with the help of Germany. Suffice it to say that he succeeded in organising a Free India Army (INA) in Europe out of the Indian soldiers taken by the British to the European war theatres to fight their battles. Enthusiasm ran high among those Indian soldiers of freedom on German soil. The transport of the INA from Europe to the western borders of



NETAJI MEETS GENERAL TOJO IN TOKYO, JUNE 1943

At this momentous conference Netaji discussed with the Premier of Japan, Japanese aid to the INA in its armed fight for India's Independence. Extreme left: General Sridhar, interpreting.

India to fight the British on Indian soil was, however, a formidable problem. If the INA in Europe could not immediately attack the British in India, it had the satisfaction of giving battle to India's rulers on war fronts thousands of miles away from home.

Meanwhile, the war broke out in East Asia in December, 1941. Japan smashed her way to Java, Malaya and Burma right up to the eastern frontier of India in less than six months. Rash Behari Bose, the veteran Indian revolutionary exile in Japan, set about organising the Indian Independence League throughout East Asia. Under his presidentship representatives of Indians in East Asia, including the Indian Army whom the British had abandoned in Singapore, met in a conference in Bangkok. Important among its decisions were first, to organise an Indian National Army in East Asia to fight for India's independence with the aid of Japan; secondly, to invite Subhas Chandra Bose to come to East Asia from Germany and lead the INA in the Second War of India's Independence. The first, in 1857, dubbed by the British as the Sepoy Mutiny, had failed.

After ninety days of perilous adventure in a submarine, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, leader of Free Indians and the INA in Europe, reached Sumatra and Penang safe and then flew on to Japan where he arrived in early June, 1943. He spent about three weeks there, holding important conferences with the Japanese Premier Tojo, and the Chief of Staff, Field Marshal Sugiyama, meeting the Japanese press, and making broadcasts from Tokyo to Indians in East Asia and in India.

The first public announcement of the dramatic arrival of Netaji Bose in Tokyo all the way from Berlin caused a wave of jubilation among Indians throughout East Asia. Overnight the atmosphere was electrified. The INA and the Indian Independence Movement suddenly assumed far grater importance in the eyes of all. The incredible had happened; the dynamic revolutionary Subhas had actually

arrived in East Asia to lead the Indian Freedom Movement. Soon he would be battering the eastern gates of the British citadel in India.

What a miracle in India's history ! The joy of Indians in East Asia knew no bounds. There was no doubt in the mind of any intelligent Indian about the ultimate outcome of this effort of Indians abroad to supplement the heroic struggle of their brothers and sisters at home for the liberation of their motherland.

CHAPTER II

EPIC IN EAST ASIA

BEFORE he reached East Asia to head the Indian Independence Movement, Netaji had, in his own mind, worked out a clear-cut, though tentative plan, while he was still in Berlin. The outline was very definitely drawn, only the details might have to be altered somewhat, here and there.

On arrival in Tokyo he reached a general agreement with Premier Tojo for unstinted aid in matters where Indians could not help themselves but must, in the prevailing war-time conditions, take help from the Japanese Government.

He arrived by plane in Singapore on the 2nd of July, 1943.

On the 4th of July, before a gathering of five thousand Indians representing the community throughout East Asia, he took over the onerous office of President of the Indian Independence League in East Asia.

The next day, on the spacious maidan opposite the famous Town Hall of Singapore, Netaji reviewed the Indian National Army and took the salute at a March Past. Thus he officially took over the Command of the INA in East Asia.

The following day (July 6) the Japanese Premier Tojo, who was paying a flying visit to Singapore, reviewed the INA in the company of Netaji.

Immediately thereafter, Netaji began attending office regularly at the Headquarters of the Indian Independence League at Chancery Lane, and at the Headquarters of the Supreme Command of the INA (then known as the Directorate of Military Bureau) at Thompson Road. He put through an intensive plan of reorganisation and expansion of the League with a view to achieving the two goals he had placed

before an Indian Mass Rally of fifty thousand, at Singapore on 9th July: total mobilisation and *Chalo Delhi* ("On to Delhi.")

The departments that were already functioning at the Headquarters were: General, Finance, Publicity and Propaganda, Intelligence, Recruitment and Training.

Netaji strengthened these departments and added the following new ones: (1) Health and Social Welfare; (2) Women's Affairs; (3) National Education and Culture; (4) Reconstruction; (5) Supply; (6) Overseas; and (7) Housing and Transport. Dr. Lakshmi Swaminathan, who later became Commandant of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment and a colonel of the INA, was placed in charge of the Women's Department.

Instructions were issued to reorganise and expand the League organisation throughout East Asia on the above lines. The result was that the total mobilisation of Indian man-power, money and material was carried out with hurricane velocity throughout Malaya and other countries.

Netaji addressed a series of public meetings all over Malaya, talked to gatherings of well-to-do men, and made regular broadcasts addressed to Indians at home.

When he was satisfied that the INA had been thoroughly organised, and that Indians in East Asia were making a splendid response to his call for total mobilisation, he took the next logical step of establishing the first Provisional Government of Free India outside India, in Singapore, on the historic 21st of October, 1943, that is, less than four brief months after he took over the leadership of the Movement in East Asia.

Events started moving with cyclonic speed.

The next day, he opened the first Rani of Jhansi Regiment camp in Singapore.

The following night the Provisional Government of Azad Hind declared war on Britain and America. A few hours later he addressed a mammoth rally of Indians, civilians and soldiers, and took a solemn pledge from them

that they would give up their all in waging the war on Anglo-Americans for the liberation of India.

In a few days, nine world powers—Japan, Germany, Italy, Croatia, Burma, Thailand, National China, the Philippines and Manchuria—accorded their recognition to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind.

On the 28th of October, Netaji flew to Tokyo where he attended the Greater East Asia Conference in the first week of November, and was received by the Japanese Emperor with all honours due to the Head of the State and Provisional Government of Free India.

At the Greater East Asia Conference, Premier Tojo announced on 6th November that Japan had decided to hand over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. Thus the Provisional Government acquired its first stretch of territory of Free India.

Returning to Singapore towards the end of December, after visiting China and the Philippines *en route*, Netaji left for the Andamans where he set foot on the first Free India territory on 31st December, 1943. Meanwhile, the Cabinet of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind had decided to rename the Andaman and Nicobar as Shaheed and Swaraj Islands respectively.

Before leaving for the Andamans, Netaji appointed a committee to make recommendations for the national unification of Indians in East Asia in matters of language, dress, food, greeting, emblem and ceremonies. He attached the greatest importance to this aspect of constructive work with a view to bringing about abiding unity in the Indian Nation.

From the Andamans Netaji flew to Burma *via* Bangkok and shifted the Headquarters of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, IIL and the INA Supreme Command to Rangoon. Thus there were now two Headquarters, the one in Rangoon, and the Rear Headquarters in Singapore.

Burma being so much nearer home (India) and having a frontier with India which the INA had sworn to cross at all costs and give battle to the British on Indian soil and expel them from there, Netaji still further intensified his efforts night and day to convert the new Headquarters into a first-rate base of operations. He could not rest until he was sure that the Burma base had become a springboard from which to jump at the throats of the British in India.

Then came the news of the firing of the first shot by the INA in the Second War of India's independence when it opened a campaign on the Arakan front on 4th February, 1944 and fought a successful action.

The 18th of March, 1944 will remain a Red Letter Day in the annals of the INA; for on that historic day, the INA crossed the Burma border and, for the first time, stood on the sacred soil of India. This momentous news was given to East Asia, to India and to the world by Netaji in a proclamation that he issued on the 21st of March, 1944.

The 21st of every month had become a sacred day for Indians in East Asia as the day on which, in October, 1943, the Provisional Government of Free India was established in Singapore. Since shifting his Headquarters to Rangoon, Netaji had called upon Indians in Burma to celebrate the 21st of every month as the Provisional Government Day.

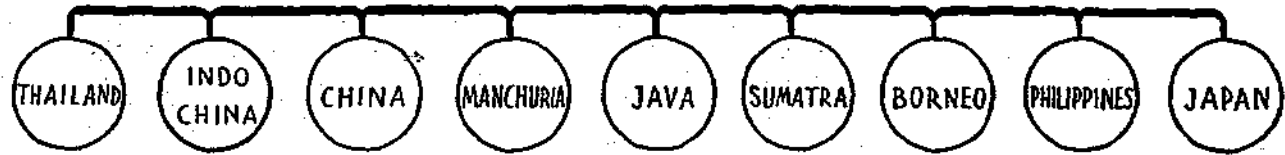
The INA's crossing of the Burma-India Border was dramatically revealed, as I said earlier, on the 21st of March, 1944.

Thus within nine months of his arrival in Singapore, Netaji had reorganised and moved the INA from Malaya *via* Thailand and Burma up to the Indian border and had actually led it across the frontiers and brought it to Indian soil—a most astounding feat even for Netaji.

Between the time he brought his Headquarters to Rangoon in January and the INA's eventful crossing of the Burma-India border, he had put through a gigantic expansion of the Indian Independence League organisation and an



TERRITORIAL BRANCHES



I.I.L. HEADQUARTERS, RANGOON

addition to the Ministries of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind.

At Singapore, the Ministers with Portfolio in the Provisional Government were the Minister of War and Foreign Affairs (Netaji himself), and Ministers of Finance, Women's Affairs, and Publicity and Propaganda. Three more Ministers with portfolio were now appointed, namely, Supply, Man-power and Revenue Ministers.

The League activities registered a phenomenal stride with the creation of a number of new departments. Thus, there were no fewer than twenty-four departments of the Indian Independence League Headquarters functioning in Rangoon to carry out the policy of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, compared with the twelve departments in Singapore:

The twenty-four departments of the IIL Headquarters in Rangoon were: (1) Finance; (2) Audit; (3) Netaji Fund Committee; (4) Supply; (5) Supply Board; (6) Purchase Board; (7) Revenue; (8) Recruitment and Training; (9) Women's Affairs (including Rani of Jhansi Recruitment); (10) Publicity and Propaganda; (11) Education; (12) Health and Social Welfare; (13) National Planning; (14) Intelligence; (15) Information; (16) Production; (17) Technical; (18) Telecommunications; (19) Agriculture and Industries; (20) Reconstruction; (21) Housing and Transport; (22) Overseas; (23) Labour and (24) Branches.

A Rani of Jhansi camp was opened in Rangoon.

Camps for the training of youth for the INA were opened all over East Asia, the largest number being in Malaya. These camps turned out soldiers by the tens of thousands after intensive military training.

At this stage, Netaji established the first National Bank of Azad Hind outside India in Rangoon on the 5th of April, 1944, to finance the war of India's liberation. The same day he left for the front, and moved his Headquarters nearer the firing line. He took with him, a contingent of fully trained and equipped Ranis of Jhansi.

The first anniversary of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind was celebrated throughout East Asia with keen enthusiasm, though under the shadow of the Imphal retreat, and under a shower of bombs and machine-gun bullets in Rangoon where the British intensified their bombing activities.

But the grandest and most unforgettable spectacle was seen in January, 1945.

During Netaji's absence from Rangoon, a few leading unofficial workers in Rangoon had formed themselves into a Committee to celebrate Netaji's birthday on 28rd January—for the first time since his arrival in East Asia—with a week's programme of impressive events.

When he heard about this on arrival in the city, he called the organisers and told them that he was frankly against the celebration of his own birthday, though he was in favour of large-scale observance of many other days. He wished to discourage the personal aspects of the movement as far as his own name was concerned. They should concentrate on and popularise ideas and ideals and not personalities.

The organisers were in a fix, but they got over the difficulty by pointing out that the people were bent upon going through with the birthday celebrations which would be marked by a terrific drive for a further spurt of total mobilisation. For instance, clothing was urgently needed for the army: the Birthday Week would witness a door to door collection of money for cloth for the soldier's uniform, with the slogan "One yard of cloth for the INA from every Indian—man, woman and child." In lieu of cloth, money would be accepted on this basis from every Indian family in Rangoon.

Reluctantly, Netaji gave his consent.

The memory of the feverish activity that prevailed in Rangoon for a whole month preceding the celebrations can never be erased from the minds of people who, like myself, witnessed the celebrations at the Jubilee Hall on 28rd

January, 1945, when Netaji was himself requested to preside and accept the loving homage of the rich and the poor alike.

Silver plates filled with gold and precious jewellery were offered to Netaji for use in the freedom fight. Men volunteered for the Suicide Squad of the INA: money and raw materials were offered as donations and a Rangoon businessman, Sri Muthiah Chettiar, announced the total mobilisation of the resources of the British India Corporation worth several lakhs.

Soon after these memorable celebrations, Netaji went again to the Front where he had despatched Units of the Second Division of the INA which was doing excellent work under Major-General Shah Nawaz. Later Colonel Sahgal and Major Dhillon also moved up with their regiments and thrilling despatches were received from these two officers who were putting up a heroic fight against overwhelming odds on the fronts.

All the same, the tide steadily turned against the Liberation Army. The enemy, by sheer superiority in Mechanised equipment, was relentlessly crushing his way through to Meikhtila and heading towards Pyinmana and, of course, to Rangoon.

When it was realised that we would be taking too much of a risk if Netaji continued to stay on in Rangoon, we members of the Cabinet of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, persuaded him to leave Burma, and to continue the fight from elsewhere.

The story of Netaji's historic twenty-one-day trek—a mere three hundred miles—from Rangoon to Bangkok, his flight to Singapore to carry on a thirty-day non-stop broadcasting campaign addressed to India against the Wavell offer in Simla in June-July (1945), the Japanese surrender of mid-August, and finally, his last flight from Saigon to—God alone knows whither—is an unforgettable epic of “blood, toil, sweat and tears.”

CHAPTER III

HISTORIC RETREAT

N EWS came through on 23rd April, 1945, that the British spearhead had thrust beyond Pinyinmana in Central Burma and it was only a question of hours before the British troops would be in Rangoon. Good Lord! Netaji was still in Rangoon at the time. Was he to be taken prisoner by the British when the war was still on, and in the capital of Burma? No, we, his colleagues in the Cabinet, had insisted that he must leave Rangoon and we would all of us stay behind to face the enemy. Most reluctantly Netaji had agreed to leave Rangoon.

That day a little after midday Netaji drove up to the Headquarters of the ILL. Soon after he took his seat in his room, he sent an urgent call for Major-General Bhonsle. Major-General Kiani was already there, in the next room and I was in the other adjoining room. Soon after Major-General Bhonsle arrived and was shown into his room, Netaji sent for Zaman Kiani and myself. The most momentous consultations followed.

Netaji turned to us and asked: "Now, if I am leaving Rangoon, who all will stay behind?" I did not wait for Bhonsle or Kiani to tell Netaji as to who were going to stay behind in Rangoon, on the army side—the military side of the Provisional Government. I said: "Sir, if I may speak for the civilian side of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, I offer to stay behind in Rangoon but I do wish to make one point very clear; that is, I have a revolver with me and you must allow me to reserve the last bullet in the revolver for myself.

"I must confess that I am an ordinary human being with all the weaknesses of a human being. I have no wish to fall alive into the hands of the British and I do not wish

to visualise even the remotest possibility of S. A. Ayer, Propaganda Minister of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, one day running down Subhas Chandra Bose at pistol-point. I wish to take no risks of that kind. So I wish to make it clear to you, sir, that I shall reserve the last bullet in the revolver for myself."

Netaji said nothing. He only grunted his characteristic "Hum."

Then we discussed and decided that, part of the Provisional Government must be left behind in Rangoon. The question, however, arose as to who should remain in charge of the Government as well as the INA in Rangoon. I suggested that a Deputy Premier be appointed immediately, and left in charge in Rangoon, and that it was very important that Netaji's deputy should be a senior army officer, because he would have to take very vital decisions, affecting the army, as well as, of course, the civilians, before and after the British entered Rangoon.

For some reasons which he explained at length and which were rather convincing, Netaji was definitely of the opinion that his deputy, if appointed, had better be a civilian and not an army officer. The question was kept pending for the time being.

Then I left the room. The conversation continued between Netaji and his two senior Generals.

That afternoon I was with Netaji in his car when he drove back to his bungalow. On the way Netaji referred to the question of appointing one of the Ministers of the Government as deputy premier to take charge of the Provisional Government and the INA forces in Rangoon from the moment of Netaji's departure. I repeated my reasons why the deputy ought to be an army man. He conceded that my arguments were quite sound but there were other considerations which influenced him to arrive at the opposite decision.

That afternoon and evening we had a hectic time—preparing for Netaji's departure. I had taken it for granted that Netaji had agreed to my staying back in Rangoon. So

I helped members of the personal staff staying in Netaji's bungalow to do their hurried packing. Netaji had to attend to a hundred and one very urgent matters and he called me to his room once every ten minutes or even more frequently. Plenty of instructions had to be taken down and passed on to officers and officials concerned.

It was decided that Netaji and party would leave that night and that the Rani of Jhansi girls in the Rangoon camp should first be taken by train and only then would Netaji leave Rangoon by road in a convoy. It was nearly 10-0 p.m. when someone dashed up to Netaji's bungalow and gave us the news that the Rani of Jhansi girls had been taken to the station and they waited on the platform for two or three hours. The train drew up but at the last moment the girls were told that there was no accommodation for them.

When Netaji heard this, he lost his temper, which was so very rare with him. He was furious with the Japanese. He called me to his room and told me to go and tell Mr. Hachiyya, the Japanese Minister who had been accredited to the Provisional Government and whom Netaji had refused to receive because he had not brought his credentials, that it was a very bad let-down. He refused to leave Rangoon unless transport was provided for the Ranis first. That was almost the last request he was making to the Japanese. He did not care whether they gave him any more help or not. *Do this, however, they must.*

I went and saw Hachiyya. He went and saw General Isoda, the Chief of the Japanese Liaison Office. By now it was well past midnight. As I returned to the bungalow at 1-0 a.m., Netaji asked me casually, whether I had packed. I said: "No Sir." Netaji then said: "You are also going with me. Better do your packing quick."

I grabbed whatever clothes I could lay hands on and some of the important papers, crammed them into a suitcase and kept it ready. The Japanese promised to send extra lorries to transport the Ranis also by road along with Netaji. We all waited for the lorries to come. The hours passed:

2-0, 3-0 and 4-0 a.m., and yet there was no sign of the lorries. At last they came, at 4-30 a.m. It was too late to leave that day. Netaji retired for the night in a terrible and nasty mood.

The whole of the day on the 24th, Netaji was busy giving final instructions and visiting the army camps saying farewell to the commanders. That evening the lorries turned up and we left Netaji's bungalow in a convoy of about four cars and twelve lorries, three of which had been placed exclusively at the disposal of the Ranis.

It was a moonlit night. The Japanese had started evacuation the previous day. They were vacating bungalows and burning papers all over the city. Our cars and lorries were heavily camouflaged with foliage from the trees flanking either side of the Rangoon-Pegu Road.

The convoy had hardly been on the road about an hour when we heard the drone of planes overhead and immediately jumped out of our transports and took cover on either side of the road. This was only the beginning. We repeated this performance every hour or two. Naturally our progress was rendered very slow. Then after three or four hours of our journey when we emerged into the open country we could hear the rumble of the distant artillery. We thought that the British troops were not very far off—perhaps only thirty or forty miles away and we were probably driving straight into them.

We made a halt and sent a patrol ahead to find out. The patrol came back and reported that the British Military was not so near but the Japanese had set fire to Pegu and to a number of ammunition dumps on the approaches to Pegu.

Standing there in the open, in the bright moonlight, with fires and explosions in the distance, and no definite news of the position of the enemy was a peculiar sensation. Any moment an artillery shell might burst near us. Life and death lost all their meaning. We were alive at that

moment but we were not sure that we would be alive the next.

The adventure was full of thrills. We were literally living every moment of our life in those hours. We continued our march through the burning villages of Pegu. We had to make quite a few halts on the way to allow our convoy to re-form. The Japanese lorries were overtaking us and going at a mad pace. Japanese soldiers were struggling along on foot with heavy packs on their backs. We reached a junction beyond Pegu where we branched off towards the east in the direction of Waw. From now on we were not running into the British spearhead but actually moving away from its path and putting more and more distance between them and ourselves.

It was early morning on the 25th April when we reached a tiny hamlet a few miles this side of Waw. As it was already nearing daybreak we had to make a halt as any progress during daytime was out of the question because of the enemy fighters and bombers that were hunting the countryside for convoys.

About 8-0 o'clock in the morning when I took a stroll in the neighbourhood, a fighter suddenly appeared on the horizon. I immediately spotted a haystack nearby, ran at breakneck speed and buried myself in the hay, the best camouflage available at that time. The fighter made full use of its machine-gun, showering the country-side with bullets. From where I was, I could see that the fighter flew right over the place where Netaji was resting. It was a miracle that saved Netaji from the machine-gun bullets.

After a meal of rice and vegetable curry at about two in the afternoon we got ready to move towards Waw just before dusk. By the time we reached the village of Waw it was dark and heavy rains had turned the soft earth of the ground into a maze of mud and slush. There was a tiny stream to cross. Many of our vehicles sank deep in the mud and it was with the greatest difficulty, by putting planks under the vehicles, that we were able to get them out. An

hour later we were horrified to see Netaji's car sinking in a deep pond, half under water. To our immense relief however we saw Netaji, a little distance away from the pond, giving directions to other cars and lorries to avoid the treacherous pit and to make a detour to get on to safe ground. Netaji's car was pulled out, he got into it again and we chugged on over the slushy, muddy ground in the direction of the Waw river. But the roads were chokeful of Japanese lorries that had gone ahead of us and we could hardly move at a snail's pace on the main road itself.

Netaji had asked some of us to go ahead. We asked our lorry driver to get off the main road and to follow a *kutchra* track to the river. But this *kutchra* track proved disastrous. The ground was slippery beyond description. The lorries got stuck in the mud, every few yards. We got out of them and started walking. It looked as if we were really skating, not walking on the ground! Neither foot could get a hold on the ground. Both slipped, one after the other, and it was a struggle to avoid falling every time. At long last we reached somewhere near the Waw river.

By now we had all lost contact with each other. We did not know where Netaji was nor did he know where we were, but we were all at a distance of hundred yards from each other. There was so much confusion because of the chaotic crowding of Japanese lorries both on and off the road, all in a mad rush to cross the Waw river during the night because the next morning those hundreds of lorries gathered round the edge of the river would provide a first-rate target for the enemy bombers and fighters. All men and lorries had to use the ferry, the only ferry available to get across to the other side of the river. Netaji had one look at the number of lorries waiting to be transported by the only available ferry and decided that the Ranis should not wait for the ferry to take them over to the other side. He then instructed Colonel Malik and Major Swami to arrange for the girls to cross the river on foot, to wade through the water and get across to the other side. The girls were simply

wonderful. They waded through waist and neck-deep water and somehow managed to get across but we were all still on the nearer bank.

Having given up all hope of being able to ferry all the lorries across the river the Japanese had started setting fire to quite a number of those lorries right on the bank and on the edge of the water. It was 3-0 o'clock in the morning and Netaji was standing on the water's edge patiently waiting to see if the ferry would be available to transport his car and at least some of the INA lorries to the other side.

It was an awe-inspiring scene, Netaji standing there and fires raging round him and lorries scattered all over the place. He insisted that General Kiani, myself and a few others cross over to the other side very early. He was the last man to do so. By then it was daybreak. Immediately we had to find cover on the other bank, for at any moment the bombers and fighters would be overhead and they would continue bombing and machine-gunning us the whole day and we dared not stir out of the place until night fall.

The village on this bank is known by the name of 'Apia. Here we found a Mandap (Hall), a very dilapidated one at that, but the care-taker gave us a warm welcome and told us that we could stay there for the day, because it was at a safe distance from the ferry. Soon after we reached the Mandap and before we could stretch our swollen and aching limbs, the first flight of fighters were overhead and heavy machine-gunning started but Netaji would not take cover. He insisted that the girls should. From that moment we were all in constant dread of the risk to Netaji's life because of his obstinate refusal to take cover when the fighters came overhead. I think that afternoon he was sleeping on the platform of the Mandap. A fighter squadron came sweeping over us firing their machine-guns indiscriminately. We begged Netaji to get off the platform and take shelter. He waved us away with an impatient gesture and turned over to the other side and continued to sleep.

Late that night he asked General Bhonsle, General Chatterji and myself to go ahead in a small convoy with a party of about forty Ranis and reach the next village before day-break. Rain had played havoc with the paddy fields through which we had to pass. Our progress was painfully slow and the lorry containing the Ranis got stuck in four feet of very soft mud and all our efforts to get the lorry out of the mud proved fruitless. At last we decided to leave it behind and, with the Ranis, walked all the night through the slippery paddy fields and reached the village of Nonkashe sometime after day-break.

This place was completely deserted. There was hardly any human being in the whole of this village. Apparently it had been abandoned because it was most heavily machine-gunned day after day and the villagers found life not worth living in their homes there. With the fighters and bombers overhead every hour or two and we rushing to take cover whenever the drone of the planes became audible, became a matter of routine. In fact, enemy planes kept us close company all the time. The machine-gunning particularly was something really frightening. Any one of us could have been killed by one of the bullets at any moment at any spot. No hour of the day and no place on earth seemed safe from those fighters which were spitting fire like dragons.

We took shelter in a dilapidated house and the Ranis cooked some rice and curry for us in between taking cover against fighters. Late that night we heard that Netaji had also arrived and was staying in another part of the village waiting to cross the Sittang River by ferry. Crossing it by any other means was impossible as the Sittang bridge had been blown up some months ago and it had not been repaired. We too set out for the river and after waiting for a long time near the ferry-crossing, we returned to our house because it was already day-break and it was most dangerous for ferries to cross till that evening. That afternoon we set out rather early taking the risk of being spotted by fighters on our way to the ferry crossing. Nothing untoward happened

and by dusk we were on the bank near the ferry-crossing but thousands of Japanese soldiers had already reached there and had occupied every inch of the available ground at this spot. We heard that Netaji and a small party of officers and Rani of Jhansi girls had managed to cross over earlier.

From the moment our convoy left Rangoon, Netaji's one serious concern was for the safety of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment girls, the minimum food necessary to sustain them through the risky adventure and some little privacy for them whenever we camped near any village or in the jungle.

What a responsibility, having to look after some one hundred girls on the three hundred-mile jungle trek from Rangoon to Bangkok !

I saw Netaji in his unique greatness, combining the highest qualities of soldier, statesman, leader, man and greatest of all, humanitarian, in those unforgettable three weeks of peril in the jungles on the Burma-Thai border.

He never, even for a moment, cared for his own life. All the time he thought only of the safety and minimum necessary comfort of the men who were marching with him. He attended to every little detail about the lorries and cars in the convoy, about the ration of rice and *dal* available at each halt, about the drinking water from the nearest well or pond, in fact every little detail that mattered. Not that there was nobody else with him to look after these little details. Why, there were Generals Bhonsle, Kiani and Chatterji; Colonels Gulzara Singh, Malik and Chopra; Majors Raturi, Swami and a whole host of officers, any one of whom could have looked after the whole of the convoy.

But, by temperament, Netaji could not be satisfied until he had attended to every little detail himself.

I can easily recall that scene at the ferry-crossing on the Sittang River. The Japanese and ourselves were packed like sardines on the river bank. What an easy target for whole-sale massacre we would have presented, if even a single enemy bomber or fighter had come over the Sittang on that moonlit night !

In those days of bombing and machine-gunning, we grew to dread the life-giving rays of the sun. In war-time, they are not life-giving, they are death-dealing rays because they are the harbinger of enemy aircraft !

Not only daylight : we dreaded the moonlight too, only a little less. We felt comparatively safe on pitch dark nights . . . rather primitive, do you think ? Well, quite so. Otherwise, how can shelters dug 20 or 30 feet underground have such a fascination for man ? How else can the sun and moon be objects of horror ?

We resigned ourselves to our fate the one hour or so we impatiently waited on the river bank for the ferry to start plying. The Japanese gave us Indians priority and we crowded the ferry nearly beyond capacity after a rather risky six-foot jump from the bank down to the ferry. The actual crossing took less than ten minutes. The INA officer in charge of the Sittang ack-ack battery had detailed a junior officer and a few NCOs to meet us at the ferry landing and they escorted us through the burning village to a hamlet some two or three miles away. General Bhonsle, other male members of the party and the Rani of Jhansi girls stayed there, and accompanied by an armed escort, I trekked my way to the ack-ack battery station where Netaji was halting.

By now it was nearly midnight. In spite of the brilliant moonlight, I somehow felt very depressed when I reached the place. I was impatient to meet Netaji. The cause of my depression, I learnt later. Almost the first comrade I met on reaching the battery station was Bhasi (Bhaskaran), Netaji's confidential Steno from the time Netaji arrived in Singapore nearly two years ago. He spoke to me in whispers. He asked me whether I had had anything to eat. I said "no." He brought me two morsels of plain boiled but slightly sweetened rice, and a glass of water. Though I was famished, I had lost all appetite. Very strange. I did not know yet why that was so. Everybody there was looking rather gloomy. None of them uttered a word. Then hurried

instructions were given in whispers for the resumption of the trek by Netaji and party towards the Burma-Thai border, or at any rate, towards Moulmein.

Then Bhasi whispered a few words into my ears. The previous night a fine civilian Japanese official attached to the diplomatic service, an ardent admirer of Netaji and true friend of the cause of Indian Independence, had been bayoneted to death by an INA Sentry.

It was a tragic mistake on the part of both the Japanese as well as the sentry. He challenged the intruder in Hindustani; the Japanese did not understand, but moved forward. The sentry plunged the bayonet into him. The Japanese Minister was very much upset; Netaji was himself upset even more.

A few hours later, the battery station received a baptism of machine-gun fire from fighters that swooped down on it in wave after wave and subjected the shelters to two solid hours of non-stop criss-cross fire. The escape of Netaji and party had been miraculous. Poor Lieutenant Nazir Ahmed, General Chatterji's charming young ADC, got a bullet in his thigh; he died in the Moulmein hospital ten days later.

Only Netaji's car had crossed over in a ferry. All the other cars and lorries of our convoy were still on the other side of the river. There was very little hope of their being ferried across to us.

It was a bleak prospect. Of course, Netaji would insist on walking all the way to Bangkok if the Ranis and other members of the party could not be given some sort of transport.

CHAPTER IV

THE FORCED MARCH

WE were asked to get ready for the trek from Sittang to Moulmein *en route* to Bangkok. Major-General Zaman Kiani was asked to take charge of the party. He ordered us to fall in and gave us instructions as to how our party, including Netaji, should march and how air-raid alarm would be given and how we should immediately disperse on either side of the road and take cover.

In grave silence our party set out on foot with Netaji, General Isoda and Hachiya, leading, followed by about forty Ranis and about one hundred soldiers. Every half an hour or so there was air-raid alarm and we dispersed quickly and re-formed after a few minutes.

I had already walked a lot before I reached Netaji at the Sittang Battery Station, I was wearing the wrong kind of shoes for a long march. Even so I did not realise at that time that I was going in for blisters so soon. We walked practically non-stop except for a five-minute halt at the end of every hour. My foot had already started aching. The little luggage that I carried on my back started weighing heavily on me. On our way we saw quite a few lorries that had been set on fire by the Japanese to prevent their contents of clothing and other material falling intact into enemy hands. I felt I had already walked miles and miles. Actually we had not covered more than ten miles or so in the four odd hours that we had already walked.

A forced march of this kind for a civilian like me was some experience. In those hours I did not feel like wanting anything else in this world except to be left alone and to be allowed to fall into deep slumber, under one of the bushes flanking the road. No hunger, no thirst, but overwhelming sleepiness, as a matter of fact, I was half-asleep as I was

trudging my weary way on that road from Sittang under the moonlit sky.

Netaji was in his top boots. Few people can do forced marches in top-boots. He never slackened the pace of his walk. He never fell back even once. There he was at the head of the column doing a steady three to four miles an hour.

Now it was nearing dawn and a halt was compulsory to avoid being bombed or machine-gunned by enemy planes. Zaman Kiani ordered the party to halt and disperse on either side of the road, and himself, accompanied by another officer, went reconnoitering the neighbourhood for a suitable spot for the day's halt. The two absolute essentials were adequate cover and some little drinking water in the neighbourhood. Within a minute of our being told to halt and disperse, all of us went to either side of the road and sat in the dust. All of us, at any rate I can speak for myself, were half-dead with fatigue and perfectly content to go to sleep on the dusty roadside. A little before sunrise Zaman Kiani returned and ordered us to fall in and marched us to a jungle track not far from where we were halting. I forgot my heavy feet and ambled along sleepily with my comrades to this spot which was about a hundred yards away from the main road.

Enemy planes were rather early that morning. Where we had taken shelter for the day there was ample cover provided by the tall trees and enough protection against enemy planes. A little while after we reached there, General Bhonsle, accompanied by the remaining Rani of Jhansi girls, also reached this spot. The number of our party grew to over two hundred and fifty.

Netaji had a look over the place. His first concern was to provide us with a little hot tea and then with at least one meal before we resumed the trek that night. The first essential was drinking water. There was only a tiny little pool of brackish water which looked totally unfit for human consumption. Netaji had one look at this pool and in

consultation with the doctors accompanying the party decided that the water should be filtered through the sand on the bank of the pool and then fully boiled so that it could be used for cooking and drinking purposes. Then the question arose about food for we did not have a grain of rice or salt or any vegetable. Good old Sub-Officer Dey came to our rescue. He walked a few miles from where we were halting and went to the nearest village and came back with some foodstuffs. We lighted a fire but then we had to put it out more than once for fear of smoke revealing our position to the enemy fighters overhead. After a number of interruptions cooking was at last finished and we got some rice and *dal* to eat at 3-0 p.m. the first and last meal for that day.

Here I must give a brief description of how Netaji spent the day.

The Head of the State, Premier and Foreign Minister of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, on the historic retreat from Rangoon to Bangkok, sat under a tree on a blanket that was spread on the ground full of dust and dead leaves. That was on one bank of a little stream that had gone dry. On the other bank nearly opposite to him I and some of my comrades rested ourselves. As we sat there and looked at Netaji I plunged into deep thought.

I can never forget the sight that met my eyes that day. Thoroughly tired, dishevelled, very hungry, with his feet aching, every limb paining, unshaven, thirsting for a cup of tea and of course for a morsel of food sat Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on the ground under the tree. I wondered what he was thinking. It was obvious that his thoughts were now as ever, for the safety and comfort of each and every one of his comrades on the trek. He was determined to pull us through, like a true soldier and a true leader and friend, with the least suffering. All his thoughts were devoted to the task of providing us with the fundamental needs of food and water, just enough to enable us to be alive and to get through. All these days he showed a wonderful

poise and equanimity of mind and rarely lost his temper. He was completely unruffled and quite cool even in the face of the most provocative foolishness on the part of someone or other.

I must also mention here that the Rani of Jhansi girls proved wonderful. They were not in the least dejected. On the contrary they were in high spirits and helped a lot with the cooking and serving. We rounded off the day with what we called tea and set out again on the trek. It was night-fall, and the sky was very cloudy and pitch dark. The moon struggled to emerge from the clouds but was often screened off by dark and dense masses of vapour. We could hardly see beyond one or two feet. In re-forming each column we had to shout to each other to find out our positions.

Meanwhile, I had treated my feet the whole day. They were full of blisters. I did not know how I was going to march again. I wished to goodness that I could get some sort of a transport and thus avoid walking altogether. In fact I was a casualty. When I did put on my shoes and fell in to resume the march I knew I was in for an extraordinarily tough night because every step on the march gave me writhing pain. But there was no other go. I just went on hopping lamely and managed to keep the rear of the column in sight.

At the start I was at the head of the column just behind Netaji, with the Ministers of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind; Then came the Rani of Jhansi girls, civilians and the soldiers in that order. I was walking so slowly that I gradually slipped back until I dropped out of the formation altogether and managed somehow only to keep sight of the column. When we had walked only a mile or two I felt I had walked twenty miles and every time there was a halt for rest I fell into deep slumber and had to be shaken up by one of my comrades to resume the march. At long last, nearing dawn, we reached the village of Kyaiktaw.

Netaji was still walking in his top boots and for the first time, he started limping. We knew then that he must

have developed some pretty bad blisters. But he would not tell. We moved a mile or two away from the village and took shelter for the day in a mango-grove.

As on the previous morning Netaji sat down on the ground under a tree and got his top boots removed and for the first time we all knew that he was having a number of blisters on both his feet. His personal physician, Major Menon, treated his feet for a few minutes and Netaji dropped off to sleep under a tree on a piece of blanket spread on the dusty ground.

It was well past midday by the time our meal was ready. It was very tasty and we were like hungry wolves. No wonder all of us, I mean many of us ate nearly twice the normal quantity of food that we used to take. I need hardly add that I was totally unfit to walk even a few feet. That was my condition by that afternoon. I made up my mind to request Netaji to leave me behind, even if all alone, in that mango-grove, because I felt that I could not walk even a hundred yards the whole of that night. Luck favoured me in the nick of time as three or four lorries reached Kyiktaw for the use of the whole party.

Netaji himself drew up a scheme as to who should use the transport. We re-formed our party soon after dusk in readiness for the night's journey. There was an unfortunate misunderstanding as to who should move first and who should move next. Netaji himself refused to get into one of the lorries. He insisted on walking as long as there was no adequate transport for the entire party. I got into one of the lorries along with some of the Ranis and one or two officers of the INA and moved off in the belief that our lorry was expected to go ahead. Labouring under the same misunderstanding one or two other lorries also moved off. We did not halt at the rendezvous where we were all supposed to meet outside the village and then move off in one group.

I learnt later that for the first time since we set out from Rangoon, Netaji lost his temper and said something about having to deal with "a pack of fools." He was in-

sistent that the strictest discipline should be observed by one and all during the march. And by way of personal example he, the Supreme Commander of the Azad Hind Fauj and Head of the Provisional Government of Free India, literally placed himself under the orders of Zaman Kiani. He halted or started at the word of command from General Kiani. He had expected that we would all meet at the rendezvous and then start only after Zaman Kiani gave orders for us actually to start. Naturally therefore when he heard that two or three lorries had not halted at the rendezvous but had gone ahead he was furious.

Ordinarily Netaji never lost his temper in public or in private. He had extraordinary self-control. But, this time, those who were with him saw a rare outburst. I heard later that he shouted : " I have to work with a pack of fools like these ! " referring to senior officers, including myself, who did not ask the lorries to stop at the rendezvous where Netaji and others were waiting. A very senior officer who was bracketted in this uncomplimentary description moaned his fate for two days, mumbling to himself : " What rotten luck to be called a fool at my age ! "

After all, the mistake was ours and Netaji moreover did not exactly mean it when he talked of the " pack of fools." So, I told my friend to cheer up and carry on and take a lesson for the future.

He detailed one of the officers to chase our lorries and bring them back to him all the way. This officer came dashing in a yellow Ford at about forty-five miles an hour and overtook us at the bank of the Bilin River waiting to cross it on the improvised bridge. I was surprised and most disappointed that Netaji should have called us back. We drove back fast but in about half an hour's time we were met by lorries moving in our direction and they asked us to turn back and proceed again towards the Bilin River. In spite of his blistered feet Netaji was walking at a brisk pace, but I—weak human that I was—offered grateful thanks to God Almighty for having made it unnecessary for me to

walk any more and for providing me with some sort of transport!

The crossing of the Bilin River was one of those serious risks that we took in plenty. A very, very rickety improvisation had been made to enable our lorries to cross over. There was a tiny ferry too which reached us to the other bank but the six feet or so dividing the ferry from the bank had been bridged by a couple of very slippery planks. It was a most dangerous proceeding. A slip by an inch or so on either side of the plank would have thrown us all including the lorry headlong into the river. We heaved a sigh of relief when our lorry reached the other bank but one of our men sitting on the top above the driver was literally catapulted about fifteen feet and was deposited in one of the bushes. How our lorries ever crossed safely to the other side still remains a wonder to me.

We went on driving, a convoy of three or four vehicles. Just then we were passing through one of the most dangerous areas where the Burmese Defence Army which had revolted against the Japanese was supposed to be operating and indulging in sniping operations. I think it was about five o'clock in the morning when we heard the loud report of a gun. We thought then that some Burmese Defence army man was taking a pot shot at us thinking that we were Japanese but an ingenious member of our party explained that it was not a case of somebody sniping at us but that actually some Japanese must be firing a shot to kill fish in one of the nearby ponds. We smiled indulgently on hearing this original explanation, and carried on.

As the sun was rising in the east a heavy downpour descended on us. We jumped off our lorries and took shelter in some dilapidated house on the side of the road. We got a good drenching because there was hardly any roof over any one of those houses. When the rain stopped we resumed our journey. Our lorry, one of the two transporting the Ranis, went out of order and would not move. Another lorry took ours in tow, but the Japanese driver of the lorry

constantly bombed by the enemy. The whole place looked very uninviting to me, I had a creepy feeling and did not like the idea of the lorries being halted there before deciding where to bivouac for the day.

Major-General Chatterji was not in the least worried; he jumped out of his lorry the moment we reached the bank and sallied forth to explore the area. He did not turn up for a long time; it was getting late and we had decided where to rest for the day. The sun had risen in the east; and, any moment an enemy fighter might be over us. Indefinite waiting for General Chatterji would have exposed the lives of the Ranis in the two lorries. We hoped for the best for Chatterji and drove away. In war zones, you do not risk the lives of many for the sake of that of one or two. A little while after we reached our diggings, Chatterji turned up and told us all about his exploration in the dangerous area. Wherever we were—in Bangkok, Singapore or Saigon—Chatterji always liked to go out exploring the countryside and its bylanes and blind alleys.

Within an hour, Netaji and party also arrived—for the first time by lorry and not on foot! He was looking rather tired. The first ride in a lorry after eight days of forced marches, hunger and blistered feet, had their own reaction on Netaji also. The way he slowly climbed up the rickety staircase of the dilapidated hut in which we were to rest for a few hours, showed that after all he was going to relax his aching bones for a while.

It was an attic where we were to spend the day before moving on. The roof had a number of gaps through which the rays of the morning sun were peering in, and the wooden floor had holes here and there. But for the spots where the rays fell the room was dark and dingy. I need not add that the place was very dusty too with cobwebs hanging from the ceiling. We swept aside the dust on the floor with the help of a torn blanket and prepared a corner for Netaji to rest in. A blanket was spread on the floor and Netaji lay down on it, and was soon asleep.

He woke up in half an hour's time, sipped a cup of awful concoction called tea with its offensive smell of bad brown sugar, and paper and pencil in hand called us all to a small conference to decide the order in which the party would move in small groups in the afternoon to the ferry station for the adventurous crossing of the river for Moulmein on the other bank.

I was in the second group ordered to move out and we had to wait more than three hours before the ferry boat came alongside. A contingent of the Ranis was also in the group and amidst great excitement and a lot of giggling from the Ranis, we made a very risky descent from the wharfside to the boat below. The boat was on uneven keel and it started listing dangerously and we wondered for a moment whether the river was to be our grave because the current there was very treacherous. Ultimately, however, we pulled out and reached the other bank and marched off towards Moulmein town. A party including General Chatterji and General Kiani had gone ahead of us and prepared a billet in a spacious-looking building.

Poor old Chatterji belongs to the old school and, therefore, inclined to be a little snobbish, particularly when it came to fine distinctions between combatants and non-combatants among the military, and again, between the military and civil. He had arranged for only three cots to be fixed up in a nice room for Kiani, Bhonsle and himself. Thivy, myself and some other equally senior (though civilian) officers were to be lumped together in the hall without a stick of furniture. The flagstone flooring was there for us to sprawl upon for the night.

It mattered little where one slept; what really mattered was that we could at all stretch our limbs and sleep under a roof in a house, instead of having to doze off huddled up in a corner of a running lorry jolting us out of our sleep every few minutes. Nevertheless we did not like this petty exhibition of brass-hat snobbery in the midst of such trials and tribulation. So, we kicked up a row, more as a diversion

than with any serious intention. We had the satisfaction of hearing an elaborate explanation as to how no snobbery or offence was meant, and that it was a mere accident that only three beds and some furniture were available in one room, and the earlier arrivals, namely Chatterji and Kiani had occupied the room, leaving, of course, one bed for General Bhonsle !

We slept very soundly on the hard stone flooring, after hearing the laboured explanation. Another gain was that we had made sure that there would be no repetition of this kind of "arrangement" for some time to come.

The next morning all was going well till about ten o'clock. The Ranis who had been billeted in the house opposite, had cooked some nice food, and some of them were eating it with a great deal of relish . . . their first good meal after a whole week.

Then came overhead the enemy bombers and fighters, and hell was let loose. The bombs fell some distance away from where we were but the fighters had a field day right over our heads. They were firing burst after burst every minute or two. We ran out of the hall and down the stairs, and threw ourselves on the ground under the porch and near about.

General Bhonsle and I had a narrow escape. We were both lying face down on the ground under the porch. Something struck the ground within a couple of yards of my heels. I dared not raise my head to look round just then. I did so later ; it was a bullet from a heavy machine-gun of one of the fighters. It was enough to kill Bhonsle or me on the spot, if it had hit one of us. It had come through the roof, pierced the floor of the first storey and landed on the ground where it made a three-inch hole. That, I believe, was the closest acquaintance that a machine-gun bullet of that size made with me in East Asia !

The Ranis were very annoyed that their meal was so rudely interrupted.

After the raid was over, we went round the town and saw the havoc the enemy planes had played among the local population comprising Burmese and Indians.

The same evening some of us were asked to move to another billet away from the river bank, and the Ranis had moved farther away to the Chettiars choultry, a massive structure in a comparatively quieter quarter, where Netaji had arrived and was occupying a verandah and a tiny room on the first floor.

The proverbial heavy rains of Burma had already begun and turned the roads of Moulmein into puddles and slushy stretches. The house where Bhonsle, myself and party were billeted had an upper storey which was fairly fit for human habitation. The ground floor had ankle-deep slush because of the soft subsoil. There was a well in the backyard and we drew plenty of water and had a nice bath daily; a daily bath was more welcome than even a daily meal. I remained in our billet and did not go out much, but after two evenings, Netaji sent for me, asked me to have a meal with him squatting on the floor of the first floor verandah and asked me to sleep there for the night.

Before we turned in, Netaji chatted for a while about his future plans in a general way. I put it to him then that what he might do immediately was to collect all the officers, men and the Ranis who had reached Moulmein and were billeted in various quarters of the town, and give them a talk reviewing the situation so far, and what they should do in future. He did not see much need to do anything, like that at the moment, not, at any rate, for morale-building—as morale, he said, was still high.

It seems he then consulted Kiani who agreed with him. However, he changed his mind later, and sent word to all to assemble in the hall of the choultry about nine o'clock the next morning. We did so. Netaji spoke frankly about our plight. He admitted that we were on the retreat, but stressed at the same time that we were only retreating to a place from where we could keep the fight on and resist the

enemy's further advance into our rear bases. There could be no rest for the INA which must go on fighting until there were no other territories to stand on and fight. He pointed to the Rani of Jhansi Girls sitting round the hall and paid them a well-deserved tribute for living up to their reputation of facing dangers as bravely as seasoned soldiers. He was sure that as long as that spirit animated the INA, they had nothing to be ashamed of. He exhorted all present to think of the very heavy tasks that awaited them immediately after they reached Bangkok.

This talk did a tremendous lot of good and propped up some of the drooping spirits among us. We then got up and sang the National Anthem *Sush Sukh chain* with far more gusto than we had done for a long time. Netaji was happy. He now saw that after all his talk was not a waste of time, nor was it premature.

I spent the time limping around the deserted town on my bare, blistered feet, and on one of those rounds I chanced on a cluster of men whose looks somewhat puzzled me at a distance. I went nearer. Of course, it was the batch of civilians who had left by rail from Rangoon, the same evening as we did (24th April), but under the leadership of that irrepressible and resourceful little imp, P. N. Pillai, who had now brought his men through the long and weary trek partly by rail, and partly on bullock carts and on foot. Their heads were clean shaven for the first time since the East Asia War broke out. They all looked like *sanyasis* who had had no food, water or sleep and who had marched for miles and miles; in short, a bedraggled crowd. But they were full of laughter and jokes and they praised P. N. to the skies, for the way he fed them on the way, sometimes even with mutton, and sometimes kept up their spirits on plain water and forced marches for hours on end. His enthusiasm was infectious. He is a first rate laugh-raiser even in the midst of calamities. If ever in my life time, again, I have to undertake a jungle trek, give me P. N. for company, and I ask for nothing more.

Netaji arranged with the Japanese to get a train or two to move us all towards Bangkok in batches. General Bhonsle was asked to take the first party consisting of about thirty of us to Bangkok. We set off on the afternoon of the 6th May. Our train was standing on a siding camouflaged by tall bamboo trees. Japanese wounded were sprawling near the rail lines. We were shown a "compartment" for the thirty of us. It was a small goods wagon, but a covered one. We scrambled in and squatted on the floor; the boards on the floor of the wagon had been ripped open in places with the result that there were one or two big awnings, though not big enough however for any one of us to be deposited on the track when the train was in motion! We were packed like cattle. Most of us later on stood up and remained standing until our legs ached. Soon it was night-fall and we felt sleepy. But where to stretch one's limbs? With the greatest difficulty, we first found just sufficient room for all of us to sit on the floor in a slightly reclining posture and then reclined against each other. As the train jogged along at snail's pace, we could not resist sleep any longer. We tried to stretch ourselves by turns.

And, what a pretty picture we made inside that wagon, huddled there in contorted postures—Major-General Jagannathrao Krishnarao Bhonsle, Chief of Staff of the Indian National Army, Shri S. A. Ayer, Minister of Publicity and Propaganda, Provisional Government of Free India, Shri John Thivy, Adviser to the Provisional Government and twenty-seven or twenty-eight others! General Bhonsle and I have laughed over this picture since we reached India. But I did not feel like laughing when I was in that wagon.

We got off the train at dawn, scurried into the nearest jungle before any enemy fighters could spot us; spent two days in hiding, snatching a little sleep, making tea, cooking a meal and then back again to our "saloon on the siding" for the night's crawling journey. Our day-time halts during the week that followed were at Thumbusaya (7th and 8th); Annequein (9th) made famous by its heroic ack-ack INA

battery; a village near a river (10th), a Thai headman's village (11th) where the headman came out to meet us with his loaded pistol in hand, then became our best friend; a Japanese military camp (12th); near Nompladok (13th); Nompladok (14th). We shook off the wagon here and arrived in Bangkok by car and lorry.

At last back in civilisation! We had met Netaji's party off and on *en route*. He was travelling by rail-motor which the Japanese had the good sense to place at his disposal, making his journey less tortuous. Netaji reached Bangkok twenty-four hours before we did. We heard that he had a cup of tea on arrival and immediately got busy giving instructions to League officials there to go out fifty, one hundred or even two hundred miles to meet all the military and civilian parties of the Provisional Government who were falling back and fighting their way through the jungles to reach Bangkok.

One such League party met us at Nompladok and arranged our transport and brought us to Bangkok in double-quick time. Our billets had also been got ready. We flung ourselves on the beds without caring to remove our dusty, dirty, tattered clothes or boots. And we slept for hours. We did not want food or water; a comfortable bed, in a solid house, in civilised surroundings did more to restore to normal our tired flesh and aching bones. We were all looking extremely thin and emaciated as we staggered into Bangkok but later felt better and up to going about our normal activities.

Netaji was staying in the small but well appointed house of Shewakram Mahtani, prominent Indian business man and Finance Secretary of the Indian Independence League Headquarters, Thailand, who vacated it and went and stayed in an adjoining cottage. Kiani and Chatterji also stayed with Netaji. Bhonsle had been given a separate house while Sahay, who was already in Thailand, myself and a few of the others who had done the jungle trek with me, were billeted in the house of Pandit Raghunath Shastri,

the ardent nationalist and indefatigable office-bearer of the League, who had vacated his house for us and himself moved with family to an outhouse in the compound. This house of ours was only a couple of furlongs away from Netaji's, round the corner of the lane. Netaji began his hectic activities again without further loss of valuable time. Almost daily he called either a formal or an informal meeting of the Ministers. The most important question to decide was: *What next?*

We took stock of the world situation, the situation in East Asia and the latest situation in India as we could guess from the radios and wireless reports of World news agencies.

Meanwhile, news of Germany's collapse had preceded us to Bangkok by a week or so. How long could Japan hold out? What should the INA do in any unforeseen contingency? Should Netaji try to contact Russia through the Japanese, with whom she was still officially on terms of neutrality? Would Russia make an encouraging gesture or refuse to have anything to do with Netaji for his erstwhile association with Germany? Would the Japanese themselves be sporting enough to sound Russia about Netaji? Or would Japan take up an unrealistic attitude and begin to wonder what Netaji had up his sleeves?

The consensus of opinion in the Cabinet was that Netaji should press the Japanese very hard to put him in touch with somebody or other high-up in the Moscow hierarchy and find out how his overtures would be received. Meanwhile, Netaji with less than a handful of his most trusted lieutenants, should be ready at short notice to fly out of Thailand to Indo-China, China, Japan, or some place nearest to the Russian territory to avoid falling into the hands of the Anglo-Americans, when he could keep up the fight no longer.

Orders went forth to the INA in Malaya to contest every inch of the ground if the British attempted a landing there. The immediate problems of receiving and looking after the INA, from Burma that was falling back on the Thai borders were also discussed.

To meet the immediate needs of the INA in Bangkok and of the detachments retreating from the various fronts in Burma and falling back on Bangkok, we needed over two million ticals (Thai currency). The money, if found, could be used for urgent purchases of clothing and supplies for the INA in Bangkok and other parts of Thailand. Sardar Ishar Singh, a Minister of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and Chairman, Indian Independence League in Thailand, was pressing the Thai Government to accommodate Netaji to the tune of some four million ticals (five million rupees) so that Netaji might have sufficient funds in hand to meet urgent demands and also be able to carry on for some time. The Thai authorities took time to think over the proposition; Netaji was getting impatient but, for some reason or the other, he was not in a mood to go and speak to Khwang Apaiwong, the Thai Premier, direct. When I found that the situation was getting on his nerves, I offered to go myself to the Thai Premier and speak about the matter. Netaji did not see much point in my proposal but reluctantly gave his consent.

I had come into close personal contact with the Premier in 1941, when he was Luang Kovid Apaiwong, Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs, Thailand, and I was Reuter's Special Correspondent in Thailand with headquarters in Bangkok. I used to call on him frequently to speak to him about Reuters outgoing or incoming cables. I met him again four years later, in January 1945, in Bangkok when he had become Premier of Thailand and, as Acting Secretary to the Cabinet and Minister of Propaganda and Publicity I had accompanied Netaji who was spending a week as the Thai Premier's official guest.

During that week, Netaji was the guest of honour at a series of lunches, dinners and banquets given by the Thai Regent, Premier and Foreign Minister, the Japanese Ambassador and the German Minister in Bangkok. At most of these parties, Khwang Apaiwong was seated either immediately to the right or to the left of Netaji and I found

myself a chair or two away from the Thai Premier either in the same row or the opposite row of the same table. On more than one such occasion, Apaiwong, well-known for his dry humour and jokes against himself, accompanied by vivid facial expressions and gestures, told Netaji and the other guests round the table about his days (in the imposing General Post Office building) as Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs; he recalled what a nuisance I was to him pestering him about the delays in the transmission of my cable dispatches to London as Reuters Special Correspondent. I was somewhat embarrassed, but also pardonably proud that he referred to "my old friend, Ayer." Total absence of self-consciousness was always a characteristic of good old Luang Kovid Apaiwong which endeared him to one and all who met him; a haunting sense of self-consciousness was and has always been my weakness; Netaji himself made an attempt or two to cure me of this mild disease, but failed.

Having wangled Netaji's grudging consent to my tackling the Thai Premier direct about the tical loan for the INA, I phoned to Khwang Apaiwong's secretariat, got an appointment, and called on him accordingly at his official residence, the Suan Kulab (Rose Garden) Palace.

I was dressed in the only khaki uniform of mine which had survived the three-week three hundred-mile Rangoon-to-Bangkok adventure through the jungles. It consisted of a pair of worn-out brown shoes, socks with holes hidden away in the toes, fairly well-creased khaki trousers, khaki bushcoat with stains of blueblack ink between the buttons just below the buckle of the detachable khaki belt, and khaki forage cap. The stains could not be removed in spite of my best efforts, and they could be seen by the Premier of Thailand as I walked into his room and he took a step or two towards me holding out his hand in greeting. We sat down to a quiet chat, and he made me feel quite at home by his unassuming manners and intimate tone of conversation. Somehow, I could not relax myself completely, partly because of the important mission I had taken on myself, and partly

because I was reluctant to be as free with him as I used to be when he was Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs. There was also one other very important reason for my self-restraint. In the four months since I met him in Bangkok when Netaji was his State Guest for a week, the world war situation had changed a great deal, Germany had collapsed, the Allies were in high spirits, and Japan—Germany's Asian ally—was dispirited; Japan was in occupation of Thailand, with or without the consent of the Thais. And, it was anybody's guess as to what were the innermost feelings of the Thai Government and the Thai people towards the Anglo-Americans, and the Japanese, and towards Netaji, the INA and the Indian Independence Movement who were in alliance with the Japanese and receiving their aid. The Thais have a reputation for their shrewd diplomacy which alone has helped them remain independent through the centuries. In the early days of World War II, when Thailand remained neutral, the German as well as British diplomats in Bangkok nagged and harassed the Thais as being pro-British, pro-German or pro-Japanese, as the case may be, in their attitude and behaviour towards one or the other of the belligerent nations. But, all that time the Thais went on assuring the Germans and the British that they were not *pro* this or that country but were simply *pro*-themselves, namely, *pro*-Thailand, to which, of course, nobody could take exception. Perhaps, even today, the Thais are only *pro*-Thais.

To go back to my talk with the Thai Premier. I was not sure how far his attitude of cordial friendship and goodwill for Netaji and for the cause of Indian Independence had changed, or had been influenced by the reaction of the people of Thailand to the rising tide of Allied victory on the battlefields of Europe. Nevertheless, I took it for granted that his personal friendship for Netaji and sympathy and support for Indian Freedom continued undiminished, and I came straight to the point when he asked me what I expected of him.

In effect, my reply was : " Your Excellency, for the last few days, Sardar Isher Singh, under instructions from Netaji, has been trying to move Your Excellency's Government to accommodate the Provisional Government of Azad Hind to the extent of about four million ticals, half of which amount is needed urgently, and the other half would be needed in the very near future. The urgency of the need has been fully explained to your Government. In case Your Excellency has any doubts about it, I would only request you, Sir, to take a good look at this (and I pointed to the ink stains on my khaki bushcoat); I am ashamed to present myself before Your Excellency in this shabby outfit, but this is very smart compared to what my comrades among combatants and non-combatants are wearing; re-equipment of the INA is very, very urgent. The loan would be a fully secured debt; you may rest assured of that; but Isher Singh is being put off from day to day, without a definite "yes" or "no"; I do not presume to know the many angles from which the official hierarchy of your Foreign Office looks at this proposition; it may be that certain elements there wish to avoid such a deal with the Indian ally of Japan at a time when the fate of Japan seems to be hanging in the balance, consequent on the collapse of Germany. I can quite understand this attitude, though I cannot approve of it. I wish to say nothing to those people. But, Your Excellency, I do wish to take the liberty of saying something to you. I beg of you to forget for a moment that you are the Premier of Thailand and that I am a Minister of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. From the day I landed in Bangkok four and a half years ago as Reuters Special Correspondent, I have considered myself a true friend of the people and the Government of Thailand, and they have also treated me as such; so I need not reiterate my sincere goodwill and concern for the real interests of Thailand. Having said this, I have no hesitation in telling you that those who take a narrow view of the immediate advantage that the changing war situation holds for

Thailand are not necessarily right ; as likely as not, they may be mistaken. However that may be, I wish to appeal to you as man to man to look at my proposition from a different angle. Perhaps, if you decline to extend a helping hand to Netaji now, no large section of your people may blame you ; but the future historian will one day record the fact that the Premier of Thailand failed to aid the Head of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind in his hour of need ; I do not want that to happen ; on the contrary, Sir, if you help Netaji now, you may rest assured that Free India—and, India *will* be free before long, even if Britain wins this war—I say Free India will remember with gratitude that her neighbour, Thailand, helped India's illustrious son and patriot, Subhas Chandra Bose, when he badly needed help in the epic war he waged for India's Liberation. The credit and gratitude will, of course, go to your country, but you will be known to history as the man who did the right thing at a critical moment, and cemented the bonds of friendship between our two countries."

Khwang Apaiwong lapsed into silence, and remained silent for a minute or two after I finished my appeal.

I did not wish to ask him for a final reply, lest it turned out to be "no" in spite of my impassioned eloquence !

I took my departure when the effect of my words was still lingering in the air in that room, or so I imagined.

I called on Netaji later and gave him only a brief and sketchy account of my interview, and told him that I had not abandoned all hopes. Later, I learnt that Sardar Isher Singh's continued efforts did prove successful, though not to Netaji's entire satisfaction.

I got busy intensifying the Radio activities in Bangkok to make up for the loss of the Rangoon station. Netaji asked me to fly to Saigon to ginger up the radio, press and platform propaganda in Indo-China and prepare our possible next base. With General Chatterji I flew to Saigon on 6th June and carried on there till 27th July, when I flew to Singapore in response to an urgent call from Netaji received

nearly a week earlier. I could not get a seat on an aircraft until 27th July. When I reached Singapore that same evening, I heard that Netaji had unexpectedly left for Seramban a couple of days previously. I continued my broadcast series which I had started in Saigon and did two on successive nights rounding up the situation, when I received a call from Seramban asking me to join Netaji, which I did, arriving there by train at three o'clock on the morning of 31st July, 1945.

After a hurried bath I was ready to accompany Netaji who was leaving for Kuala Lumpur for a couple of days' stay. We returned to Seramban where Netaji resumed his personal direction of a very important secret enquiry into a senior officer's conduct. A Chinese girl was alleged to have played the decoy in misleading the officer. The enquiry was being conducted by Major-General Alagappan, Colonel Nagar and Colonel Habibur Rahaman, but Netaji was guiding them on the spot. Netaji was pre-occupied with this enquiry and waiting in Seramban for it to finish.

Meanwhile, the Japanese were determined to get the Chinese girl immediately and put her through the third degree to get the truth out of her. They pressed Netaji not to stand in their way as she was, after all, not an Indian national, and she had jeopardised Japanese war efforts by playing the decoy for the hostile Chinese. Netaji found himself on the horns of a dilemma. He could not reasonably refuse to hand her over to the Japanese but, the humanitarian in him rebelled against the very idea, as he knew what she was in for if the Japanese got hold of her. He spent hours in deep solitary thought over the issue and decided that he would not turn her over immediately at any rate.

Nothing very sensational happened until the night of the 10th of August, 1945, when the news of Russia's declaration of war on Japan came through over the long distance 'phone from Singapore *via* Colonel Inayat Kiani in Kuala Lumpur.

CHAPTER V

ENCIRCLING GLOOM

NETAJI was staying at the Guest House in Seramban. The clock struck twelve on the night of the 10th of August, 1945. Major-General Alagappan, Colonel G. R. Nagar, Colonel Habibur Rahman and myself were also staying in the Bungalow. The telephone bell rang. Someone took up the receiver and said it was a long distance call from Kuala Lumpur. Major-General Alagappan went to the 'phone. He could only make out that it was a call from Colonel Inayat Kiani and he was talking something about the war.

Netaji was sitting in the Drawing Room above the porch, about fifteen feet away from the telephone. He was straining his ears to follow the conversation from what Major-General Alagappan was saying. Then he got up himself and walked across to the 'phone. Colonel Inayat Kiani gave Netaji big news in code. Netaji then hung up the receiver and walked back to the drawing room looking a little pre-occupied. Later I gathered from him that Colonel Inayat Kiani had been asked by Major-General Kiani on the long distance 'phone from Singapore to relay the message to Netaji that Russia had declared war on Japan.

It was nearly 2-0 a.m. when Netaji retired that morning. Before turning in, he called me to his bed-room and told me to take his car and go, first thing after day-break, to Kuala Lumpur and get fuller news from Colonel Kiani.

After an early breakfast I raced in Netaji's car to Kuala Lumpur and drove straight to where Colonel Kiani was staying, at the residence of the Commandant, Azad Hind Fauj Training Camp. Colonel Kiani described to me how Major-General Kiani found it difficult to get through to Seramban on the telephone and asked Inayat to relay the

message about the Russian declaration of war against Japan. There was nothing much he could add as to the latest situation. From the Camp I then drove down to the office of the *Malay Shimbun* and there met my old friend Francis Cooray, editor of the paper. Since the previous night the *Malay Shimbun* had received a series of despatches from the Domei News Agency on the Russian offensive against the Japanese in Manchukuo (Manchuria). The rapid advance of the Russian forces even in the first few hours after the declaration of war was admitted by the Domei Agency.

News looked pretty bad for Japan as a result of Russia jumping into the fray. I grabbed all the galley proofs that Cooray could give me with the latest news and raced back to Seramban.

When I reached Seramban, Netaji and party were having a late lunch. I walked in, saluted him and took my seat at the table. I knew Netaji was impatient to have the latest news and, of course, I was bursting to tell him. But there were some guests at the table and Netaji was content to keep on throwing glances in my direction and trying to study my face. No one round the table could guess that my entry into the room had made any change in Netaji's mood. He went on cracking little jokes about the food.

Meanwhile, somebody said that a long distance call was coming on the 'phone, this time from Singapore. Major-General Kiani wanted Netaji back in Singapore as early as possible, but avoiding a night drive if possible because of the Communist-infested area through which Netaji and party would have to pass *en route* to Singapore.

"Where is the hurry?" Netaji was thinking aloud. It was obvious that he was slightly annoyed. "What if Russia has declared war on Japan? How does it affect us in any way? We shall have to go on whatever happens... I cannot leave until I finish my work here."

The lunch was over. We all got up. Netaji walked up the stairs, went back to his room. I followed him there.

gave him the bunch of galley proofs and waited until he finished reading them.

He then looked up and said: "Well, the Russian advance seems to be pretty swift. The Japanese seem to be falling back and I wonder where they will make a stand."

He then put away the bunch of proofs and plunged into other matters that needed his urgent attention. Netaji had come up from Singapore on what was first meant to be a very brief visit to Seramban. So no Short-wave Radio-set had been put up in the Guest House. If someone had tuned in to the BBC or All India Radio, the meaning of Major-General Kiani's long distance call earlier in the afternoon asking Netaji to return to Singapore immediately would have been clear. Inayat Kiani did not feel like staying behind in Kuala Lumpur. He wanted to be near Netaji at a moment like this. He reached the Guest House about 4-0 p.m. and was asked to share the room with Colonel Nagar.

Late in the evening Netaji drove down to the Azad Hind Fauj Training Camp in Seramban and addressed about two thousand men in connection with an unfortunate incident that had taken place there a few days earlier. It was well past ten o'clock by the time he left the Camp and returned to the Guest House. I think we sat down for dinner that night at about eleven o'clock, and it was nearing one o'clock by the time we dispersed downstairs. Meanwhile the telephone bell rang on the first floor. It was a trunk call from Malacca saying that Dr. Lakshmayya, General Secretary, and Mr. Ganapathy, Acting Secretary of the Publicity Department of the IIL Headquarters in Singapore, were making a dash by car all the way from Singapore to Seramban to see Netaji on a very urgent matter and that they had just left Malacca and should be in Seramban at about 2-0 a.m.

Netaji wondered what news these two people could be bringing. He was not left in doubt for very long. It was past 2-0 a.m. and a car covered with dust from radiator to tail lamp chugged up the steep drive of the Guest House and

came to a halt under the porch. Lakshmayya and Ganapathy jumped out of the car, looking very tired and dishevelled. Netaji was informed. They were immediately called up to his bed-room.

It was a room on the first floor, about twenty by ten feet, very simply furnished, with a wooden cot on one side, and a dressing table on the other. Somewhere in the middle of the room sat Netaji in his half-sleeved undervest, but still in his top-boots and breeches; he had only taken off his bush-coat because it was rather warm in the room. The bright rays of the electric lamp overhead fell full on his face. He motioned Lakshmayya, Ganapathy and myself to the three chairs near him. There was no one else in the room. He asked me to close the doors and windows. Then in a casual tone he asked Lakshmayya: "Well, what is the news you have brought?"

Lakshmayya pulled his chair closer to Netaji, leaned forward and whispered: "Sir, I am sorry to say that Japan has surrendered!"

I instinctively turned in Netaji's direction. I wanted to see how he took it.

For a moment my head was in a whirl. Thoughts rushed through my mind at a mad pace. I could not imagine that it was only a few seconds, for a multitude of thoughts bewildered me.

I said to myself: "So, this is the crash . . . the terrible crash of everything that this great man has built up in the last twenty-four months! Is it the end of everything? Is it the end of all his dreams? Is it the end of all his work? Is it the end of all his efforts? Is it the end of everything that he has lived for? Is it going to be a staggering blow to him? How is he going to take it? It is complete, utter, pitch darkness. Is it going to swallow him up, or is he going to fight his way out of this as usual and then march to the next battlefield? Will he admit defeat or will he laugh at this the latest and stunning blow and go on with the fight for India's freedom?"

My soul was in anguish. My head was in a swirl, and I thought that hours had passed.

Netaji heard the news and after one characteristic "Um" he was deep in thought for a fleeting second. The next second he was absolutely his normal self.

He first broke into a smile, and almost his first words were: "So, that is that. Now, what next?"

It was the soldier speaking. He was already thinking of the next move and the next battle. He was not going to be beaten. Japan's surrender was not India's surrender. Japan's surrender was not the surrender of the Liberation Forces fighting for India's freedom. He would not admit defeat. The INA would not admit defeat. He laughed away the catastrophe. He was bubbling with scintillating humour. He cracked jokes and laughed like a child. It was the supreme moment of his life. He was not going to be crushed by the disaster. He was once again on top of an extremely difficult situation.

I can never forget the three or four hours that I spent with Netaji after Dr. Lakshmayya and Ganapathy broke the terrible news to him. Before they retired from his room he cracked a few jokes with them and we all laughed. With a mischievous twinkle in his eye he said: "Well, don't you see we are the only people who have not surrendered?" And he joined the laugh that followed.

Then the talk turned to what the Japanese were thinking about Netaji after the Russian declaration of war on Japan two days ago. Did the Japanese Government expect that the Provisional Government would automatically follow suit and declare war on Russia? No, they could not have thought in those terms for the simple reason that they knew very well that the Provisional Government acted in these matters entirely independently and it was no use trying to influence Netaji one way or the other. With him there was only one acid test, and that was, the interest of India—what course would best serve India's interest? Nothing else mattered to him. The Japanese knew that only too well.

No wonder then that they did not even try to find out Netaji's reaction to the Russian declaration of war on Japan.

The talk went on in good humour in that room. The Provisional Government had long ago declared war on Britain and America. Then Russia had declared war on Japan and Japan had surrendered.

What should we have done when Russia declared war on Japan?

Now that everything was over, we were inclined to live over the retrospect.

I said we had already declared war on Britain and America and if, in the last two days, we had declared war on Russia also, because Russia declared war on Japan, then the rest of the world might think that we were a terrible lot of fellows and might very well say, "Good Lord, the next thing these fellows will do is to declare war on Mars." There was a burst of laughter. By now it was well past 3-0 a.m. Dr. Lakshmayya and Ganapathy were shown one of the rooms to retire for the night. Netaji asked me to stay behind.

He snapped out a few urgent instructions. "I want Raghavan and Swami from Penang and Thivy from Ipoh to come down immediately and meet me in Singapore as early as possible. Tell Inayat Kiani to send his car racing back to Ipoh with instructions to pick up enough petrol there to go to Penang to pick up Raghavan and Swami and dash back to Ipoh, pick up Thivy and make a non-stop drive to Singapore where they must arrive soon after I reach there. I expect that we shall be in Singapore sometime tomorrow evening."

I was about to turn round and leave the room when Netaji called me back and said: "Oh, by the way, tell Inayat Kiani to instruct Ipoh to give plenty of petrol for the car. We shan't need any more petrol from tomorrow any way," added Netaji and smiled.

I conveyed those urgent instructions to Colonel Kiani in the room on the opposite wing of the first floor. Then I came back to Netaji's bed-room. I looked at the clock in the room. It was nearly 4-30 a.m. He was still in his top boots and breeches and his half-sleeved undervest. He paced up and down for a few minutes, then said: "It is rather warm here, come on, let us go and sit on the verandah."

Out on the verandah a chill breeze was blowing and it was draughty where he went and sat at the corner of the verandah where some cane-chairs had been placed. I sat opposite to him. The light was dim compared with that in the room. Still I could see his face very clearly. He looked undoubtedly grave and was silent for a while as was usual with him on serious occasions. He spoke almost in a whisper: "Now we have got to think out what we shall do."

When I looked at the watch it was nearing 5-0 a.m. and I said to him: "Sir, do you know it is five in the morning, don't you think you ought to have a little rest before we start early in the morning on a twelve-hour non-stop drive to Singapore?" The man's humour even at that eerie hour was irrepressible. He said: "Oh, it doesn't matter. We shall have plenty of rest from tomorrow on!" and he smiled broadly.

Actually, however, he did not have even a single moment's rest from then on till his fateful trip by plane from Saigon.

He discussed the most urgent matters that had to be attended to soon after his arrival in Singapore. Then he rose saying:

"We shall talk over other matters on our way down to Singapore."

I returned to my room, somewhere about half past five and could not somehow compose myself to sleep. I was turning over from side to side for quite a while and just wanted to make sure that Netaji had at least turned in, if not gone to sleep. But the light was still burning in his room and I believe that it was about 6-0 a.m. Somebody

shook me by the shoulder about seven and said : " Are you getting ready ? We are moving off in half an hour."

Before I got ready and was downstairs Netaji was there, looking fresh as ever and as if he had had a good night's rest. *You could not see the slightest trace of the all-night anguish of soul on his face.* He looked as if he was just about to start off on one of his many triumphal tours through the States of Malaya.

We started from there in a convoy. An armed guard in a lorry was leading, followed by Netaji's car in which he asked me to sit next to him. On the front seat next to the driver sat Captain Shamshere Singh, Netaji's A.D.C. In the car behind ours sat Major-General Alagappan, Colonel Nagar and Colonel Inayat Kiani. The rear was brought up by Satya Sahay's car with his luggage carrier over-flowing with half-ripe, full-ripe, and some over-ripe bananas which were so rare in Singapore, but could be had in plenty in Seramban. All the way down from Seramban to Singapore whenever Netaji's car halted on the way, he would go round to see the luggage carrier of Sahay's car and crack a joke at Sahay's expense. He watched the havoc the blazing sun was playing with the precious burden of bananas, and said : " Why can't Sahay go on giving a few bananas to the poor people on the road before the sun finishes off nearly all the bunches ? " Poor Sahay looked uncomfortable but joined in the laughter.

I think it was 7-30 p.m. when we reached Netaji's Bungalow in Singapore. We were all asked to stay on and not to go away. He asked me to have my luggage removed upstairs and to stay in the house. All of us had a hurried wash and met Netaji on the verandah on the first floor adjoining the Drawing Room and overlooking the lawn and the sea beyond. Major-General Kiani, and Colonel Habibur Rahman had also been sent for urgently.

An important conference followed. We discussed Japan's surrender and all its implications. The conference was adjourned for half an hour for dinner after which all

returned to the verandah on the first floor where coffee was served. We sat till three in the morning. There was complete agreement on all the steps to be taken as a consequence of Japan's collapse—the instructions to be issued to Divisional Commanders on the military side and to the Chairmen of the branches and sub-branches of the IIL throughout East Asia except Burma where the British troops were already in occupation, the distribution of sufficient money to the troops as well as the civilian officials to last them for at least six months.

Still, there was no official news or confirmation of Japan's surrender. We were following the Radio closely. The talk was still of negotiations between Tokyo on the one side and London, Washington and Moscow on the other. But Netaji was not going to lose any more time. Now that he was back in Singapore, urgent and important instructions had to be sent to the League Organisations in places as far apart as Bangkok and Tokyo. It was obvious that the official announcement by Tokyo of the surrender of Japan was only a matter of hours. It was already being broadcast to the world by the Allied Radio Stations. We all met Netaji again the whole day on the 13th and nearly the whole night. There was more than enough to do for every one of us. We had a hectic three days till the evening of the 14th.

The night and day conferences that Netaji held on those memorable days on the verandah of his first floor were taken up with decisions of last minute instructions to the INA and IIL branches in Singapore, in Malaya, and throughout East Asia. Netaji had decided the manner of INA's surrender, what should be done with the Rani of Jhansi camp with about five hundred girls in Singapore and how the civilian organisation should look after whole-time and part-time workers once the British landed in Singapore. All those three days Netaji went on dictating instructions to Colonel Habibur Rahman (Deputy Chief of Staff) INA with Headquarters in Singapore, and to Dr. Lakshmayya, General Secretary, IIL Singapore. Of all the problems

over which Netaji worried so much, the problem of the Rani of Jhansi girls was the most serious and next in importance was the problem of the forty-five Indian Cadets whom he had sent out a year before to Tokyo to undergo training in the army and in the air force. Netaji was also in constant touch with Captain Mrs. Thevar and gave her oral instructions as to how the girls should be sent back to their homes with sufficient money and other necessities to help them tide over the coming days of anguish.

On the afternoon of the 14th August, Netaji had one of his teeth pulled out as it was giving him trouble. The dentist asked him to stay in bed and take complete rest. What a time to ask Netaji to have complete rest! He did get into bed after 4.0 p.m. but that evening the Rani of Jhansi Regiment was putting on the boards a drama depicting the Life of Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi (written by Lieutenant P. N. Oak of the INA, ADC to Major-General J. K. Bhonsle). Captain Mrs. Thevar, the Commandant of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment in Singapore, had specially requested Netaji to preside on the occasion. He called me to the bed-room a few minutes before seven and told me to go ahead and tell Captain Thevar not to wait but to start the performance and that he would come later. Tooth-ache or no tooth-ache, he was not going to stay in bed, that evening, of all evenings.

It was a theatre built up in the open air and there was an audience of about three thousand officers and men to see the play. Deafening cheers broke out when Netaji arrived earlier than expected. The girls put up a fine performance. There was not a single man or woman in that audience of three thousand and over who was not thrilled by the spirit of Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi as portrayed on the stage. When the performance ended the three thousand voices sang *Subh Sukh Chain*. That was the last time Netaji heard community singing of that thrilling *kaumi gana* (National Anthem) by three thousand soldiers of the INA and the Rani of Jhansi Regiment.

Half way through the performance Sri A. N. Sarkar, a Member of the Provisional Government, who had unexpectedly arrived by plane from Bangkok came straight from the aerodrome and Netaji asked him to sit near him and give him the latest news from Bangkok. After the performance Sri Sarkar was asked to come to Netaji's Bungalow for dinner. It was the Cabinet that had been in non-stop session on the first floor of Netaji's Bungalow ever since he returned to Singapore on the 12th evening. Sarkar joined this conference on the night of the 14th. Before Sarkar turned up on the scene it had been more or less decided that Netaji would stay on in Singapore with all the Ministers present there and face the British when they eventually landed on the island. This decision was arrived at after a good deal of very frank discussion of the advisability or otherwise of Netaji's staying on in Singapore and being taken prisoner by the British. All these discussions took place in Netaji's presence and he also spoke frankly but in a very impersonal way. Even then his sense of humour got on top of everything.

The talk turned on prisoners of war. Those who were already prisoners of war at that time, that is, the Indian Army personnel who did not join the INA would of course be liberated as soon as the British landed in Singapore, and the entire Indian National Army personnel would become prisoners of war. So whenever the topic of "prisoners of war" cropped up in the course of the talk at the informal meeting of the Cabinet, there was always a little confusion as to which prisoners of war were meant. At one stage Netaji chirped in with: "Of course a lot of supplies will be rushed to Singapore for the prisoners of war—not to the new prisoners of war (INA) but to the old"—(laughter).

Later the talk about Netaji's staying on in Singapore and being taken prisoner by the British was very frank, almost brutally so. Netaji listened to the talk and participated in it as if it was somebody else who was being discussed in his presence. One of us said at one stage: "Sir, if you stay on,

they will, no doubt, take you prisoner, then the question is what dare they do with you. Will they dare try you either in Malaya or somewhere else in East Asia or on Indian soil? If they do and of course find you guilty of having waged war against Britain and sentence you to death and carry out the sentence, what will happen? India will be completely independent that very moment and the British Empire will cease to exist in India. Supposing they leave you alone, then you will continue to fight for India's independence. So either way it suits us and not the British. But the question is *should* you be taken prisoner at all?"

The consensus of opinion among the members of the Cabinet was that Netaji must not be taken prisoner by the British. Single-handed Netaji opposed this idea. He said that he should remain with his Ministers and his army in Singapore and face the British. His view prevailed for the time being. But it was not a final decision. We still had time to decide finally.

Meanwhile, as I said earlier, Sarkar turned up on the scene and a very important talk followed that night. After listening to what Sarkar had to say, Netaji showed a slight inclination to reconsider his own decision about staying on in Singapore. By now we were in the small hours of the morning and all dead tired. We dispersed to meet again the next day. Decisions had been taken on all other matters except this one, namely, whether or not Netaji should remain in Singapore. If he was not to stay on where was he to go? We discussed this question threadbare in Netaji's presence on the morning of the 15th and that afternoon. It was agreed that we should meet again after dinner and then take the final decision.

One of the most poignant scenes on the first floor verandah of Netaji's residence in those two or three days was enacted when Netaji sent for Colonel Stracey on the morning of the 15th. He had hardly finished his breakfast on the verandah when Colonel Stracey turned up accompanied by Captain R. A. Malik carrying half a dozen models and a

score of rolls of paper containing designs for the proposed Memorial to the fallen heroes of the Azad Hind Fauj.

The scene was memorable. Netaji's feeling at that moment could easily be imagined. He led the men of the Azad Hind Fauj to the battlefield in the cause of India's freedom and those men plunged headlong into the battle in total disregard of everything that matters to ordinary men—life, limb, comfort, food, water, and a few moments of sleep. These men did not think of anyone of these things but, inspired by Netaji's dynamic personality, had gone forth into battle to win India's freedom and throw away their lives without a moment's thought of getting anything in return even if they survived.

These heroes had laid down their lives on the plains of Imphal and in and around Kohima and it was to these men that Netaji was determined to put up a memorial even after the Japanese had surrendered and the INA had ceased to fight. The air in Singapore on the 15th August was thick with rumours of the landing—imminent landing—of the British on the island. Only a man of Netaji's dogged courage could think of putting up a memorial to the army that fought against the British on a spot where the British were expected to land again at any moment.

Netaji examined model after model and turned to Stracey and said: "Colonel Stracey, I want this memorial to rise on the sea face of Singapore before the British forces make a landing here. Do you think you will be able to do it?"

Stracey rose to the occasion. He replied: "Certainly, Sir."

Stracey knew what a colossal task he had undertaken. It would take at least two to three weeks before the memorial could be an accomplished fact. But then the question was how soon would the British land in Singapore. Once the British forces were anywhere near Singapore there was no question of going ahead with the work on the memorial. The contractor had to be found; also material and labour,

but Stracey could see from Netaji's face that he was determined that the memorial shall rise. Details were discussed and decided. Netaji got up from his chair, gave Stracey a hearty handshake and simply said : " I wish you the best of luck. I hope you will be able to put up the memorial."

Stracey was overwhelmed with emotion. He looked straight into Netaji's eyes and that look spoke a great deal more than a verbal assurance that the memorial would be an accomplished fact in the shortest possible time.

Stracey gave Netaji a smart salute, a lusty *Jai Hind*, wheeled round and marched off. That was the last that Netaji and Stracey saw of each other. We heard later that Stracey had worked night and day and completed the work on the memorial in less than three weeks.

Almost the first thing the British forces did after landing in Singapore was to demolish the memorial. I wonder why they did it. Honouring the dead, even when they belonged to the enemy is a tradition accepted in the code of all civilised nations. It was not expected of the British that in the hour of their victory they would let the baser part of themselves to dominate them. As long as even a single soldier of the INA lives, this crime of the British, this vandalism will never be forgotten or forgiven. I am quite sure that they did not imagine even for a moment that they would be leaving India bag and baggage in less than two years after this vandalism. Sheer justice requires that the memorial be restored.

On the afternoon of the 15th August, Tokyo had officially announced the news of the surrender. That night, we gathered after dinner at 10-0 p.m. on the verandah of the first floor and talked till 3-0 a.m. I can never forget the poignancy of those dramatic five hours. It did not take us long to persuade Netaji finally that he must get out of Singapore. Then the question arose : where should he go—to Thailand, Indo-China, Japan, Manchukuo or Russia ? The final decision was: out of Malaya definitely, to some Russian territory certainly, to Russia itself, if possible. There was

no meaning in Netaji being taken prisoner by the British one day in Thailand or Indo-China and there was no meaning in his going to Japan after Japan's surrender.

And what about the risks involved? It was, as he himself described his plan, an "adventure into the unknown", perhaps even a "wild goose chase." In the course of a very frank talk I asked him whether these risks of an after-surrender flight in a Japanese plane were worth it. Netaji simply replied, "Oh, I am a fatalist." (Prophetic words!)

Here I must recall a relevant anecdote I have heard more than once, since my return to India, from the lips of Nathalal Parikh, Netaji's Bombay host. It seems that in the early days of the formation of the Forward Bloc (1939), Netaji used to keep very late nights during his visit to Bombay. About two o'clock, one of those nights, Netaji and Nathalal stepped out of Jyoti Sadan, Marine Drive, and went for a stroll on the promenade. Netaji suddenly halted, lifted his eyes to the moon-lit sky, remained silent for a few seconds and then, turning to Nathalal, said: "Do you know the kind of death I wish for myself? I should be flying very high and then I must suddenly crash down to earth and die. That'll be wonderful."

The clock struck three. Final arrangements were chalked out. To Moscow or at any rate, to Manchuria, and then who should go with Netaji? Besides Netaji, at this last informal meeting of the Ministers, were Major-General Kiani, Major-General Alagappan, Colonel Habibur Rahman, Sri Sarkar and myself. Netaji decided that Major-General Kiani should take full charge of the affairs of the INA in Singapore on behalf of Netaji in his absence and that Major-General Alagappan and A. N. Sarkar should also stay behind in Singapore. Then Netaji turned to Colonel Habibur Rahman and asked, "Are you going with me?" He said, "Yes Sir." Netaji said he would also take with him Colonel Pritham Singh from Singapore, Major Abid Hassan and Debnath Das from Bangkok. Major Swami was expected

at any moment in Singapore to join Netaji in the "adventure into the unknown."

He then turned to me and asked: "Ayer Saheb, what is your age?" I said: "Forty-eight, Sir."

"Oh, then you are one year younger than myself. So, what about you?" I said, "Sir, Moscow and Malaya are the same to me, I am going with you." So everything was settled. Barely two or three hours remained for Netaji in which to have a little rest, then give final instructions to all concerned and to do some hurried packing. I do not think Netaji went to bed, and I am quite sure that Colonel Habib did not have a wink of sleep either. But I went back to my room and through sheer exhaustion I just threw myself on the bed without removing my tunic, breeches or even top-boots.

I thought I slept for half an hour. Ganapathy had come to Netaji's Bungalow the previous evening. He had come to help me in the last minute rush of work. I got him to do some very hurried packing after sunrise.

A couple of hours later we were at the aerodrome. Major-General Kiani, Major-General Alagappan and a few others had come to say *Jai Hind* to Netaji on his fateful flight. At 9-30 a.m. Netaji climbed up the steel ladder and got into the plane followed by Colonel Habib, Colonel Pritham Singh, myself, and Mr. Nigeshi, the Japanese interpreter.

The plane taxied for about five minutes and returned to where it started from. Netaji wanted to know why. He was told that they had discovered a defect in the brake of the landing gear, and it would be put right very soon. It was; and we took off a little after 10-0 a.m.

It was a bomber. Netaji was sitting immediately behind the pilot, facing the nose of the plane, and dangling his legs in the pit. Behind him sat Colonel Habibur Rahman, next was myself, close to the petrol tank and then in the fuselage sat Colonel Pritham Singh and Mr. Nigeshi. The plane was steadily gaining height and with every jerk of the

plane I got a splash of petrol all over my left side, drenching the sleeves of my tunic and the left leg of my breeches. I remembered with a shock that there was no restriction on smoking inside a Japanese bomber. Here was petrol splashing out of the tank, and Netaji was sitting within three feet of where the petrol was splashing. I turned to Mr. Nigeshi and told him caustically to ask the pilot why petrol was splashing and whether it was alright. Mr. Nigeshi asked the pilot, then told me without a twitch of his facial muscle that it was alright and there was nothing serious. One of the nuts joining the pipe attached to the tank had got loose. Nigeshi himself tightened it. The petrol did not splash anymore.

We flew non-stop to Bangkok, and reached there at about 3-0 p.m. No one in Bangkok—neither the IIL nor the Japanese Liaison office—knew that we had actually landed in Bangkok aerodrome. Netaji got out of the plane and walked across to one of the wooden structures in the aerodrome where we all had to wait for nearly two hours before Major-General Bhonsle rushed up with transport, as soon as he was informed by the Japanese of our arrival.

The news of Netaji's arrival in Bangkok city spread among the Indians within a few minutes and from that evening till the early hours of the next morning (17th August) there was an unending stream of Indians, officers of the INA, officials and workers of IIL and merchants coming to Netaji's residence and wanting to know Netaji's plans for the future. The house was overcrowded. There was not an inch of space where one could sit down. One of the most important and urgent questions that Netaji had to decide was about the three or four Rani of Jhansi girls who had to stay behind in Bangkok.

It was midnight by the time we all had something to eat. Then Netaji sat on the verandah and talked to about thirty or forty officers and officials who had decided to stay on in the house till the next morning when Netaji and party were expected to leave. Netaji went to bed at five o'clock

in the morning and slept for an hour. I stretched myself on the sofa near his bed on the verandah. I do not know now whether Netaji slept but when I woke up I saw his cot at right angles to the sofa.

Before dawn we were all ready. Netaji, Colonel Habibur Rahman, Colonel Pritham Singh, Colonel Gulzara Singh, Major Abid Hassan, Debnath Das and myself, each with a light luggage and a revolver on the belt.

It was a sad farewell. Permanand, Isher Singh, Pandit Raghunath Sastri, P. N. Pillai, Bhaskaran, Captain Rizvi, Sunil, were there.

Netaji gave an affectionate embrace to each one of them with tears flowing down his cheeks.

CHAPTER VI

THE LAST FLIGHT

ARRIVING at the aerodrome as the sun was rising in the East, we took off at about eight in the morning from Bangkok and landed at the Saigon aerodrome at about 10-0 a.m. We were in two planes, one carrying Netaji, Colonel Habib, Colonel Pritham Singh, myself and the Japanese Liaison Officer. In the other plane were General Isoda, the Chief of the Japanese Liaison Office (Hikari Kikan), Mr. Hachiyya, the Japanese Minister-designate to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, Colonel Gulzara Singh, Major Abid Hassan and Mr. Debnath Das.

It was the second day after the Japanese had officially announced their surrender, *i.e.*, 17th August. I do not know whether according to International Law the Japanese planes were supposed to be grounded in the aerodromes or were free to fly. Whatever it was, here we were at the Saigon aerodrome on what Netaji described as "an adventure into the unknown." Netaji saw a solitary Indian in the distance. He wanted to know who it was. The Indian turned out to be Mr. Chandra Mal, Secretary of the Transport Department of the IIL in Saigon. He had learnt that Netaji was coming and he had come to the aerodrome to see whether he could be of any service to Netaji.

Hurried consultations were held between Netaji and the Japanese officers and it was decided that General Isoda, Mr. Hachiyya and a senior Japanese Staff Officer should fly immediately to Dalat, the Headquarters of Field-Marshal Terauchi and ask the Field-Marshal what aeroplane facilities he could give to Netaji to carry out whatever programme Netaji might have decided upon. We drove in two cars to the outskirts of Saigon and arrived at the house of Naraindas, Secretary of the Housing Department of the IIL Saigon.

The city of Saigon looked exactly like what any other city might be expected to look two days after the forces in that area had officially announced their surrender to the enemy. The air was tense. There was very little traffic to be seen on the streets. Shuttered windows greeted one's eyes in all directions. Rumour-mongers were busy. There were blood-curdling stories as to what the French were going to do to Indians and others who had allied themselves with the Japanese during the war and fought against the British and Americans. Officers of the League had dispersed. None of them, except Chandra Mal, knew that Netaji was in their midst right at that moment. We moved our luggage into the house and distributed ourselves among the available rooms. Netaji occupied one. Abid Hassan and myself shared another. Colonel Habib and Debnath Das shared the third room. But it did not matter whether there was any room into which we could move. We did not bother about our luggage either. Netaji had a shave and a bath and went straight to bed. It was about mid-day. In a few moments he was fast asleep.

He had not had even half an hour's rest when Kiano, the Japanese Liaison Officer, drove up to the house, walked in and said that he must see Netaji immediately. We talked among ourselves and decided that it was worth disturbing Netaji. He got up and asked what the Japanese Officer wanted. Abid Hassan told Netaji, "Sir, the Japanese say there is a plane ready and waiting to take off immediately and there is only one seat in the plane, they say." Netaji asked: "Where is the plane going?"

"I don't know, Sir, nor does Mr. Kiano."

"Tell him to go back and send someone who does know; have General Isoda and Hachiyya come back from Dalat?"

"Sir, The Japanese Officer says that there is no time to lose."

"Tell him that I am not going until I know the destination of the plane. I am not going to be rushed off

like this. Tell him to go back and send someone here who knows all about the plane."

Poor Kiano drove back faster than he came. Within half an hour came another car, dashed up the drive of the house and stopped. General Isoda, Mr. Hachiyya and a Senior Staff Officer of Field Marshal Terauchi stepped out of the car, walked briskly into the house where Netaji shook hands with them and immediately ushered them into one of the rooms. Habibur Rahman was also asked to join the fateful conference.

I do not know exactly what transpired at the conference, because I was not present. When the talks were still going on behind closed doors in that room, Netaji came out with Habib, leaving the Japanese behind in the room. Netaji motioned Habib, Abid, Debnath and me into his room and asked us to close the door and bolt it. Gulzara Singh and Pritham Singh who had moved to the next house were immediately called. I have rarely seen Netaji so impatient. In five seconds he wanted to know whether Gulzara Singh and Pritham Singh had been sent for and why they had not yet come. He said: "Tell them not to bother about their dress, but to come at once. I have no time to lose. We have to take important decisions and that without a moment's delay. Come along, hurry up."

Actually they took only a few minutes to come, but it looked like ages. The door was closed and bolted from inside. Netaji stood in the middle and we stood around him. He looked at each one of us and said: "Look here, there is a plane ready to take off in the next few minutes and we have got to decide something important right now. The Japanese say there is only one seat to spare, and what we have got to decide now, in a few seconds, is whether I should go even if I have to go alone. I have tried my best to get at least one more seat but there is very little hope. Shall we take that one seat and shall I go alone?"

Each one of us, i.e., Habib, Gulzara Singh, Pritham Singh, Abid Hassan, Debnath Das and myself felt that

never in all our lives should we have to decide again a question of such grave responsibility. We were all silent for a moment. Truly speaking, we were all tongue-tied. Each one of us asked himself: How dare I tell Netaji that he had better go on this "adventure into the unknown" all by himself and not even one of us accompanying him?

We started hedging about. One of us said: "Sir, why not insist on at least one more seat and take one of us with you? How can we let you go all by yourself? Why can't the Japanese spare at least one more seat?" At that moment we were filled with bitterness against the Japanese. We did not care what their difficulties were, but we simply could not brook the idea that the Japanese could offer only one single seat in a bomber which we all knew could carry at least half-a-dozen passengers apart from the crew. All these thoughts raced madly through our brains in those few seconds.

Netaji again insisted on our giving him a categorical reply to the question: "If the Japanese can give only one seat in that plane, shall I or shall I not go all alone?"

On one point we were all agreed, and that was that Netaji should not remain in Saigon and be taken prisoner there. We were prepared to accept any alternative to that. But we were faced with a very difficult, and the worst possible, alternative, namely, that Netaji should fly somewhere unaccompanied by any one of us. Eventually we said to him: "Sir, please for heaven's sake insist on the Japanese giving you one more seat and if still you cannot get it, then you had better take the one seat and go. Also please insist that the Japanese should provide us with transport as soon as possible to take us wherever you might be going."

But *where* was Netaji going? We did not ask him and he did not tell us. But we knew and he knew that we knew. The plane was bound for Manchuria. Netaji then left us and he and Habib went to the room where the Japanese were impatiently waiting for Netaji's reply. A few minutes

later Netaji came back to our room and said : " We are getting one more seat. Let Habib come with me. I am sure they won't spare any more seat in this plane. But let us try our luck."

Then turning to Colonel Gulzara Singh and myself Netaji said : "You two had better come with your luggage and in case we get two more seats in the plane you also can join me. Otherwise, you will have to come back from the aerodrome with your luggage. Anyway, hurry up."

It was all one mad rush. There was not much packing to do. We simply grabbed the light luggage that we had carried and got into the waiting cars and drove fast in the direction of the aerodrome. Netaji, myself and Habib were in the front car, Gulzara Singh, Pritham Singh, Abid Hassan and Debnath Das following in another car. As we drove into the aerodrome we could hear the terrific roar of the engine of the plane. We were told that the engine had been running for nearly an hour by the time we arrived there. But there was no trace of the second car. Five minutes, ten, twenty and still no trace of the second car. That need not necessarily have delayed Netaji's departure. A stiff breeze across the aerodrome was blowing a lot of dust into our noses and mouths. The Japanese were getting impatient. Lieutenant-General Shidei, who was also going by the same plane, had been waiting at the aerodrome for nearly two hours. There was impatience all around and yet no trace of the car. Netaji decided that he must wait because an important piece of luggage was in the second car.

Ten minutes later the second car dashed up. Meanwhile, Habib had stepped into a little hutment nearby and was rearranging his luggage. Netaji turned to him and said, "Hurry up, Habib *bhai*, what are you doing?" In a flash Habib had packed up his bag and was at Netaji's side. The luggage from the second car was almost catapulted into the plane. Netaji hurried towards the plane, shook hands with

Shidei who was accompanying him, said good-bye to Isoda and Hachiyya and then turned to us.

What a dreadful moment that was to my comrades and myself. I do not think that we stood there for more than a minute. But an avalanche of thoughts came rushing through one's mind in those few seconds! Stretching his hand he was about to step forward and say *Jai Hind* to me in farewell. I stood there transfixed. What was I thinking? "Shall I ever see him again? If so, when and where? Is this the last time I am going to say *Jai Hind* to him? How long shall it be before I meet him again? Will the Japanese ever give us a plane to follow Netaji wherever he might be going? Or are we going to be stranded at Saigon without any news of Netaji? Or is it possible, as if by a miracle, that my comrades and myself will be going in a plane, perhaps the very next day, and follow Netaji's plane and reach him at the very next halt? No. No. That is too much to hope for. That is perhaps a wild dream. But, again, why not? There were so many bombers and transport planes in that very aerodrome. Legal or illegal, it should be possible for a Japanese pilot to turn the propellers, start the engine and take off with us aboard the plane and fly us to wherever Netaji may be. What a forlorn hope."

It was all bewildering, confusing. Our thoughts alternated between hope and fear. I shook myself up. I realised that Netaji had stepped forward stretching his right hand to say *Jai Hind* to me in farewell and here I was in a half-trance and making him wait. I too stepped forward, put my hand in his. I looked at his face and straight into his eyes. I thought he was holding back a flood of tears. He said: "Well, *Jai Hind*, I will meet you later," and gave me a vigorous hand-shake. I remember that I mumbled something, steadied myself, returned his *Jai Hind* and stood there.

Netaji, after the round of farewell hand-shakes, stepped majestically as ever towards the plane, walked up the little ladder and vanished into the plane. Habib also said *Jai*

Hind to us and followed him into the plane. By that time the noise of the engine was getting to a deafening roar. The draught from the propellers very nearly blew us off our feet. Holding my cap in position with a lot of difficulty I staggered round the tail of the plane and went and stood on the starboard side of the plane in the hope of catching a last glimpse of Netaji before the bomber took off. I strained my eyes as best as I could, but I could not make out where exactly Netaji was sitting. As it was a bomber there were no windows. While flying by bombers, usually Netaji would sit just behind the pilot. This time perhaps he was sitting a little further away; otherwise I would have spotted him from the starboard side.

At 5-15 p.m. 17th August the plane took off from Saigon aerodrome carrying Netaji. "God knows, *where!* . . ." I said to myself at that moment.

Gulzara Singh, Pritham Singh, Abid Hassan, Debnath Das and I stood there and strained our eyes in the direction of the plane until it grew smaller and smaller and was no more than a speck in the distant horizon. Then we turned round and looked at each other. None uttered a word but I thought at that moment we spoke to each other in silence a great deal more than we could ever do with our words. My spirits were at the very lowest ebb that moment. Something went on hammering into my head that I was seeing Netaji for the last time in my life. He might be safe. He might reach his destination; how could I hope to live and meet him again. The one thought that obsessed me then was that I had said *Jai Hind* to Netaji for the last time. I could never shake off that feeling. Perhaps my comrades were also feeling the same way but none of us dared confess the thought to the others.

We drove back to our quarters thoroughly depressed and on the verge of tears. But our only consolation in the midst of that gloom was that Netaji was not going alone and that Habib was with him. Hope springs eternal in the human breast. We began hoping that after all the Japanese

might give us a plane transport the next day or at least the day after to take us to Netaji.

We had all taken a cup of coffee when we left Bangkok early that morning and not one of us, including Netaji, had sipped even a glass of water till the evening. Netaji had got into the plane completely famished and there was no knowing where he was going to break his fast that day. On reaching our quarters we had a wash, had something to eat—the first meal of the day—about seven in the evening and sat down to collect our thoughts and to decide our plans for the future. Anyone could see the gloom that was writ large on our faces. At least, I can speak for myself. But the others, particularly Abid Hassan, Gulzara Singh, and Pritham Singh shook off that gloom pretty quick. They all tried to cheer up the company and discuss the future plans in a matter of fact tone. We decided that we would go on pestering the Japanese for a plane to fly us to Netaji. We waited the whole of the next day for news from the Japanese.

After waiting in vain till the evening and finishing our dinner, we decided that I should go across with Debnath Das to the Kikan Office and coax, cajole or beg of the Japanese to render this last service to the Movement by enabling our party to reach Netaji. Their reply was not very encouraging. Again the next day Debnath Das and myself went to the Kikan Office. The Japanese were a little more encouraging that day. At least we thought so, because at that moment we were in tragic ignorance of what had happened.

CHAPTER VII

THE SAD, SAD NEWS

WHAT happened at the Kikan that afternoon (19th August) assumed a lot of meaning from the next day on.

Debnath Das and myself were there pressing the Kikan Officer, Captain Kiano, somehow to fix up plane seats for the five of us (Colonel Gulzara Singh, Colonel Pritham Singh, Major Abid Hassan, Debnath Das and myself) to reach Netaji without delay.

Less than twenty-four hours later, I was convinced that Kiano had known but never told Das and me what happened to Netaji. Through an interpreter he told Das and me : "A plane is leaving for Japan tomorrow. Colonel T (a Japanese officer) is going by that plane. One seat can be spared in that plane for one of your party. It is up to you to decide among yourselves which one of you five should take that seat. As for the remaining four, all that we can guarantee now (five days after Japan's official surrender) is to fly them to Hanoi. They will have to take their chance there and try to get a plane from Hanoi to Japan."

Das and I were very disappointed that only one of us could hope to reach Netaji very soon ; we argued and pleaded that somehow all the five of us should be flown together to Netaji, but it was all in vain. Kiano said that the Japanese were helpless.

Now, in the course of this talk the Japanese said something in an unguarded moment and we did not quite get it. I must here mention once again that it was well-known that even some of the England-returned and America-returned Japanese, boasting of a good command of the English language, could not always express themselves clearly in that language. Often we had to guess a lot as to what the

Japanese must have meant when they used a particular word. In that sense the Japanese dropped a lot of "bricks."

That afternoon in the Kikan the indifferent interpreter blurted out a word or two which sounded rather strange to the ears of Debnath and myself. It is very odd that, without exchanging a glance or a word about it, we both thought that the interpreter's English was a little queerer than usual.

In telling us that only one seat was available in the plane going to Japan, the interpreter added, by the way, "Of course, no doubt you will choose from amongst yourselves a very important man . . . who can be of help to Netaji . . . some one who is like his successor. . . ."

At the mention of the word "successor" both Debnath and I instinctively stiffened in our muscles for a split second, but both of us put it down to the Japanese interpreter's vagaries; we "interpreted" the interpreter to mean, of course, "deputy," that is, someone who, in an emergency, could act for Netaji and in his name. Naturally we dismissed "successor" from our heads immediately and returned to our diggings to report to our comrades. We sat down to discuss and decide the question immediately.

Each one of us knew very well how all the five of us were impatient to reach Netaji—all the five of us *together*—not one after another or even in two or three batches.

Each one of us offered—and God knows we meant it—that anyone of the other four was welcome to take the single seat offered to our party.

Then Abid cut short the talk in his characteristic way.

He said: "Look here, Ayer Saheb. You know as well as we do that Netaji will not rest a moment wherever he may be. What else can he do now, except to start doing some propaganda and even before that, he will need someone to help him with correspondence, writing and secretarial work. So you ought to go, and there is no need to argue about it. If he is already in Moscow or on his way, you must reach him as early as possible. There will be plenty

to do. So, we stand down in your favour, and we want you to go."

He then turned round to the others and asked: "What do you say?"

Gulzara, Pritham and Debnath were emphatic when they said: "Yes, we also agree that Ayer must take that seat."

It was settled.

I nearly burst into tears when they smilingly added: "The moment you are back with Netaji you will, of course, tell him to see that we too are flown over to him, won't you? We don't want to be wandering in the wilderness, with no news of Netaji."

It was the easiest thing to promise. "Of course I won't allow Netaji any peace of mind until you are also back with him."

"But where is he today (19th)—two days after he took off from the Saigon aerodrome!"—all the five of us started musing.

We switched on the shortwave radio—the AIR gave news of the surrender of Japanese garrisons in some of the bases in East Asia, but not even a word of Netaji. We knew very well that there could be no news of Netaji for sometime and yet we were dying for some news of him from the Anglo-American radio stations.

That night we had our last dinner together in our diggings in a very sad and pre-occupied mood; we started packing up the few pieces of clothing we had brought with us.

Early next morning, we all went to the aerodrome together; I was to get into the plane bound for Japan, and Colonel Gulzara Singh, Colonel Pritham Singh, Major Abid Hassan and Debnath Das were to take the plane bound for Hanoi.

At the aerodrome the Japanese told us that the plane for Hanoi would leave first, and the one for Japan an hour later.

Each of my comrades gave me an affectionate embrace before stepping into the Hanoi-bound plane, and each of them said: "You will of course tell Netaji to arrange for us to be with him again as quick as possible, won't you?"

Probably all the five of us were in the grip of intense emotion, but we managed to cheer up each other.

Their plane taxied and took off a little after 9-0 a.m.

I waved my handkerchief to my comrades until I could no longer make out their plane in the horizon.

Then I realised that I stood *alone* on that aerodrome—the *only* Indian—Netaji and Habib gone three days ago and the remaining four comrades also just gone—to meet again. . . . When? . . . Where?

For at least a few moments I felt terribly lonely, completely stranded. Why? Because—where was the guarantee that a plane would *actually* leave for Japan?

I shook myself up. I hoped that I too would be off soon and be with Netaji, say, in a day or two at the latest.

Standing there almost alone I had enough time to let my imagination wander. . . . "Oh yes, I shall be with Netaji perhaps the next day . . . perhaps Netaji is halting somewhere on his aerial journey. . . . Why, it is even possible that his plane is held up in Formosa, waiting for better weather." (Formosa was notorious for bad flying weather). So, I stood there and dreamt that in the next few hours I would be walking into Netaji's room in a hotel in Taihoku (Formosa) and telling him all about my other comrades, waiting impatiently at Hanoi.

What dreams? And what a shattering blow was to be dealt to those dreams!

I was awakened from my reverie by Nigeshi, the Japanese Liaison Officer, asking me to step across the field towards another plane—a medium-bomber, bound for Japan.

I said to myself: "That is *something* any way. There is a plane and it *may* take off, with me also aboard."

So soon after parting from my comrades, I was feeling pretty bad, and, therefore, welcomed the hot *Ocha* (green tea) that the Japanese offered me in one of the little sheds where I was to wait before boarding the plane.

I shall never, never in my life forget those two hours or so I spent at Saigon aerodrome that day (20th August).

I was in a mood to brood then . . . I was brooding . . . then I looked up and I saw Mr. Fukuoka, that good old, fine, quiet spoken Japanese gentleman, Chief of Domei for Southern Regions, walking towards me . . . I rose and shook hands with him mechanically. . . . He looked a wee bit graver than usual . . . pitched his voice lower than usual . . . and sounded sadder than was justified, I thought, even by his country's surrender five days ago. He had a lisp in his voice ; at times I had difficulty in making out his words. He mumbled : " Mr. Ayer, I am sorry for Netaji."

" Why " I asked, in a tone of alarm, " what is the matter ? Is he held up somewhere by bad weather or engine trouble ? "

Fukuoka did not even look in my direction, but merely said : " Yes, something like that, I think ; but please *don't ask anybody here.*"

But even then I did not fear anything worse than an annoying delay in Netaji's air dash, because the Japanese often overdid secretiveness.

The worst blow was still to come.

A little while later I was rather surprised to see an approaching figure in Naval uniform, Rear-Admiral Chuda—number two in the Japanese Navy in Burmese waters since 1944.

He knows very little English and always speaks with a jerk and unless you strain your ears all the time you cannot follow all his words fully.

After asking me whether I was flying to Japan, he suddenly blurted out something which sounded to me like " . . . Atherji is *dead !*"

I stood rooted to the spot and I think my pale trembling lips asked him :

"Do you mean Chatterji is dead? How can that be possible? He left Saigon by air on the 16th or so. He was on his way to Singapore? Did he crash on the flight to Singapore?"

Even to this day, I am confused in my mind as to what Chuda said in reply at that moment. He walked away, but came back to me later when I was walking towards the bomber to board it.

"You must cheer up"

"What do you mean?"

"... Athaji..." (he sounded to me so).

"Do you mean Chatterji?"

"No, Netaji."

"NETAJI?" I yelled above the roar of the bomber... I was moving nearer the bomber and he was walking by my side.

"Yes, NETAJI," he yelled in reply, then—and as if to be clear beyond doubt—he added: "CHANDRA BOSE KAKKAA" (Excellency Chandra Bose).

My head reeled. I staggered to the ladder resting against the bomber, and climbed it somehow.

The roar inside my head was in tune with the deafening roar of the two engines of the bomber. . . .

From here I shall reduce my narrative to a diary form :

SAIGON, 20th August, 1945.

The entrance to this bomber was not by the usual door at the side of the fuselage but by a trap-door in the underbelly of the aircraft. It was wide enough for me to get into the plane. It was just as well that I had discarded my top-boots and breeches before leaving Saigon. Top-boots are an awful handicap and a positive danger when you have to perform acrobatics. When I knew I was to travel by a bomber I decided to get into a pair of khaki slacks and ordinary shoes. The bomber had already been packed to

capacity with a lorry load of some rectangular packages. I could only guess that they contained some white stuff. Others thought that they contained currency notes but I did not think so and I do not even now. Anyway, whatever it was, nearly every inch of available space had been filled with these packages. (I have since heard that they contained quinine).

We were five passengers and four crew. Colonel T. the Senior Staff Officer, Captain Aoki whom the Kikan (Liaison Office) had thoughtfully deputed to look after me on my trip from Saigon to Tokyo, a Japanese junior Naval officer, a Japanese journalist and myself were the five passengers. The Naval officer and the news man seated themselves with great difficulty very near the trap door. But, led by the Colonel and the Captain, I literally wriggled and crawled my way up a narrow opening through the suitcases and packages piled up in every possible position. If I had had my top-boots on at that time, I am sure I would have badly sprained my ankles or calf-muscles and would have remained a casualty inside the plane until it reached its destination. Somehow I reached the cockpit, ascended it, and then again through another extremely narrow gangway, only some twelve inches or less wide reached the nose which too was filled with those rectangular packages. The nose was covered on all sides with thick glass. There the three of us perched most uncomfortably on the ill-arranged piles of packages.

I did not care a hoot what kind of perch I had ; I did not care where the plane was going ; I did not care when and where it would make the first halt. To Colonel T. and Captain Aoki, my face must have looked distraught. They had not told me a word yet about Netaji ; they guessed from my face that somebody else had given me the stunning blow just before I got into the plane. They did not tell me a word even after we had settled down on some sort of "seats" in the nose of the plane.

The engines roared even more terrifically, the plane taxied and in a few moments we had taken off—at 11-15 a.m.

In a half-dazed condition I looked through the glass coverings of the bomber nose at my side and under my feet and had an aerial view of Saigon. Half an hour later, I had a feeling that we were returning to Saigon: I was prepared for the agonising contingency of landing back on the Saigon aerodrome and the Japanese saying that the trip would have to be cancelled for some reason or other. But, the plane turned again at 12-15 p.m. and definitely east-north-east presumably in the direction of Tokyo.

I was still in a half-daze. Mercifully my Japanese friends refrained from uttering even a word to me. By their silence they were showing their sorrow and sympathy for me in my acute distress. They were rather embarrassed in one sense. Colonel T. had not yet told me anything about Netaji but he knew that I had heard the tragic news from someone else. So, Colonel T. preferred to wait and take the earliest opportunity to tell me.

Meanwhile, side by side with the feeling of impenetrable gloom, I was also experiencing a strange thrill at flying into space some three, five, seven and ten thousand feet above *terra firma*—with only a piece of glass between me and the light blue sky, so high above the fleecy clouds. You can feel that exhilarating thrill only when you sit near the tip of a bomber's glass-covered nose, tearing into space at about three hundred miles an hour.

But in my mood then, I was soon insensitive even to this thrill; as I was going through a mental agony, the extreme physical discomfort of being huddled up in a contorted position became well-nigh unbearable; the first hour or so seemed to me like ages; then I said to myself, "My dear fellow, grit your teeth and bear it; you will have to sit in this position, God alone knows how long; so you might as well settle down to it."

I did not dare look at my watch too often, lest my patience give way at the intolerable slowness of the second and minute hands. The Colonel casually opened his "lunch box" which was nothing more than a thin white cardboard

box of the shape and size of an ordinary three-cake toilet soap carton and the lunch consisted of just two balls of plain white rice of the size of tennis balls with a tiny piece of dry fish. The Colonel kindly invited me to share the rice with him; I declined with thanks. Captain Aoki then joined the Colonel and ate just one mouthful. I had eaten nothing after 7-0 a.m. that day after I and my comrades had hurried through a very light breakfast. It was nearing 2-0 p.m. I was famished, but I did not feel like wanting to eat anything. Soon after getting into the bomber, I was terribly thirsty because at the start of the flight, the sun was beating down on us directly through the glass; I gulped a couple of ounces of water out of the Colonel's small water-bottle; I really wanted to drink gallons of ice-cold water. The heat, the glare, the thirst, and the mental anguish, soon after we took off from Saigon, combined to start a headache which grew worse and worse. At last, I thought the bomber was dropping speed and height; then I dared look at my wrist watch; it was past 5-0 p.m.—so, over five hours in the air, we must have done very nearly fifteen hundred miles non-stop—we must be landing somewhere very soon. I did not want any food, I did not even want water, all I wanted was to get out of that roaring bomber, stretch my limbs and rest my ear drums.

At last we landed. It was the aerodrome at Canton—a name that brings to one's mind the hallowed memory of Sun Yat-Sen, the Father of the Chinese Republic. I wriggled my way back to the trap-door and jumped to the ground. The heat outside was intense, though dry. The Colonel and the Captain conducted me to the hangars about one hundred yards away. The corrugated roofing of the hangars had turned them into so many furnaces. There I sat in a corner, and the Colonel seated himself in front of me with Captain Aoki to his left, to interpret him into English.

I must say a word before I repeat what the Colonel told me.

When Rear-Admiral Chuda blurted out the catastrophic news at Saigon, I did not swallow it altogether; I thought that it was not at all impossible that the Japanese had "cooked" this story—may be for important reasons. Moreover, his news was so cryptic—with no details whatever.

Now in the hangar at Canton, the Colonel planted himself squarely in front of me, and started telling me the whole tragic story in a sad, solemn voice, but in a characteristically slow and roundabout way. (He spoke in Japanese and was interpreted by Aoki into English).

"As you know, Netaji left Saigon on the afternoon of 17th August; his plane reached Touraine (Indo-China) late the same evening; the party rested there for the night, took off the next morning (18th) and landed at Taihoku (Formosa) in the afternoon; after a very brief halt, the plane took off again, but soon afterwards it crashed. . . ."

"Did it crash into the sea?" I deliberately asked this leading question in the hope that he would reply: "Yes, it did, and there is no trace of the plane or of Netaji and party." Then I could hope that it was all a made-up story and that Netaji was still alive and would turn up again some day somewhere.

But to my utter disappointment, he replied: "No, the plane crashed within a few minutes and on the very outskirts of the aerodrome. Both Netaji and Habib were injured. Netaji was very seriously injured. General Shidei was killed on the spot. Netaji and Colonel Habib were immediately taken to hospital. Our medical officers did their best for Netaji, but in spite of all that, Netaji. . . ." the Colonel's voice was choked.

Still I did not give up hope.

"Is Habib alive or is he also . . . ?" another leading question. I hoped that his reply would be: "Habib is also no more." Then he would have added; "As we could not take their bodies anywhere to hand them over to Indians we cremated them in Taihoku. . . ."

Again, in one sense, to my disappointment and, in another sense, to my utter relief, he replied .

"Yes, Habib is alive, he was not so seriously injured as Netaji. He is being treated in hospital, and should be all right in a few weeks."

It dawned on me then that, after all, perhaps his story was true.

But I must confess that I did not burst out into tears ; in fact, I did not shed even a single tear. Why ? I do not know for certain even to this day. May be my tears had completely dried up. Or, again, may be that I still refused to believe the Colonel's story. It was a terrific conflict that was going on within me. I *did not want* to believe his story even if it was true.

I closed my eyes for a few seconds. The hammering went on inside my head.

"No, no. Oh, no. Netaji *can't* be dead. It is impossible. Netaji is *immortal*. How *can* he die before he sees India completely free ? No. No. He is *not* dead. He is very much alive somewhere. I don't believe what this man says. This story is a fake."

A mad succession of thoughts . . . my headache suddenly got much worse . . . I had heard of splitting headaches . . . I had experienced something like that sometimes. But I am not exaggerating the least bit when I say that at that moment I feared that the blood-vessels in my temples might burst. I could hardly keep my eyes open and look at the Colonel or the Captain. Never before in my life had I that terrible headache and I pray to God that I may never have it again.

The way I asked him questions and the way I looked at him, I am afraid, I made it clear to the Colonel that I did *not* believe his story. Having done so, it was easy for me to tell him what I did.

"Look, Colonel, I want to be frank with you. Not a single Indian in India or East Asia will believe this story unless you produce conclusive proofs. You say Colonel

Habib is alive. All right. You must now take me at once to Taihoku. I *must* see Netaji's body with my own eyes. I *must* meet Habib. Don't tell me afterwards that Netaji's body has been disposed of, and don't tell me that Habib is not in a condition to be seen. Whatever happens, I *must* be taken to Taihoku."

The Colonel replied: "I shall do my best. We have already told Taihoku to take photos and collect all positive evidence of the accident. . . ."

"I *must* be taken to Taihoku," I mumbled again mechanically, but insistently.

I then looked at my watch. It was past 6-0 p.m. Our plane, on the runway in the distance, had finished refuelling. We slowly rose, walked up, and squeezed ourselves again through the trap-door into the bomber, and we took off at about 6-30 p.m. The sun was still hot and bright.

Well after dusk, we were over the Formosa Island. I started indulging in the melancholy dream of landing at Taihoku very soon, and standing before Netaji once again—but only before his body—and seeing Habib once again and hearing from him all about the accident. "Will he be in a condition to talk? Will he be allowed to talk?"

Meanwhile, the bomber was dropping height slowly and I could see the bright lights of some town or other between stretches of expansive fields. I had a feeling that the pilot had lost his bearings. We were flying round and round. I heard later that this was so. We lost over an hour spotting our landing place. It was a flood-lit aerodrome.

At last we landed . . . it was nearly 10-0 p.m.

I took it for granted that it was Taihoku. I did not even want to ask if it was so, lest they said: "No." I did not have the patience to wriggle my way again out of the plane; I clambered out of the cockpit, got on to the top of the bomber, carefully tripped my way down the fuselage, reached the tail and jumped off. It was ever so much easier than getting out of the bomber the orthodox way.

We were tired beyond words, and stiff in our limbs ; it was a moonlit night ; we threw ourselves on the grass, a few feet away from the plane. I was too tired to talk. Still with an effort, I raised myself on my elbow, turned to Aoki and asked him : " I suppose we are in Taihoku ! "

I felt like wanting to fly at the Colonel's throat when Aoki replied : " No, we are in Taichu, not Taihoku. "

" Why ? " I barked.

He consulted the Colonel and replied :

" Sorry . . . don't know . . . you see this plane's movements are not controlled by us . . . the weather is not suitable . . . so we were asked to make Taichu . . . can't say whether we can still make Taihoku . . . perhaps not. "

This came to me as a shocking disappointment. If I was not in Taihoku, I did not care where else I was ; and if I could not go to Taihoku, I did not care where else I went.

So I told the Colonel through Captain Aoki : " Colonel T, I suppose you can imagine my mental agony just now. If we are not in Taihoku now, we must reach Taihoku somehow and that too pretty quick. If, as you say, Netaji is no more, I *must* see his body, and if, as you say, Colonel Habib is still alive, I *must* meet him, talk to him, and see in what way I can be of use to him in his present condition. Mark my words and remember my warning : No Indian in India or East Asia is going to believe your story of Netaji's plane crash. "

The poor Colonel was very much cut up ; he was extremely apologetic and he replied :

" Ayersan (Mr. Ayer), I assure you I quite understand exactly how you feel. I agree with every word of what you say. Maybe no Indian will believe what I have been telling you, but I tell you with the deepest regret that what I have told you about Netaji is unfortunately true. I shall still try to arrange for our bomber to go to Taihoku but I have very little hope. "

After hearing this, I too had very little hope of seeing Netaji again, alive or dead; I was almost sure that the bomber would make for Japan.

I was in an impatient rage. For the life of me I could not understand why the Japanese could not have pushed on a bit more and landed at Taihoku and given me a chance to see Netaji's body, instead of landing at Taichu and making me thoroughly fed up with them and with every thing in the world.

I indulged in the wildest speculation. "Perhaps the plane crash story is all bunkum. Netaji did not have a plane crash at Taihoku, he is not in Taihoku, nor is Colonel Habib; if, really Netaji has died as a result of the crash and they have not yet disposed of his body, and if Habib is injured and in hospital, would not the Japanese take my earnest advice and request and fly me to Taihoku, so that there may be one more eye witness of the last rites of Netaji. And supposing, God forbid, Habib also does not survive, then I would be the only Indian witness of the tragic sequel to the Taihoku disaster. Why, then, have the Japanese not taken me to Taihoku?"

But, on the other hand, it was typical of the Japanese way of thinking and talking, as we saw it in East Asia. Their characteristic is a failure to imagine other people's psychological reactions; this is so in the best of times. Once they have chalked out a course, they would persist in it with an amazing degree of tenacity, obstinacy or whatever it is called, then discover their blunder, and insist on overwhelming you with their profusest apologies for the mistake. But apologies can put nothing right.

I was very angry with them for persisting in this unpardonable folly of not taking me to Taihoku; once I reached Japan, they dare not fly me back to Taihoku. Even if they wish to, they cannot; it would be far too late by then. Perhaps, the Americans may be landing on Japanese soil any moment. Is it, after all, possible that they have no ulterior motive behind their avoiding Taihoku? Is it

possible that some one in the Imperial Headquarters (Japanese Supreme Command) blundered in good faith and told Saigon to send the bomber direct to Tokyo without breaking journey at Taihoku? Perhaps they are too nervous to take any bomber to Taihoku for fear of sabotage by hostile Formosans. Then, why on earth am I being taken to Japan? I am not dying to go to Japan if Netaji is not there. If he is really no more, and if his body is being guarded with all due honours in Taihoku and if Habib is the only Indian on the island of Formosa, then why do the Japanese want me to go to Tokyo at all? Oh, yes, now I remember Colonel T mumbling something during that talk in the Canton airport hangar a few hours earlier. I hazily remember his saying that in view of Netaji's sudden death, I should, in his name and in the name of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, express the gratitude of the PGAH and INA to the Government of Japan for the all-out aid given to us in our fight for Independence. But, how could I assume that Netaji's plane did really crash; how could I believe the story unless they helped me reach Taihoku? In any event, how could I presume to speak in the name of the PGAH or the INA officially until I was specifically authorised by my colleagues in the Cabinet and by the top-ranking generals of the INA. . . .

I do not know how long I was lying on the grass in the shadow of the wing of the bomber which looked sombre in the moonlight.

My speculations came to a sudden halt when Captain Aoki said to me that we were immediately going into the town in the hope of getting some dinner and a place to sleep in one of the numerous inns. We got into a lorry and in less than half an hour we were speeding our way through the deserted, dusty, whitish streets of Taichu. The inns there were undoubtedly numerous; but they were nearly all full up. A full-blooded Colonel of the Imperial Japanese Army with Aoki and me in his trail, was turned away from at least three inns, before we found one in which three "beds" could

be spared. We had a wash, and then ate some rice with soya bean soup.

The Colonel* is (I hope he is still alive) quite a decent man; he was very keen on making my ordeals less unbearable; that much I could easily see for myself. Every now and then Colonel T asked me how I was feeling, whether I was comfortable—characteristic Japanese courtesy and solicitude for the guest. Wherever we went we got a small bowl of rice and a smaller bowl of soya bean soup. Colonel T would never eat a meal before I started eating. I must repeat that Colonel T did his best to see that my hardships were not so unbearable.

As for Captain Aoki, I cannot sufficiently praise him; he would not let me carry even the smallest of my bags; he would insist on carrying all of them on his back or in his hands. His subdued voice and tearful eyes spoke volumes of comfort and sympathy for me. Throughout the journey he looked after me as if I was a tender baby. When, out of sheer exhaustion, I stretched myself literally under the feet of the pilot squeezing the whole of my five-foot-nine-inches-long frame into the narrowest imaginable space, Captain Aoki would thoughtfully tuck the only available blanket and an overcoat under my arms. I am quite sure he did not want me to be frozen to death—on the way to Tokyo at any rate! God bless his soul. When I narrated all this to Habib when we met again in Tokyo, Habib went into raptures over Captain Aoki for the really selfless and noble manner in which Captain Aoki helped the INA at a ferry crossing on the Burma front. Every time he insisted on the INA getting priority over the Japanese army at the ferry.

What a perfect gentleman and a true friend of the Indian cause Captain Aoki was, I had occasion to see a little for myself long before this flight to Tokyo. I met him for the first time, also on a plane trip, on the 1st of February, 1944, when I flew in a convoy of nine planes from Singapore to

* The Colonel died in Japan in September, 1951.

Rangoon in eight hours with a thirty-minute halt at Tavoy. Most unlike the average Japanese, Captain Aoki opened conversation with a natural ease. Men of the sterling type of Captain Aoki among the junior officers of the Japanese army, I did not come across by the score.

I have digressed. I was so tired that I should have slept like a log even on a bed of gravel. It was nearly 2-0 a.m. A soft bed spread on the floor was most inviting. Only the pillow looked a bit odd—barrel-shaped, one-foot long, four or five inches in diameter, just big enough to rest the nape of one's neck; and when I put my neck (because I could not put my head) on it I realised that it was filled loose with paddy-husk (and not with silk cotton). But to me, then, paddy-husk was silkier and softer than silk cotton. I did feel very much rested when I stretched my limbs on that bed; but I believe I was far too tired to drop off to sleep straightaway. I tossed about for a while, then I must have slept. A tap on my door woke me up in the early hours of the morning. A hurried wash, another bowl of plain rice and plainer soya bean soup with Japanese green tea, constituted our "breakfast," and we pushed off by a lorry to the aerodrome. It was dawn by then. Refuelling of the plane took quite a bit of time. By the time we took off, it was somewhere near 9-0 a.m.

Another uneventful flight, though I had been expecting any moment an American fighter to appear from nowhere and challenge our bomber as it was nearly a week after Japan's official surrender. But nothing like that happened. We flew for hours over the vast expanse of the China Sea, and then at long last we were over the mainland of Japan. I immediately plunged into deep thought.

"Here I am flying over Japanese soil for the first time; very, very strange that I should fly on my first trip to Japan, a week after Japan's surrender, and under the shadow of an unparalleled tragedy. Pity, that Netaji did not ask me to join him on either of his two trips to Tokyo—the first, soon after the formation of the Provisional Government (October,

1943), when he was feted by the Japanese Government and the nation in a manner befitting the Head of the State and Provisional Government of Azad Hind ; and the second visit in October, 1944, a little less than a year before Japan's collapse. If I had gone with him to Japan on one of those trips, I would have seen a different Japan, going through the fiercest ordeal, so I heard, under a shower of fire, and bombs . . . but still *fighting* valiantly in the face of the most appalling odds, . . . but fighting with a rare, grim determination. In those days, Tokyo was a blazing inferno, night and day, fires raging here and there, and red, white, blue and black smoke rising in columns towards the sky from the most crowded parts of Tokyo ; life in the midst of so much death and destruction—desperate life struggling in the midst of death and devastation all hours of the day and night.

(NEARING GIFU), August 21.

That is the Japan at war I would have seen if I had accompanied Netaji to that country in October, 1944.

But now I am flying over a Japan that has been beaten in the war. And what a sight I see from the bomber, my first glimpses of the country from a height of about three thousand feet. Even at this height I can see miles and miles of debris, half-broken chimneys of factories or public-baths. Japan's fiery ordeal is over. Here is the peace of the desert and the silence of the graveyard . . . charred brickwork . . . twisted steel . . . heaps and heaps of debris . . . this monotonous, melancholy landscape relieved only by tiny sheds of bent and charred steel plates dotted over the place, to serve as the "home" of the homeless in the devastated towns and cities. The bombs and incendiaries from the American B-29s have done their horrible work pretty thoroughly . . .

From the 22nd of August to the 19th of November, for three months, wherever I happened to go in Japan—in Tokyo, Yokohama, or on the way to the seaside place of Atami or to the lake city of Chuzenji, I saw nothing but heartrending proofs of the American determination to burn and bomb Japan out of the war and out of existence as an empire.

CHAPTER VIII

IN VANQUISHED JAPAN

IT was nearly 1-0 p.m. when we landed on Japanese soil. I learnt later that the aerodrome was Gifu, about six or seven miles away from the town of that name, and two hundred miles from Tokyo.

The sun was bright and the heat intense. I could see that all the bombers, fighters, and other aircraft had been grounded there in the distance for sometime. We could see a large group of ground staff tugging away at the tail of a bomber, pulling it up the runway to the distant field. After getting out of our plane we walked about half a mile to the group of buildings on the outskirts of the airfield. Eventually I found myself in a reception room attached to a deserted mess where till a week ago hundreds of officers must have had their meals in the vast dining hall. But now the place was quiet with hardly even a single mess orderly inside. Half an hour later an orderly in his teens brought us some hot *ocha*—most welcome to us. Our throats were parched and the hot *ocha* was really soothing. We gulped it boiling hot. I was covered with dust and feeling terribly shabby but the hot *ocha* put some life into me. It took the attendants at the mess an hour more to produce for each of us a bowl of rice and a cup of soup. Oh, how delicious were the plain-boiled rice and the cup of soya bean soup. No banquet could have tasted better. We had been thoroughly famished and were glad to eat anything and relish it.

Colonel T sat in front of me with Captain Aoki at his elbow. There was not much that poor Colonel T could tell me. Still I can see that he was always very keen on making conversation and cheering me up, perhaps to divert my mind from Netaji's fate. He started plying me with a series of questions. He asked me the whereabouts of all the other

members of the Provisional Government of Free India. I was really very glad that he asked me those questions, because I was myself anxious to take the earliest opportunity to tell someone in authority in Japan about the whereabouts of my senior colleagues. That was the only way I could make sure that one day, in the not distant future, they would be contacted by the British and repatriated to India, even if only as prisoners. The one danger I wished most intensely to avoid for my colleagues was their being completely forgotten or stranded in the jungles or some hills. I knew where exactly all my colleagues in the Cabinet were on the 17th or 18th August. The position as I knew at that moment was as follows :

Major-General Loganathan in charge of the Provisional Government of Free India and the INA, in Rangoon : Sri Paramanand, Major-General Bhonsle, Sri Isher Singh in Bangkok ; Sri Raghavan, Sri Thivy, Major-General Alagappan, Major-General Kiani, Colonel Nagar and Sri Sarkar in Malaya. Mr. Sahay was in Hanoi.

At that time the whereabouts of General Shah Nawaz, Colonel Sahgal, Colonel Laxmi and Sri Yellappa were unknown. Colonel T went over the list once or twice and I told him that he must communicate this information to his superiors the moment he reached Tokyo. I was extremely keen that there should be some record somewhere of the whereabouts of my senior colleagues scattered in different parts of East Asia.

It was very hot in that little hall. I was feeling bored and very tired. All the three of us sprawled on the floor of the hall which was covered with a worn-out carpet. We were feeling drowsy because of the heat. In a few moments we dropped off to sleep. About 5-0 p.m. we got up and drank some more hot *ocha*. Meanwhile, somebody had brought a car and we packed up our kit and drove to the town of Gifu through endless scenes of destruction and devastation. It was nearly seven o'clock by the time we drew up in front of one of those Japanese inns near the bridge over the famous

river in Gifu. The inn-keeper told the Colonel that he could provide the dinner but he had not even a single room for the three of us to share. We had our dinner there, more elaborate than any meal we had had since we left Saigon. We squatted on the mat of the neat little room on the first floor of the Inn, relaxed ourselves and had a good meal. Dinner over, I did not feel like wanting to get up and go anywhere. I just wanted to lie on the floor and go to sleep but we had to go elsewhere to rest for the night.

We left our kit in the inn and set out on foot in search of a hotel. We walked down the beautiful embankment. It was an enchanting sight, with the silvery moon reflected in the cool, clear waters of the river, with the hills rising sheer beyond the other bank. I walked as if in a dream, in a daze. We did not have to walk long before we arrived at the gates of a really first-class hotel which once used to cater for guests both in European as well as in Japanese style. Immediately after we were shown our rooms, I had a good, long bath in the steamy hot water—the first in about forty hours. When I finished my bath, I felt light as a feather. Then the Colonel called me out for a short stroll and we just stepped out of the hotel, crossed the road and sat on the embankment. For a moment I forgot all my worries. The moonlight, the river, the little boats with their electric lights floating down the river and catching fish at night, the entire panorama was so bewitching that it had really a soothing effect on my strained nerves. I felt very sleepy and walked back to my room in the hotel.

I slept soundly on a comfortable bed till the next morning when we got up and hurried through a very simple breakfast of rice and soup and drove back to the inn to pick up our kit and then on to the aerodrome where we arrived at about 9-0 a.m. I was told we were taking off immediately for Tokyo. Actually, after a few moments of the taking-off from Gifu, we were over Nagoya, or at least, what was once used to be known as the industrial city of Nagoya, but now there was neither industry nor city, but only the name of

Nagoya with plenty of evidence of destruction and devastation.

We landed at Nagoya a few minutes after we took off from Gifu. We waited a long while—over an hour—for the plane to refuel, then we were off to Tokyo at about 10-0 a.m.

So I shall soon be in Tokyo. What a time to arrive in Tokyo and that too on my first visit to the capital of Japan. I wondered what fate Tokyo of defeated Japan held in store for me. At that moment I had not the faintest idea as to the attitude of the then Japanese Government towards Netaji and the Provisional Government of Free India. I was fully prepared for veiled hostility on the part of such of the Japanese as were anxious to show that they had liquidated the past.

Having nothing else to do in the plane I let my imagination run riot. I wondered where I was going to land, where I was going to stay in Tokyo, whom I was going to meet, what news I was going to get about Netaji's body or whether Habib was alive, and whether Rama Murti, the Chairman of the Indian Independence League, was a free man or in detention and what happened to the Propaganda boys whom we had sent all the way from Singapore to Tokyo to run the Broadcasting Station of the Provisional Government of Free India in Japan, and what was the position of the forty and odd Cadet boys whom Netaji had sent for officers training in the Navy, Army and Air Force.

The propaganda boys, those brave youths, had with characteristic daring and an indomitable spirit of self-sacrifice, volunteered to leave Singapore, which was undoubtedly much safer, to go and work in the Provisional Government of Free India Broadcasting Station in Tokyo and knew very well that every minute of their existence in Tokyo they would be carrying their lives in the palm of their hands. It would be foolish of any one to imagine that he would survive the incessant shower of fire and bombs from the B-29s over Tokyo in those days, day after day and night

after night. And yet these young men had not for a moment thought of themselves. They had only one idea—the liberation of their country for which whatever they could contribute would be worth the sacrifice. Mr. M. Sivaram, the spokesman of the Provisional Government of Free India, took them to Tokyo, put them in the way and returned to Singapore after a few months. And these young men, Mr. P. B. Nair, to me known only as Balan, Mr. Rajadurai and Mohamad Iqbal Choudhury, known to me as Iqbal, were carrying on against tremendous odds and they kept the Radio Station on until all other Radio Stations in Japan were closed down.

Later I knew that these boys were burnt out of their houses thrice during the heavy B-29 attacks, losing all their warm clothes and other essential kit which were so dear in war-torn Japan. From place to place they wandered, without food, without sleep and without any clothing to shield their thin and emaciated bodies from the biting cold of the rigorous winter, and at the same time doing plenty of work. Often during the incendiary attacks by B-29s they were separated and were roaming in the forest of fire with giant planes overhead dropping death and destruction, drifting in the wilderness, not knowing where to go, how long they would live and whether there would be an end to all their agonies. But, they were able to beat it out, and they were able to weather the storm, all due to the surging spirit inculcated in them by Netaji.

Who would not give up everything and who would hesitate to obey the orders of that dynamic personality? Whether separated by the confusion of surprise raids, or stranded by the heavy snow-fall paralysing the entire transport system, never did they fail to reach the Studio to keep the Provisional Government of Free India Broadcasting Station on the air in time. Their fortitude and courage were a moral lesson even to the veteran Japanese.

I was wondering what had happened to these young men; whether they were still alive, whether they had been

taken prisoners, or whether they had been completely stranded and left to starve in the bomb-shattered city of Tokyo.

My speculation came to an end when Captain A touched me on the shoulder and pointed, through the window of the plane, to a mountain in the distance and said: "That is Fujiyamasan!" (Mount Fuji). It was a glorious sight. We flew so near it that we had a close-up of its snowclad crest. Low-hanging clouds were over the mountain top and looking at the beautiful sight through the window, I forgot the fact that very soon I would be in Tokyo, the capital of beaten Japan.

We landed at an airport at 12-30 p.m. and I learnt later that it was the Tokurozawa airfield. We scrambled out with our kit and marched all the way to a distant group of buildings in the airfield. There we had to wait nearly two hours before the Colonel could arrange some sort of transport. I was sorry for the poor Colonel, terribly sorry that he should have me on his hands to look after. I could easily imagine the Colonel's mental torture on reaching his mother-country a week after its surrender.

The car was far too small for all the three of us to get in with our kit. So I left Netaji's suitcase and mine in the airfield, picked up only my haversack and drove into the town with Colonel T. An hour's drive down the narrow lanes on the outskirts of Tokyo brought us to the Dai Hon Yei (Imperial Japanese Headquarters). There we walked miles and miles of corridors before I was ushered into some waiting room where I was perfectly content to slip into a chair and close my eyes. I was thirsty and tired.

The hot *ocha* turned up and two or three sips of it revived me a bit. An endless wait followed and I was wondering whether I was ever going to get out of those sombre-looking concrete buildings known as the Imperial Japanese Headquarters. Colonel T had disappeared for what I felt to be some hours. The clock struck five and then the Colonel turned up with Captain Aoki and we crossed

over to the next group of buildings. Another long wait here, and I began to feel very, very hungry because I had had nothing to eat the whole day, except two or three small cups of hot *ocha*. A senior staff officer, Colonel C., who was apparently in charge of Indian Affairs in his section kindly ordered a plate of rice and some vegetables. Plain-boiled rice and plain-boiled leafy vegetables had never tasted sweeter.

Then we adjourned to the next room for a chat. Meanwhile the Japanese Foreign Office had been told of my arrival and they sent two officials to talk things over. Colonel T., Captain Aoki, Colonel C., two Foreign Office officials and myself were present. The doors were locked from inside. We discussed Netaji.

Almost the first question I asked was whether Netaji's body had been brought to Tokyo. Colonel C. and the Foreign Office men said: "No."

"Are you trying to bring it to Tokyo or take it to Singapore?"

"As a matter of fact we have no news from Taihoku. We are completely cut off from Taihoku for the last two days and we do not know what is happening there. However, we will be able to tell you whether there is any hope of bringing Netaji's body to Tokyo very soon, but taking it anywhere else is of course out of the question."

"What about Habib? Is there any news of him? Is he fit?"

"Very sorry we have no news of him either. We hope he is getting better."

Then I asked them in sheer desperation: "Do you hope to have any news at all from Taihoku?"

"Of course, we do hope to hear from Taihoku but it will take time."

Then I pleaded with the Japanese once again with all the earnestness I could command that they must somehow bring Netaji's body to Tokyo, particularly because they failed to take me to Taihoku, and I repeated my warning

that not a single Indian in East Asia or in India would be prepared to believe what the Japanese might say about Netaji's plane crash unless they produced convincing proof of the accident.

I told them in a rather bitter tone : " You could have easily taken me to Taihoku instead of to Taichu. You didn't do that. Now you say that you are completely cut off from Taihoku and you do not know what has happened to Netaji's body and you do not know how Habib is getting on, and if you cannot get into touch with Taihoku again it means there will be no more news either of Netaji or of Habib. Do you realise what this means ? It means that nobody is going to believe a word of what you are saying."

I looked at the face of the Japanese around me and I could detect real distress in their eyes. I felt that they were being more confused than cunning, but that was no consolation to me.

They assured me in the most solemn tones that they had so far told me the whole truth as far as it was known to them and they were hopeful that they would be able to contact Taihoku once again and give me further news.

Then the question arose about announcing to the world the news of Netaji's plane crash. I pointed out that according to them Netaji's plane crashed on the 18th of August and he died the same night. It was already the 22nd of the month, that is, four full days had passed and not a word had been publicly announced either by the Japanese Government or by the Provisional Government of Free India about the calamity. I told them : " You have already lost four valuable days and the more you delay the announcement of Netaji's death, the less chance there is of anybody believing the news. So the sooner you announce it, the better."

Then they wanted me to draft the announcement. I dictated a draft and asked them to show me the final draft before announcing it.

Frankly speaking, I was not inclined to believe their story at that moment, my own reason being that they had

been extremely unwise in not taking me to Taihoku, and then, as soon as I reached Tokyo, they told me they were cut off from Taihoku.

Just then a rain-storm broke over Tokyo and in a few minutes the roads and lanes were all flooded. The workers in the military headquarters had serious difficulty in walking to their tram and railway stations. It raged all the evening and till late in the night. When the storm abated, Captain Aoki managed to borrow somebody's car and we drove to Daiichi Hotel. There I was shown a fine little room with a wooden bed, on the sixth floor. I was content to stretch myself on the bed and did not care whether I got any food. I did *not* get any food as there was none in the hotel!

I did not know that a disastrous typhoon was raging over Tokyo at the time until the early hours of the morning as if to give finishing touches to the already devastated city. I must have slept like a log. When I woke up in the morning, I was feeling very cold and all I wanted was a cup of hot *ocha*. I had to wait nearly half an hour before I could get it.

When I looked out of my room and up the corridor I had the pleasantest surprise. At the other end of the corridor I saw Rajadurai walking towards me. From his face I could see that he was not sure whether it was I or my ghost standing at my end of the corridor, because he did not in his wildest imagination expect that I would be found on the sixth floor of Dai Ichi Hotel where he, Balan and Iqbal had been temporarily put up. With surprise written all over his face, Rajadurai dashed up the corridor and with a wild shout ran into my room and shook me warmly by the hand. I had to assure him that it was really myself who was standing in front of him. After a couple of minutes we sat down for a quiet chat. Within a few minutes he gave me all the news about his comrades and himself. He dashed out of the room then and was soon back with Balan.

Almost the first thing they asked me was: "Where is Netaji? And how is he?"

It was an embarrassing question. For a split second I looked puzzled, not knowing what to say. To speak the truth bluntly would be shocking to them and moreover I myself was not convinced of the fact. Therefore, I decided to spit out in all good faith a half lie, "Oh, he is O.K. and was in Bangkok when I left and will be coming to Tokyo very soon", and changed the subject.

Between them they decided that I must have something to eat. Poor boys, they had themselves very little to eat and what could they give me? Still, they brought a breakfast which consisted of one whole raw tomato, a small piece of cucumber with two slices of bread. The morning was cold and I was feeling colder, and the three articles of breakfast were colder still. All that I wanted at that moment was just one big pot of hot tea or at least hot water and nothing else. Of course, raw tomato was very good for health. Then, I thought I could eat it with a pinch of salt and I asked Balan and Rajadurai: "Now, how about a pinch of salt to go with this tomato?" I am sorry I embarrassed them; they told me that a pinch of salt was out of the question. It was then that the horror of the extremely bad food situation dawned on me. Imagine a hotel of about nine hundred rooms with ultra-modern equipment but without a pinch of salt to be had, on that floor at any rate.

Then I asked them: "How about a small cup of hot tea?" They produced it within a few minutes. I casually enquired whether it was possible to get a teaspoonful of sugar to go with the strong black tea. They said most definitely "No!" Then I naturally asked them: "How about rice and other things?" What they told me was really very depressing.

I thought to myself what a miserable life these boys must have had and the horrors through which they must have passed. I noticed that they were all very thin compared with what they were in Singapore. Hunger, cold, regular bombing day and night and plenty of work, had

worked havoc with the health of these boys and yet the brave smile with which they greeted me and their desperate efforts to get whatever food they could secure for me are things I shall never forget.

I did not care what was in store for me. I was more than happy that once again I was with some of the propaganda boys, though in distant Tokyo.

A little while later, Captain Aoki and myself took one of the suburban trains and went to the Imperial Headquarters. Still there was no news from Taihoku. I returned to the hotel very much disappointed.

Neither Captain Aoki nor myself knew where we could get our next meal. We tried our luck at the hotel dining room. We were lucky; we got something. It consisted of boiled rice, some beans of poor quality and some sort of soup. I tried my best to eat them. I was ravenously hungry, even so I had great difficulty in shoving it down my throat. I do not know why, but I could not simply stick it and I hoped and prayed that I would not have to take more than two or three repasts of that type.

A few minutes later I had the pleasantest surprise. When we got out of the dining room and emerged into the hall I saw an Indian standing there. Before he was near us, Captain A. told me it was Rama Murti. I had never seen him before. I had seen his photograph just once. We went upstairs and had a long chat. Rama Murti told me that I must leave the hotel anyway very soon because the Americans would be in Tokyo in less than a week and the hotel would be placed at their disposal.

I was most anxious to get out of the hotel even if the Americans did not come to Tokyo and occupy the hotel. Rama Murti promised to come the next day and departed.

In the afternoon, Balan again came to my room and we were talking about many things. He asked me whether I had any lunch and when he heard the story he simply went out and, God alone knows from where, he brought me by about seven o'clock, a plate of plain rice and Indian curry

with a bowl of *miso siru*—Japanese soya bean soup. Good God, that was a feast to me and I did full justice to it and wanted to go to sleep immediately. But the Japanese Foreign Office officials, Captain Aoki, Colonel T. and Colonel C. came soon after and showed me the draft of the announcement of Netaji's death. I approved it and after a few minutes talk they went away.

I thought then it would be quite unfair on my part to hide the news any more from the boys, as I knew that it would come in the papers the next morning and they would really and very rightly hate me for not telling them the tragic truth. They might not realise at that moment what motive impelled me to hide it from them. So I went to Balan's room where fortunately all of them were gathered, i.e., Balan, Rajadurai and Iqbal and one other Indian too who I afterwards knew was Sri Narain.

I told them about the plane crash and all the things that I had been told about Netaji's death. It was a pathetic scene, all of us sitting in the room like ghosts, without any life or vigour in us and without being able to talk anything to one another. The atmosphere was oppressive and I thought that it would be better for me to leave them alone at that moment and I got back to my room.

Rama Murti came the next morning as promised and wanted to take me to the house of my colleague in the Cabinet, Sri A. M. Sahay. Sahay himself was still in Hanoi—at least as far as I knew—but his wife and children were in Tokyo and Rama Murti drove me to Sri Sahay's house.

Here I must refer to a comedy of errors. It seems that as soon as Rama Murti knew that I had arrived in Tokyo, he decided that I should be put up in Sri Sahay's house. So, before coming to the hotel to take me to Sahay's house, Rama Murti went up to Mrs. Sahay and said to her: "Mrs. Sahay, would you mind putting up Mr. Ayer upstairs?" Mrs. Sahay misheard what Rama Murti said, and snapped out a most emphatic "No."

"I shall never put him up. What do you mean by asking me to put up *that* man?"

Poor Rama Murti was aghast at, what he thought, the shocking attitude of Mrs. Sahay. Still he was not going to give up hope. He pleaded: "Mrs. Sahay, he is a confidante of Netaji and has just arrived in Japan."

"What, who do you mean?"

"I mean Sri S. A. Ayer, Propaganda Minister of the Provisional Government of Free India."

"Oh, I am so sorry, I misunderstood you. . . . I thought you said. . . . That is why I point-blank refused to put him up. Mr Ayer is, of course, quite welcome. Do bring him along."

We reached Mrs. Sahay's house. Mrs. Sahay gave me a warm welcome and she and her fourteen-year-old daughter, Tulu, got busy in the kitchen and served us with a really good Indian meal. I was Mrs. Sahay's guest for one full month and I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude to her and to her children.

She is one of the bravest Indian sisters I have ever come across. Virtually an invalid, Mrs. Sahay braved the rigours of the Japanese winter and the horrors of bombing, and kept her home-fire burning through all the anxious days, with her husband away either in Rangoon, Bangkok, Singapore or Hanoi.

I knew very well that it was next to impossible to get rations in Tokyo. But like a magician producing a rabbit out of his hat, Mrs. Sahay used to produce some little rice, or some tasty vegetable curry and insist on my eating before she or her children would sit down. I told her frankly that I would eat nothing unless she and her children shared equally whatever we had. Sometimes, it would take her less than five minutes only to prepare a tasty lunch. She was broken and bent by some mysterious ailment, but then even today she is struggling with extraordinary courage against it. One day when I was sitting upstairs I heard melodious Indian music coming from downstairs. For a moment I was wondering who was singing such an enchanting tune. I went downstairs and by then the music had stopped.

I learnt it was Mrs. Sahay who had sung. Her rendering of *Bande Mataram* in chorus at the Calcutta Congress, years ago, had thrilled an audience of thirty thousand. Her voice is still more or less what it was.

I have digressed a little. I must go back to the moment I reached Mrs. Sahay's house. Soon after the lunch while we sat round in the cosy little drawing-room ten of the Tokyo boys who had been discharged from their academy came to the house unexpectedly. They were glad to see me and I was happy to meet them. They sat round me and each of them asked for news of Netaji. I was sitting on the settee and they were sitting on the floor of the drawing-room. I looked over their heads at the opposite wall and narrated exactly what I had been told by the Japanese. Some of the boys burst into tears. I was moved and I could not proceed further.

The boys' problem became even more serious. Thirty more of them had been turned out of their academy and Rama Murti did not know where to house them. Mrs. Sahay's house was strained to capacity with the arrival of ten of the boys with their enormous kit. They had just filled one whole room with their kit and they were living in the drawing-room. To put up thirty more boys there was out of the question. Later, Rama Murti managed to get two small barracks near Mrs. Sahay's house and put all the forty boys there. I continued my stay at Sahay's house.

Every morning I used to look out very eagerly for the copy of *Nippon Times* merely to know whether there was any news from Singapore, Bangkok or Rangoon—news of the fate of the comrades whom I had left behind. News came in dribblets. Zaman Kiani had been arrested in Singapore. There was an announcement from New Delhi that some leniency would be shown to those who had "collaborated" with the Japanese under "duress", but others would be severely dealt with. There was very little real news of what was happening either in East Asia or in India. Days went by like this.

CHAPTER IX

FEARS AND TEARS

RAMA MURTI and myself used to call at the Imperial Japanese Headquarters frequently for news from Taihoku. After a series of disappointments, on the 7th of September we were told to come the next day to receive some news from Taihoku.

We could hardly get a wink of sleep that night. We were so anxious to know what the news was going to be. Next morning, Rama Murti and myself went to the Japanese Imperial Headquarters and there Colonel C. told us that Colonel Habib had completely recovered from the injuries and had actually arrived in Tokyo from Taihoku with Netaji's ashes.

Both myself and Rama Murti were silent for a few minutes. I needed a little time to steady my nerves. I fell into a reverie. Habib alive in Tokyo! Habib has brought Netaji's ashes!! Can it be true— Netaji's ashes? Do these people really mean it? But the most disquieting fact is these people say that Habib has brought Netaji's ashes. Surely, I shall be meeting Habib at any moment and shall shake him by the shoulders and yell into his ears to tell me the whole truth. *Habib has brought Netaji's ashes!!*

The horrible truth was coming too near me now. How I wished that they told me that Netaji's ashes had arrived but not Habib. Then I could have continued to refuse to believe their story. But then Habib was there in Tokyo and I should be meeting Habib perhaps in two hours, but meet I must and I would very soon. And was he really going to tell me that he had brought Netaji's ashes?

I woke up from my dreams when Colonel C. told me that Colonel Habib could meet me later in the day. Netaji's ashes had already arrived at the Imperial Japanese Head-

quarters and the Japanese authorities wished to hand it over to me in person.

Hope revived. Well, if I was not meeting Colonel Habib immediately, but if I was to receive Netaji's ashes on the spot, after all they might not be Netaji's ashes, and, therefore, there was still reason to hope for the best.

I said nothing except that I would wait to take delivery of Netaji's ashes and convey them to Rama Murti's house which, for all practical purposes, was also the office of the Indian Independence League in Japan after the surrender.

They asked me to go downstairs and wait at the foot of the steps near a waiting car so that I could receive the ashes and immediately step into the car.

I stood there under the portico with Rama Murti near me. The Colonel, accompanied by a few officers, came walking silently down the steps, bearing in his hands with deep reverence the urn containing Netaji's ashes. They first put a loop of white cloth, seven or eight inches wide, round my neck and then the Colonel placed the urn in the loop and I held it with both hands.

I stepped into the car. Even at that moment, I did not feel that I had received Netaji's ashes. I was not at all sure. I was myself uncertain and confused—could they be Netaji's ashes after all? Perhaps, most unfortunately, yes; the Japanese dared not play a cruel hoax on me. They might after all be Netaji's ashes.

An hour's drive from the Imperial Japanese Headquarters brought us to Rama Murti's house where Mrs. Rama Murti had made hurried preparations to receive and place the ashes on a high table with incense burning on either side and a stack of flowers in front of the urn.

On top of the urn we placed a tiny photograph of Netaji. All of us gathered in the room, *i.e.*, Mrs. Rama Murti, her sisters, Murti, his brother Jaya and myself. We offered a silent prayer and paid our respects to Netaji's memory.

But even in the midst of all this melancholy drama I still felt that the ashes could not really be Netaji's. Some-

how I felt there was an air of unreality about the whole affair. I said to myself that I had every right to hope that Netaji was still alive somewhere and these ashes in front of me might not after all be his. But then, as against this, I had been told that Habib himself had arrived in Tokyo and that I would be meeting him very soon. It was only a question of hours. Surely, he could not have conspired in a hoax with anybody. This conflict of thoughts filled my mind as I sat there in front of the urn and brooded over Netaji's possible fate.

We all sat down in the room and spoke to one another in whispers and sipped some hot *ocha* until it was dusk. Then I got up to go back to Mrs. Sahay's house in Ogikubo, a distance of about two miles from Rama Murti's house. Half an hour of brisk walk, and I reached Mrs. Sahay's house and broke to her the sad news that Netaji's ashes had arrived in Tokyo and that I had received them and deposited them in Rama Murti's house. Mrs. Sahay was visibly moved and she remained silent for ten minutes before she uttered a word.

I told her briefly of the visit of Rama Murti and myself to the Japanese Imperial Headquarters and described to her how I received the urn containing Netaji's ashes. I told her also that Colonel Habib was expected to call on us any time that night. At the mention of Habib, Mrs. Sahay felt instinctively that the tragic truth was going to be confirmed. We did not feel like eating anything, yet for the sake of the children we pretended to have dinner, very much in silence. Back in the drawing-room we sat on the sofa in tense silence, straining our ears to catch the sound of footsteps on the gravel outside.

Eight o'clock, nine, ten, but no trace of Habib yet. The strain was getting intolerable. We asked ourselves why the Japanese did not come and tell us that after all there had been some delay in Habib reaching Ogikubo; in the alternative, why didn't they bring him along as quick as they could? Here we are counting every second. We

cannot stand this strain, this nervous strain, any longer. If Habib does not turn up very soon we shall curse the Japanese and tell them that they are callous and don't care what agony other people have to go through. . . .

Sound of footsteps . . . just outside . . . nearer and nearer . . . the door . . . then two sharp knocks . . . Mrs. Sahay and I looked each other in the face. She was in anguish. I do not know what emotions my face then registered. A bewildering medley of thoughts ran through my head.

"Oh. Habib is here; he is most welcome; I have been dying to see him, but I am afraid Habib is going to confirm the news of the Taihoku tragedy. . . . Habib is most welcome and also most unwelcome. Is it possible that by a miracle Habib will tell me and Mrs. Sahay that after all, this story of Netaji's plane crash is all a fake?"

We both jumped from our seats. Mrs. Sahay made a dash for the door and pulled herself together and, taking a deep breath, turned the handle and opened it. I was standing two or three feet behind her. The light from the electric lamp fell on the figure framed against the door-way. Habib . . . yes . . . it *was* Habib; there was no doubt about it. It was Habib whom we were all dying to see. Both his hands and part of his head were in bandages.

Habib is one of the coolest-headed and softest spoken men I have ever come across. Even at that moment, a moment of great excitement and extreme surprise, he was quite cool and composed. We recovered our speech and shouted *Jai Hind*. Habib returned the greeting.

Then I had a good look at his face as much to know his condition as to reassure myself that it was Habib himself and no one else.

His face was slightly swollen and a little anæmic.

He was dressed in a woollen khaki bushcoat, breeches of the same colour and top-boots in which he had set out from Saigon three weeks ago. He looked a war casualty from head to foot except for his clothes and top-boots. His face and hands gave no other picture.

Habib stepped forward, sat down on the low wooden platform, removed his top-boots and got up. I put my arms round his shoulders and conducted him to the drawing-room. We two sat on the sofa and Mrs. Sahay took the chair, in front of us.

Complete silence for full five minutes. None of us was in a mood to speak or knew how to begin or where to begin. We sat there with our heads bent, hearts filled with grief. But how long to sit like that without asking Habib a thousand questions about Netaji. I cleared my throat and started asking Habib all about Netaji.

"Tell me Habib *bhai*, what is the truth? Is it true? Did you bring the ashes? Are they really *Netaji's* ashes? Did your plane *really* crash? Was Netaji in it when it crashed? Were you with Netaji in the hospital? Were you with Netaji till the last moment? Were you present during the last rites? Did you ask the Japanese to try to bring Netaji's body to Tokyo? . . ."

I suddenly realised that I was overwhelming Habib with a volley of questions without giving him a chance to reply even to one of them. Then I halted for a brief minute. Habib, in his own inimitable way, quietly and in deepest solemnity said that it was all tragically true.

"Tell me all about it. Tell me how it happened. Tell us everything that happened since I said *Jai Hind* to Netaji and to you at 5-15 p.m. on the 17th August at the Saigon aerodrome."

Then in low and measured tones, Habib began his melancholy narrative.

"In about a couple of hours time after we took off from Saigon aerodrome we landed at Touraine (Indo-China) and halted there for the night. Taking off again early the next morning we landed at the Taihoku airport at about 2-0 p.m.

"While the plane was refuelling we had something to eat and we were ready to start again. Meanwhile I changed into warm clothes and asked Netaji if he too would not do so, because we would be flying into colder regions. Netaji

laughed away the suggestion and said there was no hurry for him to change into warm things. He was in cotton khaki slacks and bushcoat. He was not in a hurry to discard these for woollen khaki. After half an hour, we walked across to the plane. It was 2-35 p.m. when the plane took off. We had just cleared the runway and gained two or three hundred feet. We were on the outskirts of the aerodrome. We had been up in the air only a minute or two.

"Then a sudden deafening noise. What on earth is this? I thought an enemy fighter had spotted us taking off from Taihoku and had come swooping down on us and had taken a pot shot at us.

"What is the pilot going to do? Can he make a forced landing? Or is the plane going to crash? Actually there was no enemy plane about. I learnt later that one of the propellers of the port engine had broken.

"The port engine is out of action. Only the starboard engine is still working. The plane is already wobbling, the pilot is making a supreme effort to balance the whole weight of the plane on the starboard engine. We are losing height pretty fast. I turned round and looked at Netaji. He was absolutely unperturbed. He could not have looked more composed if the plane was about to make a perfect landing after a long flight. But I am sure he must have seen the acutest distress in my face.

"I wonder now whether I did any thinking at that time. But I must have thought that the end was only a matter of seconds. And in less than a few seconds the plane crashed on its nose and then everything went dark for a while.

"When I recovered consciousness after a few seconds I realised that all the luggage had crashed on top of me and a fire had started in front of me. So exit by the rear was blocked by the packages and exit by the front was possible only through the fire. Netaji was injured in the head but he had struggled to his feet and was about to move in my direction to get away from the fire and to get out of the plane through the rear. But this was out of question.

There was not an inch of passage through which we could get out. So I said to him "*Aagese nikliye, Netaji.*" (Please get out through the front, Netaji).

"He sized up the situation. Then he tried to make his way through the nose of the plane which was already smashed and burning. With both his hands he fought his way through the fire. He got out and stood there about ten or fifteen feet away anxiously looking out for me.

"When the plane crashed, Netaji got a splash of petrol all over his cotton khaki and it caught fire when he struggled through the nose of the plane. So he stood with his clothes burning and himself making desperate efforts to unbuckle the belts of his bushcoat and round his waist.

"I dashed up to him and tried to help him remove the belts. My hands were burnt in the process. As I was fumbling with his belts I looked up and my heart nearly stopped when I saw his face, battered by iron and burnt by fire. A few minutes later he collapsed and lay on the ground of the Taihoku aerodrome.

"I too was exhausted and went and lay down next to him. I could hardly know what had happened to the others. The whole place looked horrible with the wreckage of the plane and we passengers strewn about all over the place.

"The next thing I knew was that I was lying on a hospital bed next to Netaji. I found out later that within fifteen minutes of the crash military ambulances had rushed us to the hospital in Taihoku city. Netaji lost consciousness almost immediately after reaching the hospital.

"He revived a little later and relapsed again into a state of coma; I was not so badly injured or burnt though I was hardly able to stand up. I struggled to my feet and went up to Netaji as often as I could. The Japanese made superhuman efforts to save Netaji. But it was all in vain. Six hours after he was brought into the hospital, *i.e.*, at 9-0 p.m. on 18th August, Netaji's end came peacefully.

"I find it impossible to describe to you those six hours of mortal agony . . . not so much for Netaji as for me. In

all those six hours not even once did Netaji complain about the writhing pain that he must have been suffering. Except for brief spells, Netaji was practically conscious throughout.

"In one of those delirious moments Netaji whispered the name of Hassan. I was sitting near him and I said '*Hassan yahan nahi hain, Sab, main hun, Habib.*' (Hassan is not here, Sir, I am here, Habib).

"He was convinced that he was not going to survive. A few moments before his end came, he said to me: 'Habib, my end is coming very soon. I have fought all my life for my country's freedom. I am dying for my country's freedom. Go and tell my countrymen to continue the fight for India's freedom. India will be free, and before long.'

"These were the last words he spoke to me. I was prostrate. I did not know what to do. I did not care what happened to me. I was not interested in anything. The Japanese tried to coax me and did their best to make me eat a little by way of nourishment but they found it was useless, for the time being.

"When I felt well enough to talk to them I told them to arrange to send Netaji's body by plane to Singapore preferably or to Tokyo if Singapore was out of the question. They promised they would. I am quite sure they did try their very best. They told me that there were practical difficulties in getting Netaji's coffin into the plane. They told me then that it was impossible to carry Netaji's remains out of Taihoku and cremation had to be arranged as early as possible. They wanted my consent to it. I had no other alternative but to agree to the cremation in Taihoku.

"The funeral service with full military honours was held in the shrine attached to the hospital and the cremation took place on the 20th. They placed Netaji's ashes in an urn and kept it in the shrine.

"My wounds were healing slowly. My health improved steadily. Then I told the Japanese that I didn't wish to stay in the hospital even one day longer than necessary and I must take Netaji's ashes to Tokyo as early as possible.

How to transport me from Formosa to Tokyo was a problem and it gave the Japanese a very bad headache. They could not decide whether they should send me across by ship or by plane, as they were not sure whether any ship or plane was leaving Formosa for Japan. I went on hoping for the best and insisted that I be given a seat in any kind of transport that might be going to Japan.

"Three weeks went by without much hope of reaching Tokyo. Then suddenly I was told that a single ambulance plane was leaving Taihoku and I could get a seat. I took charge of Netaji's ashes and flew by that plane and reached Tokyo on the 6th of September. I was taken straight to one of the suburbs for the sake of secrecy and it was only two days later that the Japanese took first the ashes and then me into Tokyo city."

Habib halted for breath. He had had his say. He had nothing more to add. Mrs. Sahay and myself did not utter a word for sometime. We did not know what to say. So even the last and faintest hope had gone. It was no use hoping against hope that after all the plane crash story was a mere tale. Unfortunately, it was too true.

Still I turned round to Habib, put my hands on his shoulders, pressed them and nearly shook him and said: "Colonel Saheb, for heaven's sake tell *me* the truth. Do you really mean to tell me that the plane did crash? Tell me the truth. I am sure you would not like to keep the truth from *me*."

With tears in his eyes Habib said: "Ayer Saheb, I am very sorry. I am terribly sorry that all that I have told you is the dreadful truth. It is no use hoping that it is all false. I am afraid you have got to believe it."

Then he turned away from me. My hands were off his shoulders and I sank into the corner of the sofa for a few minutes. Then we continued our conversation in whispers, in fits and starts. It was well past midnight now and we decided to retire for the night.

Early next morning the house was stirred. The ten Tokyo Cadets who were staying in the house did not know that Habib had come into the house the previous night. They knew of his arrival only in the morning. Then they all gathered round him and asked him a hundred and one questions about Netaji. Their faces fell when Habib told them the staggering truth.

Then we held a conference for many hours. Mrs. Sahay, Habib and myself. The question we had to decide immediately was whether Habib's presence in Tokyo should be made public or whether he should remain incognito at any rate for the time being. Mrs. Sahay and myself did not want Indians in Tokyo, Japanese or Americans, to know about Habib's arrival lest they came crowding round him wanting to know all about Netaji. Habib needed complete rest, both physical and mental. The wounds in his head and face and both his hands were getting better. Yet he needed further treatment and real relaxation after the terrible ordeal he had been through. So we insisted that he should go away from that locality and stay in the district where Rama Murti was staying.

The Cadets kept vigil over Netaji's ashes in Rama Murti's house night and day for three days. Thereafter, we removed the urn to Mrs. Sahay's house where prayers were offered for another three days and on the 14th we conveyed the urn secretly from Ogikubo to a Japanese Buddhist Temple in the Suginami district, not far from Rama Murti's house. Besides Rama Murti, his wife, his brother, myself, the forty cadets, Mrs. Sahay and children, a few representatives from the Japanese Foreign Office and War Office were present at the ceremony.

It was a solemn ceremony that lasted well over an hour. Even then I had a feeling that there was something strange in the whole atmosphere and I could not really imagine myself attending Netaji's funeral ceremony at a Buddhist temple in the heart of Tokyo.

The urn is still there. It is in safe custody. On the 18th of September, that is exactly one month after he breathed his last in Taihoku, we went to the temple at night and offered floral tribute to his memory. We visited the temple and offered our prayers again on the 18th October.

Habib was staying in a house two streets away from Rama Murti and I was continuing my stay in Mr. Sahay's house. But we four, i.e., Rama Murti, his brother, Habib and myself, used to meet almost every evening at Rama Murti's house and discuss bits of news that filtered through the radio and the only English newspaper for the people of Tokyo, the *Nippon Times*.

Looking after the forty odd Cadet boys who had been thrown out of their academy was becoming a full-time job for Rama Murti. The boys had their own day-to-day problems, big and small. Apart from that, their future was worrying them. They were getting impatient to get back to their homes in India. They wanted to know what the British attitude would be towards them when the Britishers arrived in Tokyo.

On the evening of 23rd September, Habib and myself went to the barracks where the boys were put up. I gave the boys a rough idea of the whole situation then, and about the future. The boys had all gathered in a small room, sitting cross-legged and listening to Habib who told them that they had nothing to worry. However, we made it clear to them that Habib and myself were expecting arrest at any moment and that they would have to look after themselves, maintain their discipline and keep their chins up until they got back to their homes.

Habib was about to conclude his talk when someone walked into the room and whispered into my ear that a Japanese military police officer was waiting outside and wanted to see Habib. We knew at once what that meant. Habib was about to be arrested and taken to the lock-up.

The officer was very apologetic. He was sorry to interrupt the proceedings but he had no other alternative. He had been asked to take Habib to Police Headquarters.

CHAPTER X

THE CALL FROM THE RED FORT

THE three of us—Habib, the Japanese officer and myself—drove in the police car to Rama Murti's house. The fact that Habib would soon be behind the bars did not in the least bother him or me. We were too happy at that moment to think of such a trivial matter as custody in the military police headquarters. What really mattered to us then, and what we enjoyed thoroughly on the spot, was the motor ride up to Rama Murti's house. I had been fighting valiant battles in jam-packed compartments of the local trains in Tokyo or dragging my weary feet for miles where there were no rail communications. So, the first motor ride with Habib in Tokyo, a month after my arrival there, was most welcome and thoroughly enjoyable. I had nearly forgotten how it felt to have a car ride. (Of course, it must be remembered that I was in a half-daze when I carried Netaji's ashes in a car from the Japanese Military Headquarters to Rama Murti's house on 8th September).

We had, what we called, the last dinner together at Rama Murti's house, and fed the Japanese officer who forgot the cares and anxieties of defeated Japan for the time being. He then drove off with Habib after a touching farewell during which Mrs. Murti and her sister burst into tears. Habib looked unconcerned and tried to cheer us up before he was driven off. After a restless night, Murti, his brother and I set off to the Police headquarters the next morning to see for ourselves what had happened to Habib.

After a long wait on our part, Habib was brought to where we were sitting and there he was served his breakfast. Poor Habib. The food was far from inviting, even for defeated Japan. Plain-cooked rice of the size of white beans; given a few minutes, I could have counted the

number of grains that had been cooked to fill the whole plate—the rice was so big and tough. To go with the rice, there was a small piece of plain-boiled leaf. Habib averted his eyes from the plate, and fell on the small packet of breakfast we had taken for him.

Habib told us that he had not slept the whole night because an electric light was blazing in his cell till dawn and he was not allowed by the sentry to cover his face, lest he disappeared under cover of the sheet! Otherwise, he was not troubled in any way. The police told us that they had not yet heard from the Americans who had ordered Habib's arrest, and would let us know on the telephone later; meanwhile, Habib would have to continue in custody.

We returned home and waited. But there was no news till late in the evening when they rang us up to say that Habib was being released and would be brought to us very soon. Another motor ride for Habib—the lucky devil, despite his detention and sleepless night and horrible food!

When Habib rejoined us that night he told us the amazing story that his arrest and detention were all due to some slight misunderstanding of American instructions on the part of the Japanese military police. It seems that the Americans wanted the Japanese to tell Habib that they wanted to interview Habib where he was, that is, at his residence. They did not want him arrested or kept in the lock up! Vigorous explanations and profuse apologies all round brought the farce to a close.

By then I had got tired of walking every day to Murti's house for the evening chat, and I also shifted to the house where Habib was staying. American as well as British military officers dropped in there once in a way to interview Habib about Netaji and himself. We spent our time scanning the newspaper for the scanty news from India, and listening to the Radio in Murti's house for fuller news.

Then one morning (6th November) we were thrilled to the core to hear on the radio that a trial of some INA officers (names not announced) had started in the Red Fort, that

the defence counsel included Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, and that the Police had lathi-charged a crowd in front of the Red Fort which shouted the slogan : " They are patriots, not traitors."

That was more than enough for us. We tried to guess the names of the INA officers on trial and spent hours doing so. Our guesses tallied with one another's. But we were both wrong in regard to the first two names. We guessed the names of Bhonsle, the Chief of Staff ; Kiani, Commander, First Division ; and Shah Nawaz, Commander of the Second Division ; we were rational and logical. But, only about Shah Nawaz we were right ; the other two were Sahgal and Dhillon. Anyway, we were tremendously excited over the fact that a trial of the INA had begun. Even if the proceedings were held *in camera*, the British were bound to issue a daily handout saying what had transpired in the Court during the day. *The truth would at long last be told to India and to the world.*

That was all that mattered. And India would undoubtedly be happy to know all that Netaji had dared and achieved. Now, all that we were keen about was to be taken to Delhi ourselves as early as possible and tried there along with our comrades. We fervently hoped that the British would try at least all those who had been Ministers of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, as Netaji had 'warned' me before I signed the Proclamation of the establishment of the Provisional Government of Free India, on the analogy of the Irish Rebellion. Then they could not leave the two of us out. It was better to be tried on Indian soil, given a chance to have our say about Netaji, and then hanged, than to die of cold or hunger in the severe winter of defeated Japan.

Our prayers were answered the very next day. Mac-Arthur's Headquarters sent me a notice through the Japanese Foreign Office that I was wanted by the Mountbatten Headquarters in India (presumably in connection with the trial going on in Delhi). There was no separate communication

to Habib. He was disappointed. But we made discreet enquiries in Japanese circles and made sure that Habib would be taken along with me but in a different capacity—as an Army prisoner. We were rather puzzled, but did not mind any niceties as long as we were sure that we would both be taken at the same time to Delhi.

Just imagine my feelings at the prospect of being on Indian soil after full five years of exile. What did it matter if we were going to be lined up and shot for waging war against the King? After all, we would stand on Indian soil once again and almost certainly have a chance to proclaim to the wide world the heroic deeds of our Netaji. We saw God's own hand in this summons to me from MacArthur's Headquarters. My daily prayer to the Almighty, which I offered from the depths of my soul, sitting on a bench under the tall trees in Omiya Park (Tokyo), had at long last been answered.

But there was a fly in the ointment. Only the previous day I had had a bad attack of 'flu and there was no knowing how long that wretched thing would last. They wanted me to be ready to fly on the 12th. I hoped against hope that I would be fit to fly by then. Medicines were not available in Tokyo at that time; there was no hospital anywhere nearby. In sheer desperation I thought of asking the Americans to treat me as a prisoner of war and admit me into one of their prisoner-hospitals so that I might be sure of shaking off the 'flu quickly enough. An American Captain (Medical) came to my quarters on the 12th, examined me and said that I should be fit to fly by the 16th. Actually, the plane did not leave till the 19th. But, meanwhile, I feared that perhaps they would not delay the plane for my sake and I might be left behind if I was too ill to travel. When I was slowly getting rid of my 'flu, I had a bad attack of diarrhoea which complication rather depressed me. I was ready to swallow any medicine that they could bring for diarrhoea and began feeling slightly better.

The Americans suddenly turned up at our quarters on the evening of 18th September, and said that Habib and I should be ready to leave for the aerodrome early next morning. But, Habib had left only that morning for a place some one hundred miles away by train and there was no knowing where he was at that moment, and, even if he had reached his destination, where he was putting up. The American Captain who was to escort us to Delhi was very keen that we two (Habib and I) should be ready to leave early next morning; otherwise, all the plans for the particular journey would be upset.

We discovered the next morning that a few top-ranking Japanese were also being flown by the same plane to Delhi. We guessed that they were being taken as witnesses in the trial that had started. The American Captain took Rama Murti with him in his jeep and set out on the trail of Habib. After a two hundred-mile jeep-ride over bad and bumpy roads he landed Habib in our quarters sometime about three o'clock in the morning. After that, none of us slept.

Habib and myself were on the tiptoe of expectation. Our hosts, the Murtis, were very sad we were leaving and worried as to what was in store for us. Earlier that day, Balan had come to my quarters to say that he was expecting to sail home by the evacuation boat any day and there was a possibility of his reaching South India much earlier than I could hope to, even if I did not have to stand my trial in Delhi. So, he offered to take a letter from me which he would personally deliver to my wife. That set an emotional storm raging in my breast. I had not written to my wife for four years—the last letter I had written to her was in December, 1941, a day before the East Asia War broke out. I took pen and paper. I did not know how to start. My pen would not move. Somehow I started and scribbled a few lines in the most awful handwriting. I was brief and to the point. I told her that I was expected to fly the next morning to Delhi. I had not the faintest idea what fate

awaited me in Delhi ; but she could more or less guess that I would be tried and, of course, sentenced.

"Whatever happens to me, I want you to be really brave and face the world and take particular care in bringing up the children and do your best for them," I concluded (in Tamil, my mother-tongue).

At dawn, a jeep arrived and we were driven off to the airport. The Murtis also accompanied us to see us off on the plane. After what looked an interminable drive we arrived at one of the big airports on the outskirts of Tokyo, known as the Tachikawa aerodrome, and were ushered into a waiting hall. There, for the first time, we were made to feel that we were prisoners to be guarded by the American military police with loaded pistol in hand. But, who wanted to escape from the airport any way before boarding the plane? We were in an impatient hurry to embark and make sure that it was on its wings and headed for India. An enterprising photographer of the Tokyo American newspaper, *Stars and Stripes*, asked all of us, including the Japanese, to pose for a photograph at the foot of the ladder before we walked up to get into the plane. Pardonably, we felt rather important that a newspaper in Tokyo should have taken the trouble of getting our picture. But, then, it was also possible that the picture was needed only as a proof that we had in fact left Tokyo for Delhi by plane. Just in case anything happened to us or to our plane *en route*, the picture might come in handy for a small obituary paragraph. With tears rolling down their cheeks, Rama Murti, his wife, sister-in-law and brother Jaya waved us goodbye. We settled down comfortably in the spacious twenty-four-seater Dakota, recently converted from transport to passenger plane. Habib occupied a seat in the row in front of me.

We had been in the air hardly a few miles out of Tokyo when Habib turned round to me in his seat and, looking positively mischievous, thrust a folded newspaper into my hands and pointed to a paragraph. He was trying to cheer

me up ! The paper was *Stars and Stripes* and the para read that some half a dozen INA officers had been tried in Delhi and sentenced to death and had been executed. After reading the para I looked at Habib and he smiled a roguish smile. I whispered to him : " Never mind, let us have the adventure ! "

Five hours of non-stop flying at the rate of between two hundred and fifty and three hundred miles an hour brought us to Shanghai where we spent the afternoon and night in an air force mess and took off early the next morning for Hankow which we reached in about four hours' time. The weather in Hankow was bitterly cold and in my weak state of health, I could hardly stand it. My teeth were chattering all the time and there was no decent shelter from the cold. We were billeted in a small tent and the chill wind was cutting through the floor level like razor blades. We were told that after dinner we could go back to our plane and spend the night in it. We sprawled on the floor of the plane the whole night. I was sincerely sorry for the plight of the Japanese Vice-Foreign Minister and the General and Colonel, and career diplomats who were huddled up on the floor in the narrow space between the rows of seats. After a welcome cup of hot tea in the morning we took off again and reached Kunning at midday.

Off again after an hour's halt, and a three-hour flight brought us to the sacred soil of India—Chabua (Assam). I looked at my watch when the plane touched down. It was 4-15 p.m. The date was 21st, and the month November. When I stepped off the plane I stood on the soil of Mother India, exactly five years to the day after I started from Madura (South India) on my journey to Bangkok. The date 21st is also sacred to me because it was on that day in October, 1943, that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose declared the formation of the Provisional Government of Free India. And the time 4-15 was the fateful hour to the minute when Netaji actually read out the Proclamation. I could hardly contain my joy

when I realised that I was standing in an aerodrome in India! *India* at last!

For a moment I thought I was dreaming. I offered a silent prayer of thanksgiving to the Almighty for this miracle. Now I did not care what happened to me. The worst that might happen to me was that I would be taken to Delhi and there rushed into a solitary cell. But I could demand an interview with my family at least once before my trial began . . . and so on and so forth. I could see my wife and children at least once and give them a word of cheer.

We were marched off to the Air Force Mess where, under military police guard, we were shown our quarters for the night. The Americans had placed some of their Jewish soldiers to stand guard over us. I do not know why they did so. But the dinner at the Mess was most delightful. The crew of the Dakota, including the Colonel Pilot, sat at the same table with us and we were treated as honoured guests. The Japanese were particularly happy at this unexpected pleasure. Our autographs were taken by the plane crew on the currency notes of different countries which they had collected. After a hurried breakfast the next morning, we set off on the last lap—to Delhi. But before we stepped into the plane the American Army Captain who was our escort and who was charged with the responsibility of handing us over safely to the British authorities in Delhi, requested us to pose for a photograph—his memento of the flight. We readily obliged him and thanked him for the compliment. He had looked after us very well throughout the flight and had been uniformly courteous to the whole lot of us, including the Japanese.

We flew non-stop from Chabua to Delhi, catching glimpses of the snow-clad Everest in the far distance on our right.

We landed at the Willingdon aerodrome, Delhi, at 3-0 p.m. on 22nd November, 1945.

Habib and I felt a special sensation when our Dakota touched down on the Willingdon Airport. We looked at

the big clock on the Control Tower and specially noted the time—the most fateful moment of our lives after leaving East Asia.

As we were nearing Delhi, Habib whispered to me to write letters to my family if I wished to ; we might hope to pass them to any Indian on the Delhi aerodrome before we were whisked off, most probably to the Red Fort.

The moment the plane came to a halt on the runway in front of the Control Tower, Habib spotted an Indian standing a few yards away and as soon as the door of the plane was opened, he beckoned to the Indian, meaning, of course, to hand him my letters and his own to be posted from somewhere in Delhi. But our American escort told Habib not to try to communicate with anybody at the aerodrome until the British arrived and took charge of us. The captain was no longer the suave fellow-passenger and warden, but an officer doing an unpleasant duty. He had the door locked again and we were prisoners inside the plane. He walked off to contact the Red Fort. We fretted and fumed in the fuselage of the Dakota for nearly three hours before a British Major arrived in a military lorry to take us to the Red Fort.

From the plane we walked straight to the lorry a few yards away and got in and sat down in two rows on our bags. The British Major stood at the far end facing us, with his back to the road. He carried his loaded revolver on his belt. The attitude of Habib and myself towards this British Officer, the first I met after four years, visibly changed. A scowl came over our faces. He noticed it. He was a sport and so he made efforts to be cheerful and chummy. He even offered cigarettes from his case ; the Japanese, with their customary courtesy, accepted his offer ; Habib, who smoked only occasionally, declined it with a stiff "no, thank you," and I declined it also because I had stopped smoking the day after I got my attack of 'flu in Tokyo, a fortnight earlier.

I was more interested in devouring with my eyes all the scenes on the roads we passed through on the way from

the airport to whatever was our destination. I was seeing Delhi after nearly ten years; still I could pick some of the old landmarks; those avenues of neem trees looked somewhat familiar; but the big difference between 1936 and 1945 was the swarm of white men and women in khaki riding endless lines of bicycles with a bamboo basket on the handlebars. That reminded me rudely that the British, still ruling in Delhi and running their war with India's men and money, had brought American forces also into India. The result was that the capital of India looked to me more like a military cantonment.

I was lost in thought for a while, when Habib gave me a nudge and looked in the distance where I could see the red-stone ramparts of the *Lal-qilla* (Red Fort) where Netaji was to have held the victory parade after hoisting the Indian Tricolour atop the Fort—if all had gone well!

Thousands of my comrades had shed their blood on the Road to Delhi and to this Fort, more thousands had been maimed in their onward march towards this goal. But here I was, taking a ride in a British lorry, a prisoner of theirs for all practical purposes. My mind was in a state of confusion. I thought it was God's own irony that he should have given me this kind of entry into the Red Fort. As Minister of Publicity and Propaganda, I had believed with all my heart and all my soul that Netaji might perhaps work the miracle of driving the British out of Delhi, then plant the Tricolour atop the Viceroy's House and the Red Fort, and hold a victory parade inside the Fort.

By now, I was inside the Red Fort. Our lorry was taken from place to place; nobody seemed to know who should take charge of us. It was fast getting dark and cold as it was a late November (22nd) evening. At long last, we were got off the lorry and taken to some room where an Anglo-Indian NCO was seated. He received us warmly and tried to make us feel at home. He asked us whether we would care to have some tea. Habib and I were not so keen on the tea at that moment as on getting hold of some newspapers.

We told the officer we would take tea later but could we have some newspapers ?

"Oh, yes," he replied promptly, and added : "You will get at least one paper as soon as you are fixed up."

Saying this, he opened his left hand drawer to take out something. I could not help seeing the front page streamer headline in a newspaper that he had put away in the drawer. That headline came as a very pleasant surprise. It was on top of columns of detailed proceedings of the Court Martial. That meant that the hearing was not being held in camera. It was an open trial. Even then I did not know the names of the three officers who faced the Court Martial. I whispered something into Habib's ears and we decided to hold our souls in patience for a little while longer.

From that NCO's office room we were conducted some fifty feet to a wire-netting enclosure which I learnt later was called a "cage." The Gurkha guards, shouldering rifles with fixed bayonets, opened the heavy gate to let us in. At the first glance into the enclosure, I saw a row of tents at an interval of some ten or fifteen yards. We had hardly stepped into the "cage" when we were greeted with a hearty shout of *Jai Hind*. I was nearly taken aback with surprise. It was Lieutenant Param Guru, one of the thousands of those civilian youths in Malaya who had joined the Azad Hind Fauj out of patriotic fervour and kept up their spirits very high in all circumstances. Habib knew him very well but I had not met him before. Both Habib and I fired questions at him with the speed of a machine-gun. We wanted to have all the news there and then, just inside the gate and within earshot of the guards and the officer who had brought us to the cage. Meanwhile, Major-General Isoda, Chief of the Hikari Kikan (Japanese Liaison Office in East Asia), and Colonel Kagawa, the evil genius who was General Isoda's inseparable shadow in East Asia, also walked up to us from one of the tents and gave us a hearty *Jai Hind*.

Param conducted us to the tents he had prepared for Habib and myself. The British had placed him in charge

of the internal management of the cage. As we were walking along, he was breathlessly answering our volley of questions.

"Who are the officers now being tried? Who else have been brought to Delh.? Where are they? Have you got newspapers? Which papers have you got? Have you got the back numbers? Have you got them here right now? Why are the Japanese also in this cage? Do the people in India know that so many INA officers are being detained in the Red Fort? In a word, what is the country's reaction to what has so far been revealed about Netaji's armed fight? Do the people of India believe the report of his death in a plane crash?"

Those were only some of the questions we shot at poor Param.

He told us everything and showed us round the tent he had made ready for us with a couple of iron cots with bedding and blankets, a dressing table and other small amenities. Another small tent just behind the main one was to serve as our bath-room. The whole thing looked too good to be true. This was not the reception I had expected. I should not have been surprised if I had been rushed to a solitary cell and left there with plain bread and cold water.

We chased Param away to fetch all the newspapers and he returned with a whole pile of them, including back numbers of the *Hindustan Times*, *National Call* and the *Statesman*.

We gulped the tea that was brought to us by the canteen contractor's boy from the kitchen opposite the cage, and straightaway attacked the pile of newspapers. They carried pages and pages of report of the trial which had opened on 5th November and then adjourned for a few days. As I went on finishing one paper after the other, my excitement knew no bounds. The INA had literally burst on the country and the whole country from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin was aflame with an enthusiastic fervour, unprecedented in its history. I was so excited over the country's reaction that I developed a splitting headache but continued

to read the papers till nearly 1-0 a.m. After that, sleep was out of the question.

I recalled Netaji's instruction to me on the eve of Japan's surrender, to arrange with one or two persons in Malaya to secret away at least one complete set of all the publicity material put out in the two previous years; the idea was to have them smuggled into India where they could be brought to the notice of the leaders and the people. This procedure was meant to debunk all war-time propaganda of the British against Netaji and the INA and to give India a glimpse of the truth. When I recalled those words and when I saw the papers in front of me, I was sad beyond words that Netaji was not alive and not in Delhi, to see for himself how all India had gone mad over his miraculous feats in East Asia.

I heard from Param that a party of journalists had been officially conducted round the cages in the Red Fort a couple of days before to satisfy the insistent clamour of the people of India for reliable news of the treatment of the INA prisoners inside the Red Fort. My old friends and colleagues in Reuters and API, Ramachandran and Krishnamachariar (A. K. Iyengar) had specially told Param to tell me immediately on arrival in the Red Fort that my wife and children were quite well and that my old mother was as well as could be expected.

From the time we entered the cage we were being looked after by the canteen contractor who sent good food from the kitchen and told us that we should feel thoroughly at home and should not have a worry in the world. He had also caught the INA fever raging outside the Red Fort and throughout the country. So had his illiterate servant also. Param had already fixed up with this man to smuggle any letters that we wanted to post to our families. We handed to him the letters we had written in the plane which we had not been allowed to post so far. It was a point of honour with us that we would smuggle nothing else, but a line to the families in anguish was something different.

Habib and I discussed all the tons of news we had just finished reading, and we talked till the early hours of the morning. I do not remember when I fell asleep. Next morning (23rd November), we got up very early, finished bath and dressed in record time so as to go and stand outside our tent near the wire fencing on the off-chance of being able to see some of our other comrades who were in the other cages. They might be taken past our cage on the way to the enclosure where the defence lawyers, headed by Bhulabhai Desai, held office and sent for Shah Nawaz, Sahgal and Dhillon and any other INA personnel they wished to interview. And they did come one after another, under escort, of course, and our thunderous greetings of *Jai Hind* shouted across the wire fencing and the vast grounds, echoed and re-echoed throughout the Red Fort.

CHAPTER XI

UNTO HIM A WITNESS

EARLY that afternoon a couple of British Majors came to our tent and asked Habib a few questions. Then one of them turned to me and said : " Of course, you are a civilian, so we don't propose to detain you here any more, but you are to stay in Delhi to give evidence for the defence. If you care to, you may continue to stay here. Otherwise, you are at liberty to stay outside but you must be available whenever you are summoned to appear before the court-martial. You will be given definite information later."

I could hardly believe my ears. I feared some snag somewhere. Towards evening, the Brigadier Commanding the Jumna Area came to our tent and told me that Shri Bhulabhai Desai, the Defence Counsel, had arranged with Shri S. A. Sastri, my colleague in the Associated Press, to fetch me from the cage and take me to his place where I would be his guest until I gave evidence. When the Brigadier mentioned Shri Bhulabhai's name, I felt reassured that there could be nothing sinister or shady behind my totally unexpected release.

I learnt more about this release of mine later ; it seemed that my friend Ramachandran had been the prime mover in getting Shri Bhulabhai to ask Shah Nawaz, Sahgal and Dhillon whether they would like to get me also all the way from Japan to give evidence in their defence. All the three of them jumped at the idea with alacrity. So Mountbatten Headquarters (India) had to wireless MacArthur Headquarters (Japan) to send me by plane from Tokyo to Delhi as a defence witness.

I got ready to leave my cage should Sastri come. But he did not turn up. Some hitch had occurred somewhere.

Meanwhile, Habib was sorry I was going, so was I, but I cheered him up and said that he, too, would soon be out.

Next morning, Sastri came in his car and took me out of the cage. He explained that the previous evening somebody forgot to inform the guards of the orders for my release. From the cage, he drove me straight to the dormitory where the historic trial was actually going on at the moment. As I waited outside, came a crowd of my colleagues and journalist friends from the press room upstairs. We were mighty happy over this reunion after five long years. Ramaswami, Joachim Alva and A. S. Iyengar were the first to greet me here, then came Ramachandran.

Then we drove to Sastri's house and I relaxed myself physically and mentally for the first time.

Meanwhile, my wife and children in Madura (two thousand miles away) were being given hourly news of my arrival in Delhi, release, etc. My wife spoke to me on the long-distance phone late that night and when I heard her voice after five years of separation and anxiety, I could not adequately express my deep sense of gratitude to Almighty God.

When the excitement had somewhat subsided by the next morning, I remembered that I was very ill when I left Tokyo. I had not yet completely recovered even after reaching Delhi. General weakness and a touch of fever were bothering me. Good Samaritan Ramachandran got busy and put me in touch with all those who were actually engaged in the INA Defence Inquiry and Relief, prominent among them being Khurshedben Naoroji, Raghu Nandan Saran, Soli Batliwala and Vithalbhai Jhaveri.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was running between Delhi and Allahabad. I had told Khurshedben that I should be grateful if Panditji could spare me a few minutes next time he came to Delhi. I wished to talk to him about some confidential matters. When Panditji did come to Delhi the next time (on 1st December, 1945), I was down in bed with a chill. But when he heard about my wanting to go and

see him, he asked for me to be called at once to Hardinge Road (R. K. Nehru's residence) where he was staying. Then when he was told that I was ill, he sent word to say that he would look me up himself.

The prospect of the 'great man being pleased to come and see me acted as a tonic in my rundown condition ; but, in another sense, I was feeling a little uneasy in my conscience as I remembered the occasions on which Netaji and I had said some hard words about, and to, Panditji on the Radio, especially at the time of the Wavell talks in Simla. (Probably he had never heard them or even heard *about* them !) However, I encouraged myself by saying that like the good sport that he was, Panditji had forgotten all those unpleasant words in his true admiration for his valiant comrade, Subhas, and had now plunged himself headlong into the INA Defence work.

I was lying in bed ruminating, when someone came in and whispered that Panditji was coming up the stairs. I collected myself with effort, got out of the bed and slowly walked to the verandah and sat down on a chair ready to receive the distinguished caller. Panditji stepped in, closely followed by Khurshedben, Soli Batliwala and A. S. Iyengar. He was dressed in greyish woollen *achkan*, *chooridar* pyjamas, white cap and pathan *chappals*. I got up from my chair as if I was perfectly all right, stepped forward, bent down and touched Panditji's feet. He did not like that form of greeting ; he thought it was an extreme way of showing one's respect for another. (Later, Soli told me that Panditji never liked anybody touching his feet when greeting him). Anyway, I did it spontaneously. Panditji then sat down in front of me, and in his characteristic pose, chin rested in his cupped left hand, started smoking a cigarette. He was ready to listen.

I did not wish to take more of his precious time than absolutely necessary. So I gave him a broad outline of the position of the INA as I knew it two or three months before in Burma, Thailand, Malaya, Indo-China and Philippines,

and handed to him a small slip of paper in which I had jotted down the categories of all the Azad Hind Government, INA, Rani of Jhansi and IIL personnel scattered all over East Asia. I gave him all the first-hand and second-hand confidential information I had about Netaji, so that he might keep Gandhiji fully posted with news of Netaji and the INA. (At this stage, only Khurshedben and Soli were seated close to Panditji, and Iyengar was standing discreetly away in a corner of the verandah).

In that chit of mine which Panditji glanced through I had given my idea of what matters needed immediate attention and what could be tackled a little later. I had arranged the points in the order of what, in my view, were their priority. It read like this :

Repatriation
Relief
Rest
and
Resurgum.

He mumbled to himself something about resurgum ; it appeared that it did not quite meet with his approval.

But he listened very attentively to what I had to say about the heroic rank and file of the INA and remarked :

"These men must not be lost in the vast sea of Indian humanity when they reach India." There, the man of vision spoke.

Then he asked me : "Are you going back to the Associated Press of India ?"

"No, Sir, I am not," I replied promptly, as I had made up my mind on the point within a few minutes of my release from the cage in the Red Fort.

Panditji did not ask me what, then, I proposed to do. I was ready with my reply if he had asked me.

A few minutes later, Panditji left. I stood on the verandah and watched him drive off. The Delhi Congress Committee had placed a tiny car (Wolseley ten h.p. or so, I believe) at his disposal. The only striking feature of

the car was the brand new Congress flag which waved proudly from its bonnet. All that was symbolical of the then political situation. The Congress itself looked somewhat battered physically, but its prestige was very high.

The Congress in Delhi could not manage to get a better looking car in the capital of India for the man who became the first Prime Minister of Free India twenty months later !

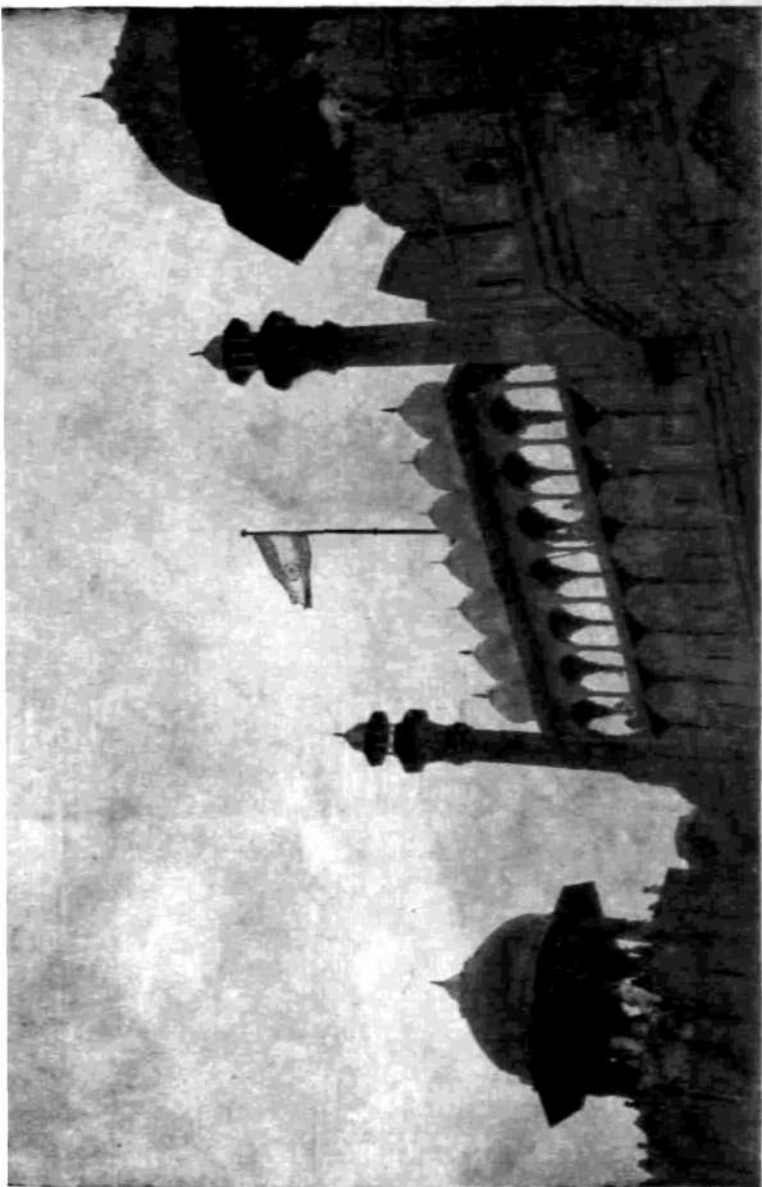
As soon as I was a little better, I was called to the Red Fort to meet the Defence lawyers. There I came into close personal contact with Shri Bhulabhai Desai. The man had thrown himself heart and soul into his work of vindicating the right of India to fight with arms against the British King.

Sitting there in a tent, surrounded by his lawyer colleagues and talking to each one of us, Shah Nawaz, Sahgal, Dhillon, Loganathan, myself and a few others whom he regularly sent for with a view to building up the defence in the light of all that we had to say, Bhulabhai looked a patriarch. All of us, INA personnel in the Red Fort, could not sufficiently thank him for bringing us together inside the Fort. I was the only INA man who came from outside, the others, including Habib, were still in detention in the various cages. I brought sweets and cigarettes for my comrades. The reunion with them brought tears to my eyes.

The most outstanding meeting for me inside the Red Fort was with General Mohan Singh. That was the first time I talked to him. I had seen him from a distance at the Bangkok Conference (June 1942). Then he went away to Singapore, formed the first INA (September), broke it up (December) and was arrested soon after. He was in detention till he was taken charge of by the British Military in August, 1945 and brought to Delhi later.

He had also heard about me.

So when we met for the first time in the Lawyers Enclosure in the Red Fort, we spontaneously embraced each other warmly and fell into animated conversation as if we had been very intimate friends for a long time.

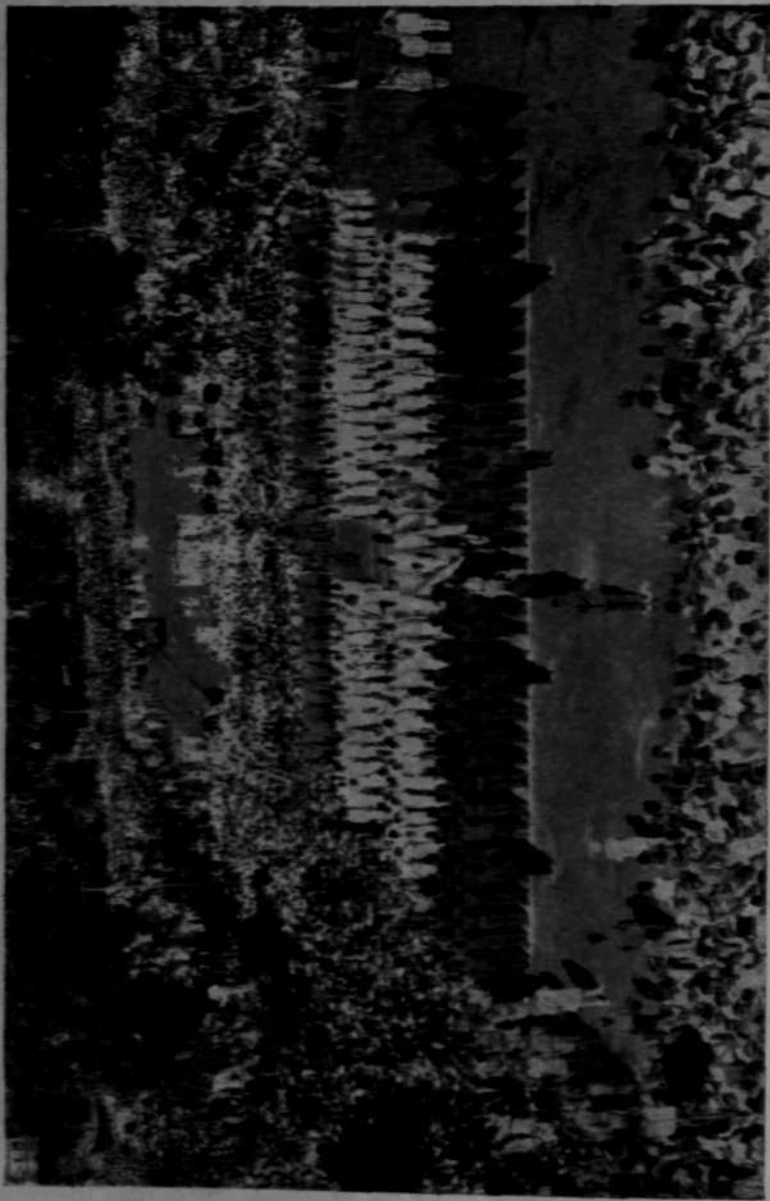


THE NATIONAL FLAG FLIES ON DELHI'S HISTORIC FORT

In one of the most impressive ceremonies connected with the declaration of Independence, the National Flag of Free India was hoisted over the turreted battlements of the historic Red Fort of Delhi on August 16th by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, while the old guard of the Indian National Army rallied to redeem an unfulfilled pledge. The Flag over the Fort.

(Photograph and caption issued by Government of India, 16th August, 1947.)





INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY'S RALLY AT RED FORT

After many historic vicissitudes and in a manner which could not be predicted, the old guard of the Indian National Army, which came into being when Indians from all parts of the far flung continent mustered in Singapore and Burma during World War II, rededem its pledge to hoist the National Flag over Delhi's historic Red Fort. This rally of 16th August, on the occasion when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru hoisted free India's Flag over the Fort was one of the most impressive ceremonies connected with the declaration of Independence. Men of the I.N.A. in uniform, a last row,

From the Bangkok days I had developed a deep admiration for Mohan Singh; a great deal of water has flowed under the bridge since then and since the Delhi trials; but my admiration for Mohan Singh is undiminished. There is something in his eyes that fascinates me even now. I have heard so much against him from many people, including some highups in the INA itself and in the present Government of the Republic of India. I am afraid they have not understood the man. I know he is over-bearing, aggressive and ambitious, in a manner of speaking, but those are only the outer crusts of the man. Beneath that surface there is a polish that is never dulled; he is even now too young for the greatness he achieved nearly ten years ago. He is born to lead men on the battlefield; he should not have been compelled to enter the political arena in India.

His is a restless soul; if he is not in the army, he must be in politics. After all, he is new to India's politics. He cannot be ignored wherever he may be. He is a dictator and a fanatical leader (not communal but national).

Partition and the tragedy that followed have clouded his vision somewhat, but he will get over that very soon. At this moment, Shah Nawaz and Mohan Singh are poles apart; I am told that they are not even on speaking terms—a thousand pities. I am sorry for India.

If ever these two men forget the past and join hands—as I fervently wish they would for India's sake—then they can achieve for India things that are undreamt of.

They are both so brave and so pure in their love for India, and they can move millions by their transparent sincerity and stir the people to the very depths of their being.

We have not heard the last of Mohan Singh by any chance.

I met many of my other comrades who were being brought in one after another from East Asia, Major-General Bhonsle, Dinanath, Major-General Kiani, Colonel Aziz Ahmed, Colonel Rawat and a number of others.

I kept myself pretty busy elsewhere when I did not have to go to the Red Fort.

Many of my old friends called to see me at Sastri's place—my API colleagues A. R. Swami and Govindan Nair and Sardar Ganga Singh (Rangoon) who pressed me to tell him what I needed and eventually thrust a cheque for rupees fifty into my hand which I turned over to the INA Relief Committee, Durga Das (Joint Editor, *Hindustan Times*, who, five months later, offered me the Bombay Correspondentship of the *Hindustan Times* which I readily accepted).

I had landed in Delhi with no money except four one hundred-yen notes the value of which in Delhi was just a zero. I handed them to A. R. Swami as mementos of my East Asia exile, and when he took me in a *tonga* to Shri Asaf Ali's house, he paid the fare and gave me a loan of one rupee and eight annas for the return fare, and left.

Soon after leaving me on the 1st December, Panditji was considerate enough to send word through Soli Batliwala enquiring whether I needed any money or clothes and asking me not to feel shy about it. I expressed my sincere thanks and said I needed nothing. I had the necessary clothing. All I needed was a little cash for moving about. I whispered a word to Krishnamachari who quietly brought me a one hundred-rupee note as a temporary loan which I returned as soon as my wife reached Delhi. Apart from Sastri my first host in Delhi was Raghu Nandan Saran, the life and soul of the Defence Committee, ably helped by Khurshedben, Soli Batliwala, Vithalbhaji Jhaveri and Shri Jugal Khanna.

Vithalbhaji came and fetched me to Saranji's place and I thoroughly enjoyed my first "outing"—the talk and the tea with plenty of good things to eat. I thoroughly relished the Delhi delicacies after so many years.

On the one hand I was impatient to appear before the Court Martial to give evidence, and on the other I was more impatient to know how soon my wife could manage to be in Delhi.

I was meeting Shri Bhulabhai Desai, Justice Achru Ram, Sahgal's father, Dr. Kailasnath Katju and Rai Bahadur Badri Das almost daily in connection with my evidence. They asked me bluntly what special events I could testify to at first-hand. I told them I could testify to the Proclamation of the Provisional Government, the oath of allegiance of Indians in East Asia to that Government, the recognition of that Government by nine world Powers, the wholly voluntary nature of recruitment to the INA, the enthusiastic collection of funds for Netaji's war chest and the absolute independence that Netaji consistently maintained in his relations with the Japanese Government. They thought that such evidence, given from personal knowledge, would be quite useful in establishing the absolute independence of the INA.

I confess that I was rather selfish at that time. There was some talk in the Defence circles that as the prosecution itself had proved the Defence case so well in advance, the Defence might produce only very few of its witnesses. But I could not brook the possibility of being denied, on some technical legal ground or the other, an opportunity of going before the Court Martial and speaking about Netaji.

I told Justice Achru Ram frankly that in no circumstances whatsoever should I be dropped from the list, even if the others were omitted. He was very sympathetic and assured me that I was one of the most important witnesses for the Defence and I would go into the witness box.

Meanwhile, I had a highly emotional interlude. My wife was coming up to Delhi to join me as there was no knowing how long I would have to wait in Delhi to give evidence. She had to undertake a two thousand-mile rail journey with two changes *en route* from Madura to Delhi. That took a full week.

She got down from the Frontier Mail at the New Delhi Railway Station at 7-30 p.m., on 8th December, holding my youngest boy whom I left five years before, when he was nearing his first birthday, and followed by my brother-in-

law, who was escorting her. I looked at my wife and looked at the little fellow nearly reaching up to her waist, and stood lost for a second. My wife made no fuss on that busy platform. In a matter of fact tone, she merely brought me back to earth by asking: "This is our Vatsal, don't you see?"

I was thinking of my dear Chandran who looked exactly like this fellow on the railway platform when I left the former in Madura five years back. Vatsal ran up to me and got hold of my hand and never left it for hours afterwards. He prattled away night and day of all that had happened in the few preceding months. He gave me a graphic report of all he had heard about the last tragic flight of Netaji from Saigon, how a report came through that I was also in the same plane or in the next. He specially referred to "another person" with Netaji, and guessed it must have been myself.

Just for fun I asked him: "Supposing that 'another person' with Netaji in the plane had been myself, what then?"

"Oh, I would have lost my father," he replied and brought tears to my eyes.

I stayed in good old Sastri's house for a fortnight before my wife and son joined me and for eight days after that. We could not be sufficiently grateful to Mrs. Sastri for the way she looked after us and made us feel at home. Even today whenever I visit Delhi I go to 10, Narendra Place, as a pilgrim goes to a temple—our first home after the reunion of my wife and myself. We spent a great deal of our time chatting on that verandah of Sastri's house; it has the pleasantest memories for us.

The British were still the rulers of India and Delhi was still their citadel, though the rumblings of the coming political earthquake were unmistakable. So, they were fighting a last ditch battle in those months.

No wonder, then, they had let loose their C.I.D. sleuths all over Delhi to keep track of all INA personnel.

One of the sleuths, a mere constable in a red fez, white shirt, dark woollen jacket, and loose trousers, had been

detailed to shadow me. He came punctually at seven every morning on a bicycle, laid it on the grass across the footpath and squatted near it facing Sastri's flat on the first floor. I usually spent most of my time on the verandah. So, even if the plain-clothes man lost sight of me sometimes, I never lost sight of him! Sastri would always have something amusing to say about the poor fellow sitting there all the time. The man followed me wherever I went walking or in a *tonga*. But if I left in a car or a taxi, he never tried to follow me, because he could not. One day I had left in a taxi, and he was sure I would return by the same taxi and he stuck to the same spot. I did return by the same taxi but dismissed it a few blocks away, walked nonchalantly up to Narendra Place and dropped in on A. S. Iyengar at the extreme end, instead of walking to Sastri's staircase. From Iyengar's flat I could see my dear faithful plainclothes man who was still waiting for the taxi to come so that he could quietly question the driver and find out where I had been. After an hour or so, I left Iyengar's place and walked over to Sastri's flat and stood there on the verandah for the policeman to see. I could see easily the confusion in his face.

I must give the man full marks for the conscientious way he was doing his duty. He questioned every visitor to Sastri's flat and asked him whether he had been there to see me. The first thing I used to do was to point out the policeman to my visitors and caution them to be prepared for his questioning when they went out after seeing me. One of my API colleagues, a quietly humorous type, regaled me with the story of his encounter with the policeman the previous day.

It seems the policeman asked him: "Have you been to Mr. Sastri's house?"

"Yes."

"Did you go there to see Mr. Ayer?"

"No, who is Mr. Ayer, anyway?"

"Don't you know? He is the INA man, sitting there, see, on that verandah now?"

"Oh, he is the INA man, is he? That's interesting! But I had been to see Mr. Sastri." (By the way Sastri was out at that time. But the policeman never bothered when Sastri went out or returned home. So there was always a lacuna).

The Big Day arrived at last—11th December. I was to go into the witness box. I did not feel half as brave when the hour arrived, as I had felt till that morning. I offered a silent prayer to God to help me in the witness box at the Court Martial so that I might not let down my comrades in the dock or Netaji.

What I and the other witnesses said in the court can be seen from Moti Ram's publication *Two Historic Trials In The Red Fort*, which is so far the most authentic and comprehensive report of the INA trial. Elsewhere will be found extracts from the official record of my evidence. A big burden was off my chest.

I left Delhi five days later (16th December, 1945), with my wife and son and passed through Bombay where I made it a point to ring up the residence of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and ask for a few minutes of his time. I used to occasionally bother him as a member of Reuter-API for news, until I left for Bangkok in November, 1940. He remembered me and asked me to come over and see him the same evening at 68, Marine Drive. Dahyabhai, his son, gave me the message on the 'phone. I duly arrived at the fourth floor of Hem Prabha at the appointed time, and was shown into the drawing-room where I waited. The Sardar walked in, and on seeing me his first words were: "Well, you've made history!" He meant, of course, that Netaji had made history. I was overjoyed to hear that from the lips of the most inveterate opponent of Netaji in the Right Wing of the Congress. It was very generous and sporting of the Sardar to have uttered those words with spontaneity. I stood up as he walked towards me, and I bent down and touched his feet. He raised me by the shoulders and made one sit down by his side on the

sofa. In typical Sardar style, he came straight to the point. He asked : " Well, what do you propose to do now ? "

I said : " Sardarji, I wish to do two things. I must do some work on the INA Enquiry and Relief Committee and at the same time do some professional work to earn my daily bread. I am a poor man and I have a large family to support. Of course, I am not going back to Reuters whom I have served for about twenty-seven years, though I must say, in fairness to them, that they are pressing me to come back. I must look out for some other job."

" All right. When are you going south and how long will you be away ? Keep in touch with me from time to time."

I gave him a suitable reply and took my leave.

Arriving in Madura *via* Madras in the third week of December I spent about two and a half months in those parts after running up to see my old mother in the townlet of Etaiyapuram, famous as the birth-place of the great poet of Tamil Renaissance, Subramania Bharathi (my paternal uncle twice removed).

Meanwhile, I had received word from the Sardar that he would like me to join the INA Enquiry and Relief Committee Office to do some honorary work, as early as possible.

TELLING BAPU ABOUT NETAJI

I was very keen on paying my personal respects to Gandhiji and telling him all I knew about Netaji's last 'plane journey. The question whether Netaji was alive or not was still troubling Gandhiji and he was being asked questions wherever he went. Khurshedben Naoroji, granddaughter of Dadabhoy Naoroji, fixed up an interview with Mahatmaji for me at the Nature Cure Clinic, Poona, where I arrived towards the end of March. I was accommodated as a paying guest in the Clinic and waited practically the whole day to be called to Mahatmaji's room. He was busy talking to the delegation led by his eldest son, Manilal Gandhi, from South Africa, and advising them what to

do next. About 5-0 p.m. I was called in and I went and sat very near him on the mattress. We talked in Hindustani throughout and the interview lasted an hour and a quarter. He plied me with questions about the Indian National Army, the kind of food it was given, whether meat was also included in the rations, etc., etc. He asked me about Netaji's 'plane crash. I gave him a full and unvarnished version as I had heard it from Habib, and also told him something confidential to satisfy him that I had every reason to believe what Habib had to say. He also seemed to think that Habib was speaking the truth. During the talk, he finished his sparse meal. I told him that I was on my way to Delhi to work in the office of the INA Enquiry and Relief Committee. He gave me his blessings. At the end of the interview he invited me to join him in the daily evening's prayer for which a crowd had gathered outside the compound wall. I gratefully accepted the invitation.

In the next issue of the *Harijan*, Gandhiji wrote that after his talk with me, he was regretfully confirmed in his belief that Netaji was no more.

I believe that it would be but becoming of me to acknowledge my special debt of gratitude to my father-in-law, Shri Venkatramier, for the way he moved heaven and earth all those four years—December, 1941 to November, 1945—to get some reliable news of me. After Japan's surrender he ran up to Delhi, inspite of ill-health, to get me out of Japan and back to India. Once I was back on Indian soil, his pent-up feelings burst out and he had a nervous breakdown which has left its permanent effects on his health.

But, the bravest woman in the world for me is my wife; she looked after herself and my daughter and five sons, and directed all "operations" concerning cable, telegraphic, postal and personal enquiries about me, apart from listening-in to all the radio stations for news of the progress of the World War in Europe and East Asia.

When she joined me in Delhi on the 8th December, all she said, by way of complaint, was that I might have given

her a message or two over the Singapore Radio about my welfare. This was a rather complicated matter for me to explain to her satisfaction, without going over a great deal of ground.

She knew that as Minister of Publicity and Propaganda of the Provisional Government, the Radio Stations were in my charge and the Singapore and Saigon Radios were putting out messages from Indians in East Asia to their families in India night after night. Why then did I not put out even a single message? A very reasonable question and legitimate grievance on the face of it.

But my conscience came in my way. In the Red Cross cable or two that I had sent her when I was in Bangkok I concluded my message by saying: "praying for early re-union." But, after taking the solemn oath of allegiance to India and to Netaji, promising to lay down my life in the fight for independence, how could I truthfully say to my wife, as before, that I was "praying for early re-union?" The truth is that I was *not* praying for early re-union. And I did not wish to send a message without that ending.

I did not wish to be a hypocrite either to Netaji or to my wife. Netaji had told us that not one of us had a right to hope even secretly that he would live to reach India after the War. It was a matter of life and death for India. And I, as Minister of Publicity and Propaganda, had been shouting these exhortations and sentiments from housetops and wireless masts in East Asia! If I had not been Propaganda Minister and if I had not believed in those sentiments so deeply, perhaps I might have sent her more than one message.

My friend and colleague, Sivaram, also did not send even a single message, although we two, discharged, among others, the duties of the Director and Deputy Director respectively of the Singapore Radio Station of the Azad Hind Government.

After spending a day or two in Bombay, I flew to Delhi and attended a meeting of the All-India INA Enquiry and Relief Committee under the chairmanship of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The meeting was held on 2nd April at Birla House where Sardar Patel was staying. Among members of the Committee present were Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Shri Sarat Bose, Shri Sri Prakasa, Shri Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and Acharya Kripalani. One could see with half an eye that although the cause of the INA had brought Panditji and Sarat Babu together on the committee, the gulf between them was unbridged. I was told that some time after his release from internment in Ootacamund as a State prisoner in August, 1945, Sarat Babu indirectly attacked Panditji in a public statement as one of the "international chatter-boxes." Sarat Babu loved his brother Subhas more dearly than he loved any one else on earth. He literally doted over "my Subhas"; therefore, he resented any personal criticism or attack levelled against his younger brother by anyone, however highplaced the latter may be, in Government or public life. It would seem that Sarat Babu could not stomach Panditji's reported statement of 1942 that even if Subhas marched into India at the head of the Japanese army he (Panditji) would fight him. Sarat Babu could not tolerate this attack on Netaji, which he thought was ill-informed, irresponsible, unfair and totally unwarranted. What had happened in India between 1942 (when the British started the scare of Japanese "invasion of India") and 1945 (when the revelations about the INA thoroughly vindicated Netaji and thrilled the country to the core), merely served to accentuate Sarat Babu's bitterness over the harsh judgment that was sought to be passed on Netaji.

The atmosphere at the Relief Committee meeting was, therefore, strained. Panditji and Sarat Babu hardly greeted each other or even looked at each other during the entire proceedings. That was rather unfortunate for the INA; because Sardar, although Chairman, never took any important

decision without consulting and obtaining the prior approval of Panditji. Sarat Babu was rendering yeoman service as chairman of the Provincial Committee in Bengal. The estrangement between two such very important members of the Central Committee as Panditji and Sarat Babu left its unfortunate mark on all that the committee tried to do.

At this meeting I was appointed Honorary Joint Secretary of the Central Committee with Colonel P. K. Sahgal (of Red Fort Trial fame).

Nearly all the senior officers of the INA were still in detention, mostly in the Kabul lines where they were visited one day by Mahatmaji.

As one of the Joint Secretaries of the Relief Committee I had the privilege and duty of visiting all my comrades inside the Kabul Lines and other detention camps and in the military hospital in Delhi once a week.

Then, almost daily, the authorities began releasing the officers until practically all of them were out. The men had been released earlier in big batches from various stations in India. Their classification fell into three categories, namely, white, grey and black; virtually none of the INA were classified as white except those very few, who had double-crossed Netaji; the grey were those who, according to the British, had joined the INA because of the influence of others; black were those members of the INA who had thrown themselves heart and soul into the INA and actively fought against the British.

The two months I spent in Delhi as Honorary Joint Secretary of the Central Relief Committee were most sacred to me and also most poignant. I had to listen to relations, friends or messengers from distant places like Calcutta, Madras and Karachi making enquiries for even the slenderest clue to the fate of young civilians or officers. An ailing father, a wailing mother or a tragic wife was praying to God night and day and at the same time sending messengers to the remotest corners of the country enquiring about some INA officer or man.

One such case was that of Manilal Doshi. He had gone to Japan in 1941, a few days after his marriage, and he had left his bride behind in India. Four years later, after the war was over, his family got news that Manilal was still in Rangoon; he had deliberately chosen to stay on there to run a newspaper for the INA men left in Rangoon. The British, meanwhile, returned to Burma and reinstalled Sir Reginald Dorman Smith as Governor. The Governor one day held a press conference which Doshi also attended as a newspaper editor. And the victorious Sir Reginald got a rude shock. He was pompously holding forth on the need for Indians in Burma to be prepared to work even as sweepers. Doshi jumped to his feet and said: "Your Excellency, what about yourself and your countrymen in Burma setting a good example to us Indians in this matter of sweeping the streets here in Rangoon?" That hurt the Governor to the quick, and poor Doshi was persecuted.

Charges were trumped up against him by the myrmidons of the law; one of the charges would have made even the cat laugh. Doshi was accused of using force and extorting money from an elderly Indian gentleman in the course of collecting funds for the Independence Movement. Doshi is known to have a sharp tongue and a defiant spirit; but he has no reputation for violence or extortion! So, we in Delhi had a hearty laugh when we heard of the charges on which the powers-that-be in Burma at the time were determined to teach him a lesson. Doshi was completely indifferent; not so the INA Enquiry Committee nor his family. Sarat Babu flew to Burma and pointed out to topmen among the Burmese the folly of this British persecution of Indian patriots on Burmese soil. Meanwhile, Khurshed Nariman, the Congress hero of Bombay, flew to Rangoon in spite of indifferent health, and set about preparing Doshi's defence. But there was no need.

Doshi and many others like him were released in due course without a trial.

India expressed her appreciation of this graceful gesture of intervention on the part of men like General Aung San and Thakin Nu.

Meanwhile, by the end of May, 1945, the British authorities in Delhi realised the folly and futility of any more court-martials of INA officers after the stunning anti-British demonstrations following the release of Shah Nawaz, Sahgal and Dhillon. Almost all the INA officers had been released from the Red Fort and Kabul Lines, and all the projected trials had also been abandoned.

A big responsibility was off my shoulders ; my immediate objective in making the pilgrimage to Delhi and working at 82, Daryagunj (INA Office), had been attained. All the INA personnel were free and had actually reached their respective homes in distant corners of India. Colonel Arshad was good enough to offer to relieve me, and I gladly accepted the offer of my old friend and ex-colleague of Reuter-API, Durga Das, Joint Editor, *Hindustan Times*. He wanted me to work as his full-time correspondent in Bombay, my home since 1916.

After a month's sojourn in the South, I came to Bombay and tried to settle down as a Special Correspondent. Almost the first important event I had to cover was the AICC meeting held at the Cowasji Jehangir Hall in July, 1946.

Meanwhile, the Muslim League leader, Quaid-e-Azam Mohomed Ali Jinnah, was carrying on a fanatical crusade for Pakistan ; a frenzied meeting of the League at the Kaiserbaug, Umerkhadi, in the heart of Bombay's Muslim quarter, set me thinking furiously. Of the sixty odd correspondents who reported the League Session I was the only man in *dhoti*. All the delegates and spectators being Muslims, I was the solitary figure in *dhoti* and *kurta* in the whole hall which reverberated to the shouts of Muslim Leaguers. I was feeling awkward in my conspicuous physical isolation because of my dress.

I attended a press conference called at the Quaid-e-Azam's house on Mount Pleasant Road. The Quaid-e-Azam

spoke with the authority of a prophet and was irritable at the slightest sign of doubt of the ultimate outcome. As I sat in one of the backrows and listened to his expounding the inevitability of the creation of Pakistan, I could not help recalling the scene in the drawing-room of the house of Netaji in Singapore in that very month (July) but three years earlier, soon after he took over the presidency of the Indian Independence League. He was no less emphatic at that time that partition would prove disastrous to India in the long run.

The Quaid-e-Azam held a long stout cigar in the unsteady, nervous fingers of his right hand. He lighted it and pulled a puff or two; the light went out; he then went on striking match after match in between answers to the newsmen seated around him till he finished more than half a matchbox. The cigar remained unlit and unsmoked till the end of the hour-and-quarter press conference. That cigar symbolised for him the events that were to follow.... Partition, Pakistan, and an intense desire to live and serve the State he had fought to create, death and the wish unfulfilled . . . like the cigar held between fingers or between teeth for over an hour but unlit and unsmoked.

I had hardly worked for the *Hindustan Times* for a month (July 1946) when Bala Saheb (B. G.) Kher, Chief Minister, sent word through Morarji Desai, Home Minister, enquiring whether I would join the Government of Bombay as Director of Information. I had been receiving hints from Sardar Patel's confidants since April, 1946 (when the Kher Ministry took up office) that something like this might come my way; but nothing turned up; so I had accepted the *Hindustan Times* commission, come down to Bombay and forgot all about the Secretariat.

In the course of my work as *Hindustan Times* correspondent I took a trip to Poona to interview the Ministers for a series of articles on their nation-building plans for the future. I carried a letter from Sardar Patel which got me a most cordial reception from Bala Saheb Kher. . . . I still

vividly remember that interview with him ; when we had finished discussing his portfolio, we smoothly digressed to an absorbing talk on the higher values of life. I felt that the premiership of Bombay was a burden that Bala Saheb would cheerfully shoulder as long as necessary, but would lay down the moment God would let him go back to his philosophy.

One other memorable interview was, of course, with Morarji Desai. I had never seen him before ; I had hardly heard about him ; but the interview was characteristic of the austere man. He had called me at 7-30 a.m. (too early in the morning for *me*, but pretty late in the day for him). The way he expounded his conception of the duties of the police was very impressive because there was an authority, directness and finality about the measured few words he uttered. I was slow to size him up ; he puzzled me a little ; he asked me to come again the next morning, but at 7-30 again ; I tried to hint that that was rather an uncomfortably early hour. With his typical bluntness he said that I must be a lazy man to say so. To be up and dressed at his doorstep a mile away from my hotel in the chill rainy morning of Poona at 7-30 should be such an easy matter for me according to him. "I am up at 5-0 and by 7-30 I finish reading piles of office papers," he said.

My complacency was shaken ; however, I promised to call on him at 7-30 a.m. the next day. I did.

To return to Bala Saheb's invitation to me to join his Government as Director of Information. I promptly accepted the offer and told Mr. Desai that I looked upon the offer as the fulfilment of my ambition to serve the People's Government on Indian soil in some capacity or other, as I had already done outside India.

I took over as Director of Information at about 9-0 a.m. on Sunday the 1st of September, 1946.

My post-war baptism of fire on Indian soil came within six or seven hours.

That very afternoon bloody, riots broke out over a wide area around the Round Temple in Bombay ; the city was plunged into gloom and panic before sunset.

Government was in Poona ; the Secretariat was closed.

I dropped in at the office of the PTI and converted one of their rooms into my office, put through trunk telephone calls to the Home Minister (Shri Morarji Desai), ran up to the Police Commissioner and put out a series of bulletins. I went to bed at 4-0 a.m.—twelve hours of non-stop news-collecting and news-giving.

PART II

CHAPTER I

DAWN OF FREEDOM—BEHIND THE SCENES

THE 4th of July 1943: a historic day for Indians in East Asia, for Subhas Chandra Bose, and in India's struggle for Independence.

On this day, at the cinema theatre in the famous Cathay Building of Singapore, Rash Behari Bose, the veteran Indian revolutionary, handed over, and Subhas Chandra Bose accepted the Presidentship of the Indian Independence League in East Asia. With this, Subhas took over the leadership of the three million Indians in East Asia and the Supreme Command of the Indian National Army.

Addressing the five thousand Indians assembled in the hall, Subhas created a sensation by his announcement that he was thinking of establishing a provisional Government of Free India to lead the Indian National Army to battle against the British forces on Indian soil.

I have no first hand knowledge of any previous understanding that Netaji might have had with the Japanese Premier Tojo on this all-important question of forming a Provisional Government of Azad Hind. How delicate and full of difficulties this question was to the Japanese, I shall try to indicate briefly. From the Japanese point of view this question raised a number of political, military and diplomatic issues in the midst of a world war in which they were waging, at that moment, a life and death battle. The moment a Provisional Government of Free India was established, the Imperial Government of Japan was bound to:

1. Recognise the Provisional Government of Azad Hind as such;

2. Use its good offices to induce its allies, Germany, Italy, Croatia, Burma, Thailand, China, Philippines and Manchukuo to accord similar recognition ;

3. Extend to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind in its day to day intercourse all the facilities and diplomatic privileges due to an independent nation ; and,

4. Treat the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, its nationals in East Asia, and the INA on a footing of perfect equality on all matters, except where the Provisional Government of Azad Hind itself voluntarily waived certain rights for the duration.

For instance, the Japanese Emperor must receive Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose with all the honours due to the Head of an Independent State. The tallest among the Japanese Civilians, Military, Naval or Air Officers including Premier, War Minister, and Commanders-in-Chief, would be accorded only reciprocal courtesies by Netaji.

Even in wholly-Japanese-occupied War Zones, Indian nationals would be subject only to the jurisdiction of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and the Japanese civilian or military law would not apply to Indians. In other words, the Provisional Government of Azad Hind would enjoy extra-territorial rights like any other world power in foreign territory.

I believe I have said enough to show that the projected formation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind raised a number of political and military issues for the Japanese Government. I have no doubt that Netaji had told Tojo, soon after he reached Tokyo from Berlin in June, 1943, of his intention to form a Provisional Government and he must have received a general assurance of support from him.

But then the Japanese are a very peculiar race. Nobody knew, and the Japanese themselves did not probably know, who shaped their Government's policy and who had the final veto.

Normally you would imagine that once the Premier had been informed and had given his Government's assurance of support, there would have been no insuperable difficulty in the way of Netaji going ahead with the formation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. But no, not so, with the Japanese, anyway.

First of all, the chief and the officials of the Japanese Liaison office, known as the Hikari Kikan (literally, Light Office, that is, an office that radiated light), who were present at the Cathay, were taken by surprise at Netaji's announcement; at any rate, they seemed so. They went red, white, and blue in the face when they heard the announcement. They said that as a matter of courtesy Netaji ought to have given a previous hint to Tokyo before making such an important declaration of policy which affected the Japanese Government also. When it was pointed out to them that most likely Netaji had already told Tokyo about it, the Kikan officers shifted their ground and bitterly complained that he had not told them (Kikan) even a word beforehand. And, how could they possibly function as a useful liaison office unless Netaji showed them this little courtesy?

So, anger and confusion prevailed in the Kikan over the Provisional Government of Azad Hind issue. Although Tokyo was in favour of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind in principle and wished to discuss the details affecting Japan, the Kikan in Singapore proved a very hostile and unsympathetic middleman. The moment this petty, peevish attitude of the men dressed in brief authority in the Kikan came to Netaji's notice, he decided to tell them less and less and to treat them, as far as possible, as a mere post office. The Kikan had the power for mischief as the sole channel of communication between Netaji and Tojo. But then they were also afraid of blows to their prestige if Tokyo found out that Netaji had no respect for the Kikan, and would tell them nothing of consequence, except for communication to Tojo. Netaji completely ignored the unfavourable attitude of the Kikan and asked Tojo to send a responsible officer to

Singapore for final talks on the Provisional Government of Azad Hind.

An officer eventually arrived. He was only a Colonel of the Japanese Army. But among the Japanese, a Colonel of their Army is a mighty man, particularly if he is a staff officer of the Dai-hon-yei (Imperial Headquarters for the Army, Navy and Air Force). He brought some message from Tojo which he communicated through the Chief of the Hikari Kikan, Colonel Yamamoto. The highest among the Japanese are sometimes very hard bargainers. They hummed and hawed a lot about some of Netaji's demands concerning the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. These talks went on for a week in the course of which they were nearly broken off once or twice because of the firm stand that Netaji took on essentials.

I cannot claim firsthand knowledge of these negotiations, but fairly reliable gossip gave me some idea of the trend of the conversations. The Japanese were not very keen on the Provisional Government of Azad Hind being a full-fledged Government, expecting recognition by the Axis and their allies, with regular Ministries formulating policies and having them executed through the administrative machinery of the Indian Independence League. The Japanese were so pre-occupied with the execution of the war and giving aid to the IIL and the INA that they did not want to be bothered by a new set of problems that would be presented by a *pukka* Provisional Government of Azad Hind. But then, Netaji was nothing, if not thorough. Ultimately, the Japanese had to give way.

Having done so, they hoped that Netaji would keep them posted with his intentions at each stage. For instance, they hoped to be told in advance how many Ministers would be appointed, what portfolios they would hold, who would be these Ministers, how many of them would be civilians and how many would be chosen from among the officers of the INA, what line would the proclamation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind take, etc. But, to their utter

disappointment, Netaji told them nothing about these aspects till the very last moment.

At that time, I too wondered why. I even felt that nothing would have been lost by Netaji telling them what he had decided regarding the various aspects of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. It would have meant nothing more than ordinary courtesy from one ally to another. I then understood that Netaji would have gladly kept them posted if only the Kikan officers had not been so very inquisitive; their inquisitiveness and insistent tone irritated him and he was bent on keeping everything secret from the Kikan as long as possible.

The Kikan officials were daily snooping around the IIL Headquarters in the hope of picking up scraps of gossip about the proposed Provisional Government of Azad Hind.

Only three days before the historic day of 21st October, 1943, Netaji sent for a Senior officer of the Kikan and told him confidentially that he intended to proclaim the formation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind on the 21st, and follow up the proclamation with a statement in his own name, and a broadcast over the radio the same night. I knew nothing about this; Netaji did not tell me anything although I had been meeting him almost every night at about eleven p.m. for a general talk on the day's news from India and abroad. The Japanese officer, however, came to me and told me about Netaji's plans and asked me to find out how soon the proclamation and statement would be available to the Japanese radio stations and the Tokyo press. I went to Netaji's Bungalow the same evening (18th October) and in a matter of fact tone, told him what I had heard from the Japanese officer and of his enquiry.

Netaji then looked at me with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes and said :

"So, he has told you, eh? I told him it was confidential for the time being and I have kept my side of the bargain. Now I shall tell you all about it."

Then he gave me details about his programme for the 21st, and asked me to come again the next evening and help him with some typing. "I haven't written a word yet; I have not even given it a moment's thought. We must get down to it tomorrow."

I went to the Bungalow the next evening. He had called eleven others, too, to meet him at intervals of a few minutes that evening. I did not know about it at that time.

Soon after I reached the Bungalow at about six p.m. I was shown upstairs, and in a few minutes I found myself sitting with him on the rear verandah overlooking the lawn and the sea, and engaged in serious conversation.

The talk hinged round the imminent proclamation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind.

Here I must interrupt the narrative for a brief while to recall one or two earlier occasions on which he had spoken to me on this subject. On the first occasion, he quoted the historical precedent of the Irish Proclamation and hinted that he might well follow that shining example. Even in the midst of such a serious talk at a late hour in the night, the man's sense of humour was irrepressible. "Of course, all those who sign our proclamation as Ministers of the Provisional Government must also be prepared to be shot even as the men who signed the Irish proclamation were shot by the British."

Saying this, Netaji laughed outright.

A few nights later also, when he had returned from a tiring tour up to Penang and back, and was just resting his weary limbs on the rear verandah, he sent for me about midnight and settled down to a leisurely chat. The talk eventually came round to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind.

I here set down our conversation on both occasions:

"Sir, in my view, it would not perhaps be advisable for you to appoint a number of Ministers in the Provisional Government of Azad Hind."

"Why not?"

"The main reason is that you do not have in the movement now men of the right calibre to rank as your colleagues in the ministry."

"Supposing you are right, what is to be done then? How can we have a Provisional Government without Ministers?"

"Sir, there is a way out of that difficulty. I suggest that you announce yourself as both Premier and Minister for the most important war-time portfolios like, say, War, Foreign Affairs, etc. Nobody could criticise that, because precedents can be found for such a procedure. Then, as for the remaining Departments you can announce the names of men who will be secretaries of those Departments, working *directly under you as we are doing now.* It might sound a little unorthodox, but it is quite practicable, and will, I think, do equally well."

"I am afraid you are entirely wrong there, Ayer. If I took over so many portfolios myself, it is bound to be criticised as a form of dictatorship, and the criticism would be well justified. As for the other Ministers, why, in the Irish Provisional Government also, there were unknown men when their names were first announced to the world. They had to prove their mettle. This will be the case with us also. I must make the best of the material available here. So, I am going to have Ministers."

That was a hint to me that, as far as he was concerned, he had said the last word, and was not in a mood just then to argue further.

To resume my narrative of what happened on the verandah of the Bungalow on the evening of 19th October, 1943: Netaji said that we should have an early dinner that night. He had to see a few callers in between, and then we should get down to the proclamation seriously and without interruption. He added:

"I must also finally work out the composition of the Ministry. Of course, you will be in it." This he said in an undertone and casually. I believe I merely acknowledged

it by rising an inch in my seat and mumbling: "Thank you, Sir."

But then, I returned to the attack, this time more intensely than on the previous occasions, because in less than forty-eight hours he was to make the momentous announcement.

"Sir, about the appointment of Ministers, is it too late for you to change your mind? Have you given your serious consideration to the alternative I mentioned? Are you still of the view that it wouldn't work? You will, I hope, excuse me for referring to it once again like this. My only excuse is that I feel rather strongly on the point. In fact, I have some serious misgivings. I wish they were without cause."

Netaji was silent for a moment. Silence was *not* consent, in this case. I was to take the silence as a negative reply. Soon, however, he said, "I don't think we need discuss it now. I am sure everything will turn out all right. Mr. . . . will be coming presently and I must see him."

Then I got up, saluted him and went to one of the adjoining rooms. There his personal staff told me that a few senior civilians and INA officers had been calling at regular intervals and the interviews were expected to last some time after dinner also.

We sat down to dinner in the dining room downstairs about nine p.m.—a very small company, Netaji, two or three members of his personal staff and myself. Netaji was silent and rather pre-occupied practically all through the dinner except for a casual remark or two about the food, which he always ate heartily.

After dinner, I got ready in an ante-room with a type writer and the necessary stationery and waited for Netaji to call me and start work on the Proclamation. It was a long wait. I was beginning to feel sleepy; if he was not going to work that night, I wanted to go back to my Mess at the IIL Headquarters, get into my *dhoti* and shirt and stretch myself on the bed and have a really nice sleep.

Meanwhile, he called me to his study, a rather smallish room, about ten by ten feet, with a desk in the centre, a radio in the front lefthand corner, and an *almirah* behind, against the wall on the left. There were only a couple of office chairs on either side of the desk in front of Netaji; an electric table lamp provided sufficient light for writing purposes. I crossed the drawing room and walked up to the door of the study; just then emerged Lakshmi after a two-minute interview with Netaji. He had got up from his seat to show her out of the study. She said *Jai Hind* to him just outside the room and moved away. He then motioned me into the study, went round the desk and stood near his chair. I waited for him to take his seat before I could take mine in front of him. But he stood, deep in thought for a minute or so, then turning in my direction, but looking into space, said in a low voice: "She is a wonderful child, God bless her." The reverie was over. He sat down and asked me to do so too.

"Now, come along, where shall we begin. I haven't had a moment's time to think so far. But I must begin and finish it. Then I have to draft a statement also. . . ."

It was now well past midnight.

Then I witnessed a phenomenon. I had a glimpse of the great man. He took hold of a bunch of quarter-sheets of blank paper, took a pencil in hand, and started writing.

"After their first defeat at the hands of the British in 1857 in Bengal. . . ."

He did not lift his eyes from the paper in front of him, silently handed to me the first page as soon as he finished it, and I walked out of the room and sat at the typewriter. Abid and Swami went to his room in turn and brought me the proclamation manuscript, sheet after sheet, as Netaji finished it.

What amazed me was that he never even once wanted to see any of the earlier pages that he had written. How he could remember every word that he had written in the preceding pages, how he could remember the sequence of

the paragraphs. In the entire script there was not one word corrected or scored out, and the punctuation was complete.

That he wrote out the whole proclamation sheet after sheet, without a break and at one sitting was some measure of Netaji's clear thinking, remarkable memory and grasp and facile pen ! The entire historic proclamation was written with the ease with which a brief letter could be penned.

After I finished typing the whole thing, I read it through first before taking it to him. I wanted to be sure I had made no mistakes in typing. Also, I wanted to see how it read. So, I read it twice over. There was no doubt that it was a memorable document, and as long as I am alive I shall be proud that I was privileged to type such a precious document for Netaji.

I took it in to him. He glanced it through, did not change even a comma, put it aside on the desk, then turned to me and with the suspicion of a smile on his lips asked a mischievous question.

"Would you like to have the names ?" He meant, of course, the names of the Ministers, the men who were to affix their signatures to the Proclamation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. In his manuscript, he had stopped with the words : "Signed on behalf of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. . . ."

I promptly replied : "No, Sir,"

Netaji : "All right then, I shall give them tomorrow."

I could see that he was holding them back just in case he wanted to make any last-minute change. Actually, I don't think he did.

Not that I was not inquisitive at all ! I must honestly confess that to some little extent my lively interest in the personnel of the Provisional Government was perhaps not quite in keeping with the vehemence with which I had earlier spoken against having Ministers. This was quite a human foible, I suppose.

But I had more or less an idea of nearly all the names. Whispering in the Bungalow conveyed quite a few. Then when Netaji called me to his study twice or thrice, earlier in the night, he had a foolscap sheet of paper in front of him. The desk was rather narrow, and so it was almost under my nose too; on it I could see scribbled a list of names, some scratched out and some with modifications. I could not help taking a quick glance at it, though I really did not want to. I have a feeling that Netaji did not mind my seeing it; it was an example of his own characteristic way of 'premature disclosure' to me!

Then, almost immediately after finishing the proclamation, he got down to his statement on the formation of the Provisional Government.

It was nearly six a.m. by the time he completed it; he had been sipping black coffee since midnight. He got up rather slowly from his chair and said he was going to bed. I was to finish the typing, check the copy, leave it for him to see, and come again in the evening to look to the printing of the Proclamation.

I went to the Bungalow that evening (20th October), the eve of the Proclamation Day. There I saw a good deal of subdued excitement, and a lot of comings and goings. There was a fairly big company at dinner but nearly all the guests left soon after it was over. So, we went upstairs, Netaji and I, and there in the study he gave me the list of signatories to the Proclamation, and told me to have enough copies printed the same night and delivered at the IIL Headquarters early the next morning.

Handing me the list of names, he asked me to read it through. I did. Then he asked me: "Well, what do you think of it?"

"I think it's all right, Sir."

"Um."

Next moment I was off like a shot, with a complete copy of the Proclamation for the press where I had cautioned the workers about this emergency work. Netaji had not

changed even a comma in the typed copy I had handed to him. I am not complimenting myself on my typewriting! I mean that Netaji had not found it necessary to add, modify or remove even a word in the fifteen hundred-word Proclamation which he had written down at one stretch and had not bothered to read over before it was typed.

The climax to this historic day, heralding the "dawn of freedom," took place the next day, at the Cathay Theatre, when Netaji, his voice tense with emotion, proclaimed the establishment of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. A flood of emotion again submerged Netaji and he broke down more than once as he took the oath of allegiance to India and pledged himself, body and soul, to the liberation of India. It was an unforgettable scene, stirring and poignant at the same time.

CHAPTER II

LIFE WITH NETAJI—THE REAL MAN

WHEN he was about to leave Rangoon for the Front on the 5th of April, 1944, Netaji asked me to shift to his Bungalow and look after it during his absence. He showed me round his bed-room and pointed out the boxes and other things he was leaving behind in that room. He told me that I could use his roll-top desk in that room, but I cut short the talk and told him that I was *not* going to use that room, and that nothing in the room would be disturbed. I added that I was going to lock up the room straightaway and would only have it opened, cleaned, and dusted occasionally. I told him that I would be quite comfortable in one of the rear-rooms on the same floor.

He returned one evening towards the end of May rather unexpectedly and did not go again to the Front for sometime as there were some very urgent matters to attend to in Rangoon.

Usually, he was a late riser, because he invariably retired very late, and then read political and religious books in bed till the early hours of the morning. He rose any minute after six but never later than seven in the morning, had his bath and always breakfasted in his bed-cum-office room by 8-0 a.m. The breakfast consisted of a couple of half-boiled eggs and two or three cups of tea, which he enjoyed at all hours, between morning and evening.

Colonel Raju, his personal physician, who was also staying on the same floor, in the room opposite to mine, used to say how difficult he found it to "manage" Netaji. "Always excess," Raju used to say and illustrate it by saying: "I beg of him not to eat so much of *supari* mixture (betelnut, cardamom and cloves) from morning till night. He wouldn't listen. I tell him to smoke less, he wouldn't

listen, either. When he plays badminton, I tell him to stop after three or four sets, but he wouldn't be satisfied with fewer than eight or nine."

That was poor Raju's headache. I used to sympathise with him because I too was on the spot and knew all about it.

Netaji smoked his first cigarette after breakfast at about 8-0 a.m. That started a chain. I do not know the exact number he smoked in twenty-four hours, but it could not be fewer than thirty or forty; it would depend a great deal on the day's events. A difficult conference with the Japanese, lasting about five or six hours, meant chain-smoking during the conference. The last cigarette he smoked between midnight and 1-0 a.m., but he never, never, smoked in bed. He did not like to, and he could not, even if he wanted to, because he invariably used a mosquito net and kept the ceiling fan going all night. It was too much of a risk to smoke in bed, and silly to take it.

In smoking, as in other things, Netaji was thorough. Being very fond of cigarettes myself, I used to watch the great man smoking and note all his peculiarities. When he was very deep in thought or engaged in heated conversation, he would puff at the cigarette pretty hard, finish it soon and light the next one with the butt before throwing it away. Whether he chain-smoked or lighted a cigarette after an interval, he would smoke the cigarette till there was practically nothing left of it to smoke. You could tell the stump of Netaji's cigarette by its length, which was very nearly nil, barely half an inch at the most. He never used a holder and yet could accomplish the feat of getting the last puff out of a cigarette. This meant that his lips and his fingers holding the cigarette tip were rather burnt. Surely it was no sense of economy that prompted this use of the cigarette to its finish. But if anything it indicated his characteristic thoroughness in doing any thing he had taken up.

A few mornings he took some Ayurvedic medicine in honey. If I happened to be in his room when he was taking the medicine I was a fascinated observer. He hated

clumsiness. He had a tiny, flat, oval-shaped black-stone mortar of the type used by *vaid*s, with a three-inch pestle to match. After washing both his hands with soap he would carefully put the powder in the mortar and pour a few drops of honey on top of it, then grind it slowly for sometime until the whole thing became a shiny brownish paste, then lap up the paste direct from the mortar, scrape every bit of the paste from the tip of the pestle with the right middle finger, and lick it carefully and enjoy it like a child eating jam, again scrape the mortar and pestle and lick it all off until there was no trace whatever of powder, honey or paste in mortar or on pestle ! This process would take a few minutes to finish ; and while it lasted I could not take my eyes off the mortar and pestle. Not content with this, he would pour a few drops of milk in the mortar and stir that too with the pestle and drink it ; this rinsing he would repeat once more.

The same thoroughness he would practise whenever he took any patent medicine in liquid form. This he used to do soon after meals. He would drink the medicine first ; then pour an ounce of water, rinse it, drink it ; there might be nothing left in the glass to rinse ; but he must pour water in it at least twice and rinse it.

I am afraid I have digressed, but a knowledge of his daily routine is essential.

If after breakfast, no callers were expected, Netaji would drive first to the IIL Headquarters and carry on till about 11-0 a.m. or midday, then drop in at the Supreme Command Headquarters for an hour or so ; in between, tea would be sent for and he would gulp down several cups of it at both places. It was not unusual for him to forget all about his lunch ; not so his personal staff. But he was always thoughtful and considerate ; and insisted on their taking tea too whenever he had it. But then, Colonel Raju and A.D.Cs. Rawat and Shamshere Singh would rather have a morsel of rice and curry than pots of tea. Back home about 2-0 p.m. Netaji and Staff would sit down for a rather late

lunch. Whenever I was working at home (in the Bungalow) I used to join Netaji at lunch also. This meal was invariably simple. Plain boiled rice, thin dal, plain-cooked vegetables, a saucer of *dahi* (curds) and a banana, ending up with a cup of good coffee.

The banana stage was invariably amusing; because, usually Kali, the table boy, took bananas round in a bowl. Very dark and well-built, with shining gold-filled white front teeth and an innocent childish face, Kali joined Netaji's household soon after Netaji arrived in Singapore in July, 1943 to assume the leadership of the Independence movement. Kali moved with Netaji to Burma leaving his parents and his newly-married bride behind in Singapore. Netaji showered paternal affections on this youngster who was one of Netaji's most loyal and faithful servants.

A giggle went round the table every time Kali appeared with his bowl of bananas. The moment Netaji saw Kali enter the room with the fruit bowl, he would ask :

"*Kali, aaj bananaka kitna diya ?*" (What did we pay for bananas today ?).

The next day he would ask : "*Aaj kya bhau hai ?*" (What price, today ?)

The third day he would ask : "*Kali, aaj banana kaisa mila ?*" (What did the banana cost us today ?)

I must say that Kali himself enjoyed the joke more than anyone else. More often than not, Kali forgot to ask the Mess Havildar what he had paid for the bananas that day. Then he used to guess; and Netaji knew it too.

Whenever he mentioned a higher price than the previous day, Netaji used to say :

"*Kali, banana bahut mehnga hogaya. Kal se kaise kharcedenge ?*" (Banana has become very dear; how can we buy it from tomorrow ?) Then Kali would grin sheepishly and murmur something and go away.

Not one day did Netaji forget to ask Kali the price of bananas !!

The banana joke was a daily item at the lunch table.

Apart from this, at any meal, particularly if he had a number of guests, Netaji had something very interesting and amusing to say about food. He avoided serious talk as far as possible. He wanted his guests, who sometimes included very junior INA officers or IIL officials, to feel quite at home at table with him. Naturally, when the Head of the State, Provisional Government of Azad Hind, and Supreme Commander of the INA started waxing eloquent on the many ways of cooking particular fish or on the food values of spinach or gourd (*karela*) and how the vegetables were spiced in the different provinces of India, even the timidest of the junior guests at the table would make bold to smile or laugh and come out with their views on the art of cooking.

One night at dinner the guests included Yellappa who rendered yeoman service to the Independence Movement. The talk turned on *dahi*—made from cow's and buffalo's milk. Yellappa held forth on the qualities of buffalo-*dahi* and said that eating it regularly would make a man very dull in the head. Prompt came Netaji: "You are talking from personal experience, I suppose!" A roar of laughter would greet this sally.

Another night, A. M. Sahay (Secretary to the Provisional Government) was one of the guests. The conversation touched a rather difficult officer at the volunteer training camp at Shanghai. An enquiry on the spot was urgently necessary to investigate certain serious allegations against the officer. It was well-known to all that Sahay had been tentatively asked to get ready to go to Shanghai to investigate. Just in case Sahay could not go, Netaji wondered whether Mr. Rama Murti, Chairman of the IIL at Tokyo, could be asked to do that job.

Poor Sahay butted in with his opinion:

"*Woh seedha saadha aadmi hai, Sahib.*" (He is a simple and straightforward man, Sir).

In a flash Netaji interjected:

"Oh! *tedha aadmi chahiye kya?*" (Oh, do you need some sort of a crook for that job?)

Saying this Netaji himself laughed and the whole company, including Sahay himself, roared with laughter.

Netaji did not mean any malice whatsoever, but he was much too fond of a good joke to let go any opportunity of cracking one.

It was utterly impossible to guess the day's events from the talk at the dinner table. At meal time serious discussion was *taboo*. Netaji always relaxed and radiated cheer, laughter, wit and humour.

I remember a night at the dinner table at the Azad Hind Fauz Training Camp at Kuala Lumpur. That was on the eve of Japan's surrender, and after Netaji's retreat from Burma to Thailand and Malaya. He was at the moment tackling an extremely difficult case at Seramban and had come up to Kuala Lumpur for a day or two. Dr. M., General Alagappan and Colonel Habibur Rahman and Colonel Nagar had run up from Seramban to report to Netaji the latest developments in the investigations.

One of them suggested that they had better get back to Seramban the same night. The drive to Seramban was dangerous at night, the road being notorious for armed communists ambushing passing cars and stopping them with roadblocks.

The argument went on for and against the party returning to Seramban the same night.

It was also well-known that Dr. M. would be ill at ease if he did not return home the same night.

Netaji was going to tease him.

Dr. M. also insisted that, whatever the risk, he would like to return, as he had done such night trips before!

Netaji winked at the company and said:

"Perhaps, Doctor *must* get back home tonight" (mild laughter).

No, no, not at all, Netaji. I need not go back tonight. I can go tomorrow morning."

"Now, you see, Doctor wants to show that he is really not afraid of his wife!" In the loud laughter which followed even Dr. M. joined.

When we were driving down from Seramban to Singapore, over two hundred miles, on 12th August, under the shadow of an unparalleled disaster, namely, Japan's surrender, Netaji started asking the driver every half-hour or so what speed he was doing. I was sitting next to Netaji, so I could see the speedometer needle. The driver knew that Netaji could not see the speedometer from where he was sitting. He knew also that Netaji did not like undue speeding, say beyond thirty miles or so. But the driver was sitting at the wheel of a powerful De Soto in which you would not know when it was doing fifty miles an hour. And he had the heavy responsibility of passing the communist-ridden areas well before dusk. Otherwise, he would be taking very grave risks with Netaji's life.

So he was going at a steady forty to fifty miles an hour on clear stretches of the fine Malay roads, between midday and 3-0 p.m. when Netaji was also inclined to drowse off and on.

Nevertheless, every half hour or more frequently, he asked the driver:

"*Ab speed kitni hai?*" (what speed now?) or, "*Ab kitne meel speed men chalti hai?*" (Going at how many miles speed now?).

Without, of course, turning back in his seat, the driver would reply in a matter of fact tone:

"*Thees mile Sahib*" (thirty miles, Sir), or "*Pantees mile, Sahib*" (thirty-five miles, Sir), when the actual speed was forty and fifty miles respectively. Whenever he heard this, Netaji broke into a smile, thoroughly enjoying the joke. He would put the driver the same question as often as he used to ask Kali the price of banana day after day! This was a childlike quality in him and he revelled in such innocent indulgences.

One could easily multiply anecdotes like these, but to go back to Netaji's daily routine. After lunch, he would go and sit in the drawing room to have another smoke to be followed by forty winks of sleep, if nobody had come to lunch or was waiting downstairs by appointment.

In any event callers would begin coming from 3-0 p.m. onwards and the interviews would go on non-stop till nearly dusk. Then Netaji would send word to us in our rooms to get ready for badminton, and we would play till it was absolutely impossible to see the shuttlecock in the dark.

After a bath, Netaji would come down for dinner about 8-0 p.m. This was a more leisurely meal which Netaji would eat very well and enjoy every morsel of. At least two helpings if fish was really good, plenty of *pooris* with *dal*, followed by a plateful of rice with curry, one more helping of rice if the curry was very good, followed by some sweets. Netaji would not touch it if it was custard, for fear of adding to his weight; if it was any other sweet, just a bit to see how it tasted.

Coffee would go round. Then we could tell how soon or late Netaji wished to go to bed that night. Once in a way, Netaji used to turn in very early, meaning, of course, about 11-0 p.m. He would not touch coffee those nights. Then we knew. He would smoke a cigarette or two, chat with one of us for a few minutes in a semi-sleepy way, then get up and go to his bed-room. If he took one cup of coffee, he had decided to go to bed about midnight or 1-0 a.m. Two cups, then he wanted to sit up till 2-0 or 3-0 a.m. If he ordered more coffee to be sent up to his room sometime after dinner, then it was to be practically an all-night affair—going through important papers, taking important decisions, writing letters to comrades in Berlin, INA or IIL officials in Thailand, Malaya, Java, Indo-China and Japan, also important communications to the Japanese Government.

I have had personal experience of many such nights. He gave plenty of confidential work to his personal Stenographer Bhaskaran to keep him going night and day. I had

more than my hands full with the Propaganda Ministry and as *ex-officio* Secretary to the Provisional Government. All the same, I worked with him on many of those all-night sessions. Naturally, I came nearest to him sentimentally and spiritually on those nights.

One such night went like this. It was well past eleven by the time he finished his talk with the last guest. Then he got ready for the night's correspondence work. Coffee was ordered, and Kundan Singh, his faithful valet, brought it up. I was still in my uniform and opened the typewriter in my room and arranged the stationery in readiness to type for him a very, very important letter. Netaji in his room got into his pyjamas so that he could feel cool and comfortable. He started writing, and sent the first few sheets one by one through Kundan Singh. Then very considerably, Netaji told Kundan Singh to leave the coffee in the room and go to sleep. After that I went to Netaji's room to bring the letter sheet by sheet and went on typing. Netaji would not have it that way. He said to me: "You needn't bother to walk to and fro; you had better go on typing. I shall bring the pages", and he did. In his pyjamas he kept up a relay between his room and mine for nearly two hours, until he finished writing that letter.

Poor Rawat, who shared the room with me, told me the next morning what a nuisance I had been, banging at the typewriter the whole night. I told him how Netaji walked up to our room so many times and passed by his (Rawat's) bed to leave his manuscript on my desk. Rawat felt very uncomfortable. I typed virtually all night. After finishing the important letter which he wrote to Foreign Minister Shigemitsu, he started writing to the forty cadets whom he had sent to Tokyo for military and air training.

The letter to Shigemitsu was a fateful missive. Netaji went into great detail about the positively unhelpful attitude of the Hikari Kikan—the Japanese liaison unit associated with the INA—on important matters and how they were hindering instead of helping smooth relations between Netaji

on the one hand and the Tojo Government and the Japanese High Command on the other ; with his unanswerable logic, he demanded the elimination of the Kikan as the go-between so that he could deal direct with Tokyo or through a Japanese Minister who should be accredited very soon to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. He ended up the letter on a very grave note. He said that unless he received satisfaction, he would withdraw from the leadership of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and the INA and remain a private citizen or he might collect a suicide squad of five hundred men and march to the front at their head, entirely on his own and having nothing whatever to do with the Japanese.

This was an extremely delicate though semi-official letter, which Netaji was addressing to the Japanese Foreign Minister. Supposing he did carry out the threat, the Japanese dared not show their face to the outside world. Netaji knew it ; that is why he put off writing it till he could do so no longer. The letter brought some results. Some of the dichards in the Hikari Kikan were shunted off, and thereafter somewhat better relations obtained between the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and the Kikan.

Netaji had to do very hard and anxious thinking when drafting that letter. Soon after I finished typing that letter, he started on the letters to the "Tokyo Boys" (the Indian Cadets he had sent to Japan for training).

He was particularly attached to these boys and I must say that the boys reciprocated his sentiments in a very touching manner. So, writing a letter to these teen-agers at about four o'clock in the morning was sort of an emotional exercise for Netaji ; and he took his own time in choosing each word to give the letter that typically human touch which was all his own. I was told later that when the boys got this letter, they all burst into tears, which they had not done even at the thought of separation from their parents and brothers and sisters. . . .

The first rays of the morning sun were peeping into his room when Netaji finished his all-night session. He went to bed and had barely three hours sleep before he got ready to receive a high-ranking Japanese military officer who called by appointment.

When he was free for a while in the evening and did not fancy badminton, he would go round the grounds of the house and visit his pets—two monkeys, two goats, two rabbits, three or four ducks and geese, and a tonga pony. The monkeys alone, for sometime, were kept inside the house, and he passed them whenever he came to the bottom of the staircase. One was named Ramu and the other Sita. He was very fond of Ramu, and Ramu was equally fond of Netaji. Nobody else dare go near Ramu without coaxing him first with a banana. But Netaji would walk up to him for a minute every time he passed the little pet and that fellow would immediately climb on Netaji's shoulder and start scrutinising the half a dozen strands of hair that had survived round Netaji's temples, take a banana from his hand, if there was one, and jump off contentedly.

The other pets really belonged to Colonel Raju who started collecting the menagerie patiently. Having seen them during his walk round the house for a few days, Netaji started liking them too. He would go to each of them and feed them with his own hand. Neither Netaji nor Raju had a dog in the house at any time. For some reason or the other Netaji never thought of having a dog, not that he did not like to have one. Nobody ever brought him a real pedigree one; he might have liked it.

But cats? . . . positively no! He simply did not like them, and he made no secret of this either. And yet, in the Rangoon Bungalow, wherever you turned you saw a kitten or two, and then a big male cat, and a female cat with obvious signs of the imminence of another litter of kittens.

Here is the story of Netaji and the unwanted cats and kittens ranging all over the house. It all started in Singapore. There, Abid Hassan, Netaji's Private Secretary, who had

accompanied him in the submarine all the way from Berlin to the Far East, was as fond of cats as Netaji loathed their very sight. And Abid knew it. Yet, one day, without Netaji's permission he brought to the Bungalow from somewhere two charming little kittens—milky white, with a couple of beautiful grey spots on the body. I have seen them; they were really loveable; I did not have to be a cat lover to say that. When I admired and fondled the kittens, Abid put his finger to his lips and cautioned me to stop. "Perhaps you don't know Netaji doesn't like cats in the house; and he doesn't know these are here! These little devils wouldn't stay here quietly; they try to make a bee-line for Netaji's study. I don't know what I am going to do. I don't want to send them away, but how can I keep them away from Netaji? Thank God, their meowing is not yet loud enough to be heard in his room. So you might at least keep quiet."

I did not mind. I knew it would not be long before the kittens strayed into Netaji's study and then Abid would hear something.

The half hour I spent with Abid that day, I had a free entertainment watching him and his kittens. Abid, by nature, has P. G. Wodehouse's "Archie" touch about him, and in some situations, Netaji was the wealthy uncle to whom "Archie" was a perpetual headache. But deep down in their hearts the love and affection they had for each other was something really sublime. Abid's room had heavy double doors, and swing doors; only the swing doors were closed, and the big doors were permanently kept ajar; and there were two exits to the room; and through either of the exits the kittens could amble along to Netaji's study. The side door of the study was much nearer, the front door a few more feet away. Abid had some work in hand; he had one eye on it and the other on the two kittens, with the result that at some moments he looked cross-eyed and somewhat crazy.

The kittens would not oblige him by being together at one place ; they would insist on choosing the opposite corners of the room for a minute's diversion and then disappear. Poor Abid would frantically run first after the one taking the short-cut to Netaji's study, and next after the kitten making a detour but with the same destination in view. He would then keep both of them on his lap, hold them down tightly with one hand, and wipe the beads of perspiration on his forehead with the other. It was a losing game, but Abid would not be Abid if he threw up his hands. So, he managed somehow to keep the kittens out of Netaji's sight, having taken a solemn oath from the rest of the household that they would keep mum.

Then one day, the game was up. The kittens had grown big and strong on the fine milk diet their fond master had been giving them. Abid was poring over some papers at his desk. The kittens apparently got tired of seeing the same face at the same desk in the same room, morning, noon and night ; they were off in the twinkling of an eye, and marched proudly together, and stood in front of another face at another desk—Netaji in his study going over some important papers. He was pre-occupied, and did not notice their arrival. They meowed in unison to announce their presence. Taken by surprise, Netaji lifted his eyes from the papers in front of him, and glared at them. He was all alone in the room, so he did not say anything ; when he got over the initial surprise, he shouted for Abid instinctively, but Abid could not hear at that distance ; then he rang the bell and sent for Abid peremptorily ; Abid got up from his chair and by sheer force of habit, hurriedly looked round the room for his little charges ; they were nowhere there nor anywhere outside in sight. In great trepidation he dashed into Netaji's room ; the kittens looked at him and in their eyes there was the joy of happy reunion with Abid though it was at a wrong place ; and Abid and Netaji looked at each other.

Pointing to the kittens, Netaji asked: "Are they yours?"

"Yes, Sir," Abid replied.

"Of course, I ought to know, and, pray, why did you bring them into the house without telling me?"

"I'm sorry I didn't tell you, Netaji. I thought you might not like the idea. But they are such lovely kittens, Sir. Both of them sleep at the foot of my bed."

"What? Sleep on your bed also? Abid, couldn't you get hold of any other pets except these cats?"

"Er. . . . Sir. . . ."

"All right, you may go, but for heaven's sake, don't let them stray all over the place."

Abid gathered the kittens in his arms and made a quick exit.

In the days following Netaji continued to taunt Abid about his kittens, but they insisted on moving all over the first floor and later had the run of the ground floor also. Netaji gave up protesting against their meanderings. That was at Singapore. Abid left them behind there, when he left for Burma.

Till a few days after Abid joined Netaji at the Rangoon Bungalow, there was not a single cat in the house. May be, then, that word went round the cat world in Rangoon about Abid's arrival. First appeared a male cat in the grounds of the house. Netaji did not know. Then followed a female cat; Netaji did not know that either; they kept their rendezvous with Abid outside the house only—sort of a gentlemen's agreement! A few days later, the female cat kept coming into the house and going out; Netaji had not noticed this. Somewhere under the staircase, there was a litter of kittens. They slowly started crawling out; and *then* Netaji saw them. A few days later, the big and the small cats were all over the ground floor of the house, and got in the way of the table boys during every meal time in the dining room.

Then Netaji reconciled himself to Abid and his army of cats, but he never tired of saying: "For the life of me I

can't understand how any man can allow his cats to sleep on his bed. Abid sees nothing wrong in it; he thinks it is wonderful!"

Netaji not only enjoyed cracking an innocent joke at somebody else's expense but he was almost boisterously happy when retailing a good joke against himself.

It was at the same dinner at Kuala Lumpur on the eve of the fall of the curtain on the INA epic in East Asia. He recalled the December of 1940 when he found himself in jail in India and was impatient to get out of the jail and out of India. After a great deal of thinking night and day, he decided to go on hunger strike if he was not released at once. He spoke about his resolve to the bluff, bulldog-type of British Superintendent of Prison, who had a hearty sense of humour.

"Do you know what he told me?" asked Netaji looking at the company round the dinner table. "He said: 'Mr. Bose, please remember that a live donkey is any day better than a dead lion,'" and Netaji led the burst of laughter that rocked the dining room for a few seconds.

"In spite of this well-meaning advice of the Superintendent, I stuck to my decision and told him so. He merely shrugged his shoulders, and walked away saying: 'You may do as you please, I couldn't stop you.'"

After he moved the Headquarters of the Provisional Government, the Independence League and the INA to Rangoon, Netaji was working with the minimum necessary skeleton staff as many senior officers and officials had to be left behind in Singapore which became the Rear Headquarters and was still a very vital base for the supply of man-power and material. Day in and day out, he had to dispose of an ever-increasing pile of papers concerning all the three Headquarters.

One day as he was leaving the League Headquarters in Rangoon, late in the afternoon, as usual, for his lunch, and carrying a few papers under his arm, he stood for a minute at the top of the staircase to talk to a visitor who waylaid

him. After disposing of the visitor with a sweet smile and affable words, in spite of being tired and very hungry, he turned round to us and remarked : " I never seem to be able to finish this work and have to carry some home every day. I am afraid I am born to be a clerk ! "

Then one evening in March, 1945, when Mr. Karim Ghani, head of the IIL Burma Branch, had started an intensive drive for the collection of money and materials in his capacity of Chairman of the *Inteqam* (Revenge) Committee (to avenge the bombing of the Red-Cross-marked Myang Hospital which killed many patients), a prominent Indian businessman of Rangoon called on Netaji at his bungalow.

He was proving a tough customer and the Committee could not make any headway with him in squeezing some money or materials out of him. They were getting desperate because the businessman was setting a bad example to others. The Committee complained bitterly and suggested drastic steps to teach the man his duty to his country in her hour of crisis. For his part, the businessman complained of lack of courtesy or consideration on the part of Mr. Karim Ghani, and even insinuated that under cover of *Inteqam* (Revenge) against the British, *Inteqam* was sought to be practised against him to pay off some old scores !

Netaji talked to the businessman all alone on the open terrace above the porch for well over an hour. At the end of the apparently tiring encounter, Netaji accompanied his visitor up to the top of the staircase, gave him a genial *Jai Hind*, waited till the guest had gone down the stairs and out of sight, then turned round to me and, with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes, said : " Ayer Sab, by the time I finish with these crooks, I am afraid I will become a crook myself ! " And he smiled broadly.

Netaji sometimes did not take even his politics too seriously. He saw the humour of any political situation, especially if he was himself the butt of a joke.

One night after dinner, in April, 1945, he called Major Swami and me to his bedroom where, in his vest, breeches and top-boots, he was seated at his roll-top desk looking into some papers. He started talking to us about the progress of the Allies' Second Front in Europe. It was making rapid strides and the position was getting serious for Germany; it was difficult to say how long she could resist. Netaji was in lighter vein. He saw himself as others (his enemies, the British) saw him. It was well-known that he would ask the INA to fight to the last, irrespective of what happened first to the Germans, and then to the Japanese. He might, if need be, think of some other ally against the British.

"If the Germans collapse, then we shall go on cheering the Japanese and carry on our fight. What to do if the Japanese also collapse? Italy gone, then Germany, then Japan. Which other world power shall we turn to next? What about turning to Russia?" he asked and burst into a loud guffaw of laughter. Russia, the mortal enemy of Germany—Netaji's ally facing impending defeat!

He saw the humour of the situation as viewed by the British. Of course, the BBC and the AIR would call him names as an unprincipled and unscrupulous politician who would not hesitate to think of even unthinkable alliances.

Netaji always had a hearty laugh against himself whenever he heard the AIR say: "Subhas Bose will now think up some ingenious excuse for his failure to bring about a revolution inside India, and he will go on bluffing the Japanese."

It would so happen that some high-ranking Japanese would be sitting with Netaji at that very moment.

He had the gift of seeing himself as others saw him, and he had the capacity to enjoy a joke against himself.

CHAPTER III

CRUCIAL DAYS—A LEADER'S METTLE

BEFORE I relate some of the behind-the-scenes incidents in which Netaji had stormy meetings with the Japanese, I must briefly sum up the Japanese mentality as revealed in regions so far apart as Japan and Burma. The quarrels and clashes must be viewed against the background of Japanese psychology and temperament.

When Netaji arrived in Tokyo from Berlin after a perilous ninety-day submarine journey, he contacted Premier Tojo, Field-Marshal Sugiyama (Chief of Imperial General Staff), Admiral Yonai, Navy Minister, and many other top-rankers in the Japanese Government and the armed forces. He was convinced of their sincerity in their offer of all-out aid to the Indian Independence Movement. This belief in the top-men's sincerity was reinforced by the spontaneous demonstrations of goodwill on the part of the Japanese nation.

From their very first meeting, General Tojo and Netaji took a very strong liking to each other. Each saw in the other great qualities of leadership, character, courage and statesmanship of a high order. Netaji made no secret of his unqualified admiration for Tojo whenever he had an opportunity of discussing the situation in Japan. Netaji defended Tojo's policy with particular vehemence after Tojo's resignation.

But the top-men could only announce the policy of the Government from Tokyo—the execution of that policy was in the hands of all manner of Japanese—soldiers, sailors, airmen, military governors, other petty officials, a few of whom had been dentists, or barbers or photographers before the war. And these men were spread over the whole of East Asia in totally different environments and subject to

a bewildering variety of local economic, social, moral and political influences.

The Indian Independence Movement was one compact whole covering the territory from Japan to Burma. The broad outlines of its aims, objects and methods were laid down and reiterated from time to time by the towering personality of Netaji. He kept a watchful eye on the INA officers and Provisional Government and IIL officials in all corners of East Asia. Any instance of deliberate deviation from the chalked-out path was taken serious notice of by Netaji himself. So, when this disciplined and integrated corps of men came into contact with Japanese nationals in the various countries of East Asia, they found them a very much unco-ordinated lot, each man interpreting the same orders differently from the other. Some of them actively tried to place obstructions in the way of Netaji's officers. Naturally, this proved a grave handicap to Netaji's men who tried to translate into action the clearly-defined policy of Netaji.

Now, let me take the total Mobilisation of Indians in East Asia. This meant the recruitment of the maximum number of Indian volunteers for the INA and giving them the necessary facilities to enlist and undergo training. It meant also the collection of the maximum amount of money and materials which the large majority of Indians in East Asia were keen on pouring into Netaji's war chest. The only alternative to total mobilisation was helpless dependence on the Japanese for everything to help the INA move forward to the Indo-Burma front and there start the battle for India's independence. Netaji was deadset against looking to the Japanese for men, money or even materials except weapons, planes and tanks which the Provisional Government of Azad Hind had no means of manufacturing in East Asia.

The intensive drive for Total Mobilisation brought the regional workers accredited by Netaji into conflict with the local Japanese authorities—including military Commanders and State Governors. The stock excuse for obstruction or

unhelpful attitude included local conditions, local economy, local self-sufficiency, or local social conditions.

I studied these local Japanese authorities pretty closely in Siam, Malaya, Burma and Indo-China, whenever I had a chance to meet them personally to conduct official business or on social occasions.

Apart from the sincere top-men in Tokyo, in my own mind I classified the rest of the Japanese, who had anything to do with our movement, as follows:

Colonels of the type of Kitabe and Kagawa who blazed the trail for the Japanese Empire in Manchuria—the arrogant, obstinate type who had reduced the people of Manchuria to virtual serfdom. They did not see much point in Japan offering all-out aid to Netaji except on condition of something concrete in return—say, at least a promise of military, economic or political concessions to be given to Japan in Free India. They suffered from a fit of racial superiority. They were puzzled, irritated and provoked by the Indians' assertion of self-respect, and independence of thought, word and action. Among us, we nicknamed these Colonels and men of their ilk as the "Manchurians," and described their attitude as "Manchuria mentality." These men had their admirers as well as opponents in the lower hierarchy.

Then there was the truly sincere but rather impotent group of juniors who went out of their way to help us, to encourage us, and to apologise for the short-sighted attitude of the Kitabe-Kagawa group.

Lastly there was the colourless group which fully endorsed Tokyo's policy, but would only pray and hope that the INA would somehow win India's independence, even in spite of the "Manchurian" group.

The trouble with the "Manchurians" and their satellites was they had their own half-baked theories of the British domination of India through cunning, and the divide and rule policy. The "Manchurian" Colonels even tried stupid imitations of British machinations from time to time. They tried to handpick puppets from among insignificant Indians

and also to play off one man against another. To them what mattered was Japan's victory in the war somehow and everything was subordinated to that aim. In their view the Indians had no right to say or do anything which might distract the attention of the Japanese in East Asia regions or Tokyo. Not only that, they would even go to the extent of nullifying Tokyo's plighted word by refusing to give more than the barest minimum of facilities to Netaji and his officers.

Ultimately, men of this type proved the ruin of Japan. They made more enemies for Japan; they antagonised all thinking men of other nationalities, especially Indians. To them nothing else mattered except the Japanese Empire, its survival and expansion. They were so narrow-minded that they literally foamed at the mouth at the very mention of reciprocity between the INA and the Japanese army as war-time allies.

And East Asia was studded with "little" Japanese of this type.

I must however once again emphasise that both publicly and in their official communications to their outposts in East Asia, the top-men in Tokyo went on reiterating Japan's determination to help Netaji in every possible way, and proclaimed that the Japanese army would fight shoulder to shoulder with its comrades of the INA. Undoubtedly this frequent reiteration gave a certain degree of steadiness to Indo-Japanese relations in East Asia, in spite of the sustained efforts of the "Manchuria" group to do everything short of open sabotage.

I often asked myself the question whether Tokyo was helpless in putting the "Manchurians" in their place or recalling or dismissing them for whittling down Tokyo's policy. The whole trouble may be attributed to the inherent defect in the Japanese military machine. The militarists in Tokyo, as a caste, have always been domineering the whole show. The "Manchuria" Group always enjoyed very special prestige at the Imperial Headquarters (of the three Armed Services); so a Manchuria-returned Colonel was a

very powerful tyrant wherever he went, because he could always count on very strong backing from nearly all except the top-most men at the Imperial Headquarters.

The "Manchurian" Colonels were fully conscious of this and hence all the bother.

For a time, Kitabe ruled the roost in the Burma office of the Kikan and Netaji got him removed from there. It came as a shock to many Japanese brasshats in East Asia and at the Imperial Headquarters in Tokyo. Though he quit the Kikan, he left behind him a highly objectionable tradition and atmosphere. General Isoda took over but he had Colonel Kagawa as his Number Three. This was in the fateful year of 1944 when the INA went into action for the first time on the Burma-India Frontier. Colonel Kagawa was a pretty crude imitation of Machiavelli. Many of my colleagues told me that he was a very brainy man; I did not think so. I had seen plenty of him. He was of course cunning in designs, crooked in thought, perverse in attitude, and rather crude in expression. He was not even an evil genius; he was an evil man indeed, but unrelieved by any genius worth the name. He could not even hide his cunning, crookedness or perversity. So, right from the beginning he was a discredited man from our point of view. Netaji never gave up his efforts to get this man off the backs of Isoda and the Kikan, particularly after Netaji shifted his Headquarters to Rangoon.

The conferences between Netaji as the Head of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and General Isoda as the Head of the Liaison organisation (Hikari Kikan) were frequent and regular, as so many important matters had to be discussed from time to time.

These conferences were held at Netaji's residence and at General Isoda's alternately. At these conferences, Isoda would be invariably accompanied by both Major-General Yamamoto, his Number two, as well as Colonel Kagawa, his Number Three. In fact, Yamamoto, and Kagawa would never let their Chief meet Netaji alone. On

the other hand, more often than not, Netaji attended these conferences accompanied either by Colonel Habib or by Colonel Sahgal or by myself only, and sometimes unaccompanied by any one of us. Habib or Sahgal was called just in case Netaji wanted to have some minor details in the course of the conference and to take notes; I was called to take notes only. In the course of those conferences, neither Habib nor Sahgal might have spoken more than a few words in elucidation of some fact; I had no occasion to speak even a word. In addition to Yamamoto and Kagawa, Isoda brought with him either General (Civil) Senda or an official interpreter to interpret Japanese into English and *vice versa*.

Isoda came with some diplomatic experience as one-time Military Attache to the Japanese Embassy in Washington. He could speak English fairly well, but found prestige and safety in speaking only in Japanese at these conferences. Yamamoto had been Military Attache to the Japanese Embassy in Berlin and there he had come into contact with Netaji before accompanying him to East Asia. He was supposed to be a great friend of Netaji and a sincere well-wisher of Indian Independence. He reached Singapore from Tokyo a few days before Netaji did, and took over as Chief of the Hikari Kikan Headquarters. When Netaji arrived, it was hoped that the most cordial personal relations between them would be reflected in the mutual relations of their respective organisations. Netaji and Yamamoto used to speak to each other in fluent German. Yamamoto was only a Colonel then. The Provisional Government of Azad Hind was formed and Tokyo sent a Lieutenant-General in the person of Isoda to take over from Yamamoto who was relegated to the place of Number Two.

Then a very unwelcome and shocking change came over Yamamoto. Probably he was a bitter and disappointed man. Netaji had nothing whatever to do with his relegation, and Yamamoto ought to have known it. However, from the moment Isoda took over, Yamamoto became rather unfriendly to Netaji and to the whole Movement. Netaji

was pained and distressed at this somersault. On the other hand, Kagawa was elated at this unexpected reinforcement. Later on, Yamamoto went further than even Kagawa in his openly obstructionist attitude. Meanwhile, Yamamoto was promoted Major-General. So it was a Lieutenant-General trying to pull one way and a Major-General in unholy alliance with a Colonel, pulling the other.

Netaji was sometimes disgusted at this sight. He wondered whether Isoda had any guts at all. On the whole, this reactionary set-up at the Kikan was most irritating and tried Netaji's patience to the utmost.

The climax came one evening in the autumn of 1944.

A conference between Netaji and General Isoda began at Netaji's residence at 4-0 p.m. and it ended at 10-0 p.m. In my humble view, it was less wear and tear for body and mind to go through a minor skirmish on the battle-front than to go through one of those conferences with the Japanese for six hours non-stop. Those present on the Indian side were Netaji and myself; on the Japanese side were General Isoda, Major-General Yamamoto, Colonel Kagawa and Major-General Senda, personal adviser of General Isoda, and a very influential man and a friend of Netaji from the time he was Consul-General in Calcutta. Sparks started flying in all directions right from the beginning—rather unusually early even for those conferences.

Yamamoto opened the Conference by complaining in an excited tone that Netaji did not give even a hint to Tokyo or to the Kikan about his intention to appoint Ministers of Supply and Man-power though such appointments were likely to have repercussions on the Japanese war-effort.

This was too much for Netaji. For one thing he saw no propriety in Yamamoto (Number Two) starting the discussions when Isoda was there, and then he resented Yamamoto's tone.

Prompt came Netaji's retort. "I challenge General Yamamoto's statement. He ought to remember that some-

time ago I did mention to him my intention regarding those two new Ministers."

Poor Yamamoto went red in the face and his Chief and other colleagues were very much embarrassed at this snub to Yamamoto right at the beginning of the Conference.

Isoda was more or less ignored by Yamamoto, who was not going to be subdued so easily.

Netaji refused to concede, in principle, that he should tell the Kikan anything about the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. If he liked, he might do so out of personal courtesy to General Isoda. But the Kikan could not expect it as a matter of course.

Then followed a very heated argument, monopolised by Yamamoto on their side, about the need or otherwise for the two Ministers, namely, Supply and Man-power.

Netaji was vehement in his assertions about the functions of the two new Ministers.

Yamamoto tried to argue that the Supply Minister would enter all the markets for raw materials in East Asia on behalf of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. This might interfere with Japanese purchases and their war effort. Similarly, a Provisional Government of Azad Hind monopoly of Indian man-power throughout East Asia might dislocate Japanese war effort in factories, railways and dockyards.

With his characteristic logic, Netaji smashed Yamamoto's arguments and pointed out that an intensification of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind War efforts to fight the British would be a distinctly favourable factor for the Japanese overall effort, and could in no way detract from it.

"We shall go to the markets that you will never tap. We shall enlist man-power that you can never hope to attract," said Netaji. By way of illustration, he pointed out that, for instance, the Supply Minister would scour the East Asia markets for wheat, gram and dals, edible oils and such commodities for which the Japanese had no use at all. As for man-power, there were thousands of Indians who

would rather join the Independence movement as full-time workers for practically no remuneration, than work for the Japanese even on an attractive salary. Why, then, this dog-in-the-manger policy, and meaningless talk about the dislocation of the Japanese war effort?

Yamamoto was beaten, and he lapsed into silence but not before the heated arguments had gone on for two or three hours.

By now, the atmosphere was surcharged and there might be an explosion any moment.

Then Netaji raised the most thorny question of the time, that of expanding the strength of the INA, and he wanted an assurance that the necessary arms would be forthcoming very soon.

The moment Netaji touched this topic, Isoda sat bolt upright in his seat and got voluble. At great length he pointed out to Netaji that this came to the Japanese as a surprise. They had never before been cautioned about such an expansion: in fact, they would oppose such a proposal because it was out of the question for them to spare a large quantity of arms and ammunition for the expanded army, and so on and so forth.

Netaji was visibly pained and surprised at this prevarication, conscious or unconscious, on the part of a Lieutenant-General of the Japanese Army. He quoted dates and other details to show that General Isoda was wholly wrong in affecting surprise. Even allowing a wide margin for the language difficulty and the vagaries of interpreters, Netaji was quite sure that he had mentioned this topic more than once to the Japanese, and he said so. Then Isoda corrected himself slightly and remembered that some expansion of the non-combatant units of the INA had been mooted before, but not regular combatants for whom light and heavy arms and ammunition would have to be found.

General Senda, who was performing the unpleasant task of interpreting Isoda, was very uncomfortable in his seat. He had been apparently present at previous talks

and remembered the essential points. His impression was obviously different from his Chief's but his lips were sealed, so he could only fret and fume as he could not speak out. In spite of the provocation, Netaji exercised tremendous self-restraint and appeared totally unruffled. He continued to remind Isoda of the many little details of the previous talks in which he had conveyed a very different impression.

It was all of no avail.

It was plain that at Yamamoto's and Kagawa's instigation, Isoda was against the expansion of the combatant strength of the INA. So, he went on repeating *ad nauseam* what he had said earlier.

Netaji could not stand this sort of nonsense any more. He was satisfied that the time had come for plain speaking.

After a few seconds silence, Netaji said: "If that is General Isoda's attitude about the expansion, then I am afraid I cannot accept it; either I must have what I want, or I must withdraw from the Movement."

That was a serious threat for which Isoda had not bargained.

He lost his balance, blurted out something in a harsh tone, rose abruptly in his seat, grabbed his papers with his left hand, and told his colleagues to withdraw from the Conference along with him.

The withdrawal took a few minutes. Meanwhile, Netaji also got up, but said nothing. The tension eased immediately; normal leavetaking followed, as if nothing untoward had happened. Somebody cracked a feeble joke; forced laughter went round the company.

Netaji escorted his guests down the stairs and up to the portico. Usual deep bows and courtesies were exchanged, and Netaji gave the guests a smiling send-off. The clock struck ten. The ordeal had lasted six excruciating hours and ended in a "scene." A few minutes later, we all sat down for dinner.

Now, Netaji was inclined to relax and laugh the Conference off.

"I think it is easier to deal with our British enemies than with our Japanese friends," he said.

I had been a silent observer of the six-hour agony, and was bursting to tell Netaji what I thought of the whole affair—if only he would ask me a word.

At long last he gave me an opening.

So I said : "Sir, this is not a friendly conference between allies but a war of attrition between enemies."

Here I must say something about the technique which the Japanese usually employed at these conferences, and how Netaji met them on their own ground.

The Japanese were rather slow of speech both in the original and in the interpretation. On top of that they would go on repeating what they said, totally ignoring all arguments to counter their assertions or opinions. I had an impression that the Japanese deliberately employed this elephantine method just to drive the other party to the point of utter exhaustion.

But Netaji was more than a match for them ; he never lost his temper even in the face of irritation and provocation ; he took his own time to rub in his points and to elaborate them ; he would sit back most comfortably in his chair, and settle down to enjoyable and leisurely smoking ; if the Japanese came prepared for a two-hour conference, he was ready to sit it out for another hour. He would wait until they showed signs of wanting to leave ; then he would pick up a sheet of paper and say : "Just a few small matters." The Japanese would sit down again, thinking it would take only a few minutes more. Then Netaji would reel off one question after another, each of which led to a discussion. Then the Japanese will have had a good taste of their own medicine and would be allowed to go. They never succeeded in wearing out Netaji's patience or endurance.

Two other conferences have left an indelible impression on my mind. As a matter of fact, they were two series of conferences on two different but vexed questions. Both the

series took place in March, 1944, in General Isoda's spacious residence.

One was about the establishment of a National Bank of Azad Hind which the Japanese strongly opposed. The other series of conferences was about the appointment of a Japanese high-ranking military officer as the Chairman of the proposed Indo-Japanese War Co-operation Council to function on Indian soil after the entry of the INA into India. The Japanese insisted on a Japanese Chairman, and Netaji equally vehemently refused to consider the suggestion.

Netaji and Isoda met at least thrice to discuss this very delicate question and, as usual, of course, Isoda was accompanied by Yamamoto and Kagawa together with General Senda (Adviser). All the four of them talked. I alone accompanied Netaji who was the sole speaker on the Indian side. More than once during the fateful talks I thought that Netaji would finish with the Japanese for the last time.

The worst feature of these talks was the Japanese insistence that it would be much better to have a Japanese Chairman even after moving inside India. With extraordinary patience Netaji would put forward in very clear language all the important reasons why he could not accept the proposal. They would not meet any one of his arguments, but go on harping on what they said at the beginning.

Once in a way, they would invoke the name of some big noise or other in the Tokyo Government or High Command and insinuate that that mighty personality would be highly upset if Netaji stuck to his viewpoint. But in taking this stand, they misjudged Netaji. He was prepared to tell them that he would himself cable to Tojo or to Field Marshal Sugiyama pointblank refusing to have a Japanese Chairman. He was ready to stake everything on this issue. He told them in plain language that a Japanese Chairman for the Indo-Japanese War Co-operation Council *on Indian soil* was absolutely out of the question, and he was not going to budge an inch on this issue. He said he would not consider any proposal that might be derogatory to the dignity, integrity,

and sovereignty of Free India ; it would be the very negation of independence, and it would not at all be acceptable to the people of India ; and he would agree to nothing that would be unacceptable to the Indian patriots at home.

Tension grew with every minute that passed towards the end of the third and last sitting of the Conference. The Japanese tried even veiled threats, by hinting that Tokyo might have to consider seriously whether they could continue to help Indians in those circumstances. Netaji was unmoved and quietly ignored these threats ; he did not care if they withdrew all support as a reprisal for his turning down a Japanese Chairman.

"Does this mean, your Excellency does not want a war co-operation council at all ?" they asked Netaji, finally and in sheer desperation.

Netaji replied very coolly and courteously : "Oh, I *do* want the Council and I want it very badly, too, but I don't want to have a Japanese Chairman. If there *must* be a Chairman, then he *must* be an Indian, or, if you like, I have another alternative. Let the Indian and Japanese sides of the Council meet on terms of perfect equality, and *without* a Chairman !"

Ultimately, they agreed to leave the matter pending. Netaji did not mind.

He had fought single-handed for three days on a vital matter of principle, and won in the end. He was a sporting opponent. On rising from the Conference, he was particularly courteous to the Japanese and laughed and joked with them before taking leave.

The other Conference, over the establishment of the National Bank of Azad Hind, was no less a troublesome affair. The Japanese were not keen on Netaji's having a Bank of his own outside India's borders ; so they raised every conceivable and inconceivable objection. For three days, they quoted expert bankers' opinions and cautioned Netaji against serious financial disasters involved in starting such a Bank in war-time conditions in Burma. They saw



Netaji pays visit to Mitsuro Toyama at his Tokyo residence ; about forty years ago, this leader of Black Dragon Society of Japan gave refuge to Rash Behari Bose, Indian Revolutionary leader and father of the Indian Independence Movement in East Asia.



A. Yellappa, Chairman, Indian Independence League, Singapore, and Minister without Portfolio, Provisional Government of Azad Hind, who organised within a week the National Bank of Azad Hind at Rangoon, with authorized capital of five million Rupees and had it inaugurated by Netaji a few hours before he left for the Front on 5th April, 1944. Yellappa died a year later in harness, wounded by a splinter in a bombing raid in N. E. Burma.

no need for such a bank either ; they were sure of the failure of such an adventure.

What did he hope to gain by starting a bank in a foreign country like Burma, even assuming that Burma would not object to such an institution ? They added that Burma would, in fact did, object to such a bank as it might be derogatory to her sovereignty. Then, the Japanese got down to detailed objections. They were against the Provisional Government of Azad Hind finding the whole capital and making it a State Bank which, they said, would be opposed tooth and nail by the Burmese who had already a State Bank of Burma in Rangoon. The State Bank of Azad Hind in Rangoon next door to the Burma State Bank might unnecessarily kindle the jealousies of the Burmese. The reason was the Burmese State Bank was doing none too well for lack of financial resources ; and the State Bank of Azad Hind with its vast resources was bound to thrive in contrast to the rather thin time that the Burmese Bank was having.

"Very well, then what about throwing open the shares of Azad Hind Bank to public subscription ?" asked Netaji.

Oh, no, that would not do either ; because, the capital would have to be at least a few million rupees. This would mean a very large body of Indian shareholders ; the Bank's business would be predominantly confined to the transactions of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. Business conditions in war-time Burma held out no promise of adequate normal banking business for a new institution ; there would be practically no bills to discount, and no foreign exchange business worth mentioning. Indian depositors would fight shy of the semi-Government bank for fear of disclosing their financial position to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, though indirectly ; and, in these circumstances, if the bank started running at a loss, the disastrous consequences could not be restricted to the Indian community but would be felt by other banking institutions also throughout East Asia. And, after all, where was the need to have a new bank ? An Indian-

owned bank was already functioning very well in Rangoon and other parts of Burma ; why not, then, use that Bank for the purposes of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, asked the Japanese.

So, it was one long tug-of-war, spread over three days of nearly three hours each day.

Then in a masterly summing up of the discussions at the end of the third day, Netaji told the Japanese something to this effect :

“ I am surprised at your sustained opposition to the establishment of a State or Shareholders Bank by the efforts of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. I can understand your arguments against a State Bank to some extent ; I fail to see any substance in your arguments against a shareholders' bank also ; I know it is war-time now, that is, the conditions are very abnormal, but you ought to remember at the same time that the backing I expect to have from Indians for such a bank is also of a most extraordinary kind. I am more than confident that the bank can not only do enough normal banking business but also attract enormous deposits from the Indian people. I do *not* visualise any disaster ; if any threatens, I am confident of preventing it. Have a bank I must, and that too within a few days, before I leave for the front. I must open the bank and then go to the front.

“ Perhaps, you may be surprised to hear that four Indians have come forward to find between themselves all the required capital for the bank. They are prepared to write off the capital, if necessary, though I am quite sure they won't have to. In any event, they are ready to assign to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind eighty per cent of the annual profits. This removes all the difficulties you have mentioned ; I do not expect any serious opposition from the Burmese ; as a matter of fact, Burmese quarters have already been sounded ; they have not only no objection, but they have wished our venture all success.”

That silenced the Japanese pretty effectively. They shook their heads and said that if that be so, Netaji was welcome to have his bank, and they only hoped that it would not have a shortlived career.

It was always open to Netaji, on any matter, to take a very firm stand right at the beginning and ignore all opposition and adverse arguments and go ahead with his projects. But then the risk of a complete break with the Japanese was always there; he tried very patient persuasion and sought ultimate consent, grudging or wholehearted, in preference to precipitating a crisis over every issue.

How one man, Yellappa, and the other four patriotic Indians worked like Trojans night and day for a week and converted a vacant building into a full-fledged bank with an authorised capital of rupees fifty lakhs is a romantic story that deserves a chapter all by itself.

Another aspect of Netaji's skirmishes with the Japanese "allies" concerned the Indian labour force pressed for service on the construction of the Siam-Burma "death railway." I have heard that even some of the top-rankers in India have made sarcastic remarks that the Japanese butchered many Indians for the construction of the strategic railway from Siam to Burma "in spite of your Netaji and the Provisional Government." I can attribute this sarcasm only to their abysmal ignorance of the actual situation and their failure to understand Netaji.

While the main labour used for the construction of this railway were the Australian and British Prisoners of War, it is true that the Japanese sacrificed a few Indians as well, and their method of recruitment was really shocking.

Some of the arrogant NCOs of the Japanese who were ordered by the Japanese higher-ups to recruit labour came with lorries to market places, toddy shops and temples where people usually gathered, ordered them all to get into the lorries and, after sorting the able-bodied from the lot, spirited them away direct by train without even allowing them to inform their relatives or friends. But this method

was resorted to prior to Netaji's arrival and before the IIL movement gained full momentum.

When the matter was brought to the attention of the Indian Independence League, it immediately started negotiations with the Japanese authorities. In the meantime, Netaji arrived and when he was informed of this matter, he held urgent conferences with the Japanese authorities and vigorously protested against this method of recruiting. The Japanese apologised profusely, as usual, and gave vague excuses that as they were unable to trust Chinese labour and as Malay labour was unsatisfactory, the only alternative was to impound Indian labour and they did it thinking that it was to the mutual advantage of the Japanese and Indians.

Netaji told them that he had no objection to their recruiting Indian labour but that should be done only with the permission of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and on condition that labour would be provided with all facilities, such as accommodation, food and medical treatment. The Japanese agreed to his terms and there was an end to incidents of forceful recruitment. Further, Netaji sent a mission to Bangkok under Brahmachari Kailasm of the Ramakrishna Mission to see that the Japanese implemented the terms agreed to and the Indian labourers were well-off.

To saddle the sin of past Japanese actions on Netaji is not cricket.

Probably the most outstanding and admirable aspect of Netaji, the Fighter, was his capacity to go on fighting—and fighting—in the face of defeats and disappointments. Let me recall just one disastrous episode in the war of India's liberation.

Netaji was away on one of the Burma fronts on tour when the INA was fighting with its back to the wall, and the British had broken through Mandalay and were advancing on two or three fronts in a desperate hurry to take Rangoon. While risking his own life every minute on the front-line, Netaji got the stunning news that five INA Officers of the

Headquarters of the Second Division had gone over to the enemy.

It was the biggest moral catastrophe that had so far befallen the INA and disgraced both Netaji and that patriotic army in the eyes of the Indian community, the Burmese and the Japanese. It was impossible to keep it a secret from anybody.

Netaji returned to Rangoon without delay and wanted to think the whole thing over very carefully. He accepted no engagement and did not go either to the League or to the Supreme Command, both of which he otherwise usually attended regularly every day. Meanwhile, one morning, he urgently summoned Colonel Raju, his personal physician, who was living on the same floor behind Netaji's rooms and opposite to the room in which Major Rawat (Netaji's adjutant) and I were billeted. It was an unusually early hour for Netaji to summon any one of us, and Colonel Raju was wanted at once. We wondered what had happened and waited for a few minutes. Raju came out and told us that Netaji had sprained his hip muscle, when going through his morning physical jerks. Netaji was writhing in pain, Raju relieved it somewhat with some first aid pending fuller examination. Then we went in and saw him. The pain was not so unbearable; he was lying in bed but could not turn one side or the other; he had to lie in one position.

It was the most unfortunate time for him to have the sprain in, for he was at that time going through enough mental torture over the desertions, without the addition of physical torture. Getting out of bed was out of the question; he had to lie helpless on one side of his back without moving a fraction of an inch for nearly a week.

Was the sprain an unmixed evil? Perhaps it proved later a blessing in disguise. The moment he began feeling slightly better and able to move in bed he started thinking night and day, almost exclusively, of the desertions; he was plunged in introspection; he had plenty of time to do it in, because he hardly ever came out of his bed-room even

for his meals for a few days. We knew that a storm was raging in his breast, and we knew also that there would be big developments when he came out again and resumed his normal routine.

In those days I left him alone, as he, too, left all of us in the household severely alone, lest his thoughts be disturbed. The rare occasions on which he sent for me in the first few days I was with him only for a minute or two to answer some query or to receive some important instruction about League Headquarters affairs.

Later on he started sending for me and opening the topic of desertions. He talked. I listened. My eyes spoke to him volumes of sympathy. What else could I do or say? Once in a way he thought aloud.

"How can these fellows have the heart to betray their own comrades and their country, like this? Surely, the British are not going to welcome them with open arms. What do these fellows stand to gain? Nothing. They can only lose all that man holds precious. And yet . . . well, it's no use crying over spilt milk . . . what has happened has happened . . . and now what's wrong with us, what is wrong with the INA itself, that even five of its officers should let us down like this, and then, most important of all, how shall we prevent any serious repercussions, and how shall we prevent any desertions in future?"

The news of the desertions had spread quickly among the officers and rank and file of the INA in Rangoon. How would the INA, as a whole, take it?

There was no mistaking the answer. Every officer and every soldier was burning with anger over this let-down, and feeling ran high against the deserters. What form of expression would this indignation take? It was a very delicate situation.

By now Netaji had finished brooding; he had thought out an elaborate plan to convert this major disaster into a first-rate victory.

"This is a blessing in disguise," he said to me, "and and I shall see that the INA gains the maximum out of this apparent tragedy."

I wondered what he meant and stared at him. He looked like a giant refreshed. He was going to act. He was going to plunge headlong into a plan of action.

Almost the first thing he did was to summon all the officers and rank and file in Rangoon, numbering over five thousand or so to assemble in one of the camps to meet him. They gathered, the first meeting after the desertions. He spoke to them non-stop for over four hours in Hindustani, and roused enough spirit in them to last them a life-time. He spoke to them with brutal frankness, gave *carte blanche* to soldiers to shoot down officers on the front if the latter made any suspicious move like going over to the enemy.

This was something unheard of in the annals of any army in the world. There was a dramatic change in the whole atmosphere. He called upon the Commanders of all the INA and auxiliary camps in Rangoon to organise an anti-traitors day competition, prizes to be given to the camp staging the best anti-traitors' drama, and asked me to be one of the three judges to go round all the camps.

Netaji had triumphed as usual. All the camps worked night and day to knock off the trophy for the best anti-traitors' drama. The morale of the entire army shot up high. Sentiment had swung to the other extreme and stayed there for a long time after the dramas were over.

BOMBING OF INA HOSPITAL

There were many other occasions in East Asia, when Netaji's faith in man and God was put to the severest test. One of these was the bombing of the INA hospital in Myang (Rangoon). He felt bitter beyond words because he could not conjecture even the wildest reason for the American bombers wiping out a whole hospital.

What was known as carpet-bombing by American Flying Fortresses (four-engined heavy bombers called B-29's)

during World War II in their raids on Burma was ruthless and hideous; the outright destruction of human lives was nothing compared to the ghastly cruelty and living death inflicted on civilians, and sick and suffering soldiers.

The bombing of the hospital on 10th February, 1945, by B-29's is still vividly fresh in my memory though more than six years have passed since I saw with my own eyes that nightmarish outrage.

The hospital had been clearly marked with a big Red Cross visible to enemy aircraft even at a height of more than twelve or thirteen thousand feet.

To me this carpet-bombing of the INA hospital is even today an unsolved puzzle, although I know that, not far from the hospital the Japanese had their secret petrol and ammunition dumps hidden away amidst clumps of trees. But, then, there was not even an extra tin of petrol or even a small box of ammunition anywhere in the hospital grounds. I know this for a fact.

Why, then, did the Americans bomb the hospital and shower incendiaries on it? Without question it was a war crime and somebody ought to have been tried for it, but then the INA, with its Allies the Japanese, lost the war; and the vanquished could not arraign the victors at the bar of world opinion even for an outrage of this type.

It was about 2-30 p.m. on Saturday, and I was at the III Headquarters; the staff had gone home as it was a half-working day. Only two or three officers were still at their desks, among them being Lieutenant-Colonel Jehangir.

The sirens sounded the air raid warning; almost immediately came a flight of B-29's sweeping the skies and unloading their bombs, but some few miles away; a few minutes later, came the second wave and disappeared in the horizon. Then the clock struck three, and I felt hungry. Jehangir offered me a lift in his Baby Austin to Netaji's Bungalow where I was staying.

As we entered the gate and drove up to the portico of the Bungalow, I saw Netaji's car about to pull out of the

portico, with Major Rawat and Major Swami, Netaji's Adjutants, besides the driver, as its occupants. I literally jumped from Jehangir's car into Netaji's moving car and then asked Rawat and Swami where they were driving off. They had grabbed a few bananas from the dining table where the lunch for all of us was going cold, and they offered me a couple of them to swallow; we were already out of the gate and speeding ahead; my guess was right; they were rushing to the place that was just then being bombed by wave after wave of B-29's. Only a few minutes before, Netaji had received telephonic news that the INA hospital in Myang, six miles away, was being heavily bombed. Netaji was still in bed, recovering from a sprain of his hip-muscle; he wanted to go himself to the hospital and see things with his own eyes; but his doctor pointblank refused to let him stir out of the room, because if Netaji had to jump or run during the raid in his then condition, there was every risk of his being crippled for some time; to put his mind at ease, Rawat and Swami volunteered to rush to the scene and get him all the news of the bombing. And so we were speeding like mad men towards Myang. We had hardly gone four or five miles, when we saw a quick succession of Japanese lorries with a handful of excited occupants passing us and fleeing in the opposite direction. We still pushed on as we could not make out why they were dashing away like that even after the raid was over. They knew better. The second wave which had passed before I left the IIL Headquarters was by no means the last, as most of us had imagined because of our usual daily experience. There was only a break and more waves were coming; we pushed on, rather puzzled by the wild gestures of the men on the lorries and on foot, asking us to turn back. We were now nearing the hospital zone, and one of the lorries dashing towards us, blocked our path and the men in it yelled that the next wave of bombers was coming, and that we should turn our car back and speed off. It was too late then for us to turn back; the lorry dashed past us and vanished; the B-29's were nearly overhead and

were about to unload their bombs and incendiaries ; we left the car in the middle of the road, jumped into the ditch some three or four feet away to our left. The ditch was about four feet deep—good enough as a shelter from flying bomb splinters, but no protection against the shower of incendiaries which could fall direct on anybody's head or body and scorch him to death on the spot or to living death in a hospital. Came the shower of four hundred-pound explosive bombs and the burning gelatine terrors called incendiary bombs. There is protection against even the worst explosive bomb, except, of course, the atom bomb ; but there can be no protection against the incendiary ; it gets you even if you are sitting in the deepest ditch and it sticks to you and burns through you ; it burns through roof, ceiling and floor until it sets everything ablaze and gets you direct and in the enveloping flames. Do not flee from a bomb ; just lie flat on the spot or jump into the nearest shelter or dug-out ; but, from an incendiary dropped from a B-29, just flee, flee and flee, as far away as you can ; there is no other way of escape.

When we were getting out of the car, Swami, who alone had brought a steel-helmet in case of need, offered it to me ; I accepted it with alacrity to protect my bald head which was covered by only a thin khaki forage cap ; I was in khaki trousers and bushcoat which looked well-ironed and smart ; I always had a pathetic weakness for the crease down the front of my trousers ; by sheer force of habit, I gave a second's thought to the crease and tried to avoid spoiling it, though in the midst of a shower of death and destruction. So, in the ditch, though taking refuge from the terror from the skies, I carefully squatted on my tiptoes, with my haunches a few inches above the heels, thus saving the trouser-crease as much as I could !

One bomb fell to our right and another to our left. They came hurtling through the air with their frightening noise. The earth under my toes trembled and I closed my eyes and waited for the end to come, though still squatting

in that very fastidious posture. The one that fell on the left threw up so much loose earth that I had a shower of lumps of varying weights; but for the steelhelmet, my bald head would have suffered a concussion. I was still alive, I slowly opened my eyes, then life really returned to me, and so did a little courage, then came the voices of Rawat and Swami anxiously asking me: "Ayer Sahab, are you all right?" We were all the three of us all right, except for a slight scratch here and there. Our driver was all right too. But to our horror we found five yards from where we were sitting, Netaji's despatch rider, Manickam, buried deep in the mud; only his head was sticking out and he was shouting to us for help; he wanted only his hands to be freed from the mud; "Just do that only and run away," he said (in Hindustani). The next wave of bombers was expected any moment and he did not want all the three of us killed together on the spot which was almost certain if we tarried too long and removed all the earth that had covered his body. The poor boy had followed the textbook instruction to lie flat when under a bombing attack, but he had not bargained for the landslide from the other side of the ditch and for the shower of loose earth from above. We somehow managed to release his two hands, before we ran on to the nearest shelter; came the fourth and then the fifth wave. It was all over at last, at any rate for the time being. We returned to the ditch to dig up the dispatch-rider who was valiantly struggling to help himself. Meanwhile, we found Netaji's car, lying on its roof on the edge of the six-foot deep ten-foot wide crater made by the bomb, the blast from which had thrown the car high up in the air, turned it upside down and flung it on the edge of the crater. More bombers might come, as there was sufficient daylight for the messengers of death to do their worst in Rangoon and return to their bases in Bengal or Assam long before dusk.

We staggered back to Netaji's Bungalow one after another on foot, looking badly shaken but trying to put on a bold face. Before I reached the Bungalow, some Japanese

had got there and hinted to Netaji that while Rawat and Swami had been seen getting away from the scene of the bombing, I had not been spotted anywhere at all; perhaps, something had happened to me, they told Netaji. When I presented myself before him a little while later, he looked somewhat relieved. He was at that moment speaking to one or two INA officers who had somehow escaped the inferno in and around the hospital and were giving Netaji a graphic description of the rain of fire and death. They told him how wave after wave of bombers took square after square of the area and literally ploughed each big square thoroughly and relentlessly. Thus, in five waves they had raked, razed and ravaged an area of some six square miles, which on their maps they must have divided into five squares for target purposes.

In less than an hour, a whole hospital had been razed to the ground and what was lying on the ground was in flames, a large number of patients had been killed on the spot, and most of the rest had sustained severe burns. The latter were rushed to the General Hospital in the city, six miles away.

Netaji refused to stay in bed any longer. With great difficulty, he got out of it, stood bolt upright for the first time in a fortnight, put on some clothes and drove to the General Hospital before dusk. I accompanied him. At the hospital, he stood in the middle of the two rows of beds in deep sorrow for a few minutes, looking up and down the basement hall which echoed to the groans of the semi-conscious casualties. He then went near each soldier and had a close look at his injuries and assured him that he would personally make sure that everything humanly possible was done to relieve the physical agony caused by the burns. He visited the men twice a day, and sometimes thrice. Every time he returned home from hospital he was morose and ordered his meal to be sent to his own room upstairs and ate all alone, and not in the dining-room. If soldiers on the front line had been killed or wounded, he would have taken

the casualties as part of the game of war ; but here helpless patients in a hospital had been killed, maimed or burnt and the humanitarian in him could not stomach this. It was an unparalleled outrage, and a flagrant violation of the Red Cross.

All he could do was to swear revenge and to call upon the Indians in Burma to avenge the atrocity by intensifying their support of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind by pouring in more men, money and materials to gear up the war-potential of that Government.

I am still hoping that one day the Americans will tell the world the real reason for their blasting and burning the INA hospital in Myang (Rangoon) on Saturday, 10th February, 1945.

CHAPTER IV

INDIA'S ARMY OF LIBERATION

NO one was surprised that Subhas Chandra Bose, with his magnetic personality and his long record of suffering and sacrifices in the struggle for India's freedom, captured the hearts of the civilians in East Asia from the moment he landed in Singapore on the fateful morning of 2nd July, 1943.

But the way he virtually hypnotised the soldiers of the INA from the moment he walked with leonine dignity in a cream-coloured silk lounge suit and holding a dark brown felt hat in his left hand, to inspect his first guard of honour in East Asia, is in itself a fascinating chapter.

I watched the soldiers' faces as Subhas addressed his very first words to the INA in East Asia: "*Sathion aur Doston* (Comrades and Friends)." One could see with half an eye that a thrill ran through the ranks of the guard of honour at being addressed by such a great man as *sathion aur doston*.

What followed thrilled them to the core. He said he was on the eve of realising India's dream of fighting Britain with the sword for India's liberation. When the men of the guard of honour marched back to their barracks and repeated with great gusto the contents of Netaji's brief talk to them, there was sensation throughout the camps. That day Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose won the undying admiration and deep loyalty of the rank and file of the INA.

The title of Supreme Commander, if it truly fitted any commander on the battlefields of Europe or Asia, fitted Netaji most superbly. He *looked* supreme, every inch of him. The way he talked and moved with the soldiers on or off the warfront was one of supreme dignity and self-confidence, too.



Netaji in the simple uniform of Supreme Commander of INA.

PRESENTED BY

J. RAGHOMAY REDDY

'Brindavan'

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The word "personality" assumed a meaning when Netaji, in his Supreme Commander's uniform, stepped on to the saluting base and faced the serried ranks of the INA. And yet, the uniform itself was the simplest in the world—no bright red cloth, no shining metal, no ribbons, no medals in a row, no shining leatherbelt or shoulder strap, nor a sword in its scabbard hanging from his waist, nor a horse to ride. Whatever clothes he wore, he wore them smartly. Normally he wore khaki cotton cloth except when he visited Japan. There he had to use khaki woollens as a protection against the severe cold weather. His forage cap with two tiny well-polished brass buttons in the front sat majestically on his bright and broad forehead—the face beneath the cap, of a rosy wheat complexion, now inscrutable, immobile, dignified, now wreathed in a charming smile, now reminding one of the Bengal tiger as when he roared an inspiring exhortation to soldiers or civilians at mammoth gatherings.

It was impossible to take one's eyes off his face whenever he ascended the platform; he held one spellbound by its compelling magnetism. His bushcoat fitted him like a glove and showed off his massive chest to advantage. When he stood up, in his smart breeches and well-polished topboots, he gave an impression of impregnable solidity like the Rock of Gibraltar symbolising in granite India's will to freedom. It was not only his countrymen that were overawed by his dominant personality: Thais, Burmese, Japanese and Indonesians too were unanimous in voting him as easily the most striking personality in all East Asia.

No wonder, then, that whenever he went amidst the soldiers of the INA, their chests heaved with pride at the sight of their *Sipah Salar*, simple in his uniform and yet so naturally imperious—a born leader of men.

The average soldier's mental surrender to Netaji was complete the moment he heard him speak to the men of the INA. He spoke to them in a language that perhaps no army commander had ever before addressed to his men. He addressed them on the eve of their moving forward to

the battlefronts. And what did he tell them? He told them nonchalantly to step out of the ranks and remain behind if they had even the least doubt in their minds as to the righteousness of the cause for which they were about to lay down their lives. He gave them his word of honour that he would really appreciate their frankness and sincerity if any one of them told him that he did not wish to go to the front, either because he was afraid or because he was not convinced. No stigma would attach to such a frank and honest soldier. He would be sent to the rear where he could still do some useful work. Netaji repeated over and over again that he did not care for numbers; he would be satisfied with smaller numbers, but every one of such men should be a hundred percent sincere and brave in the face of steel and fire.

This kind of talk, the soldiers had never heard before. They knew that he meant every word of what he said. They were profoundly influenced by his supreme self-confidence in being able to carry on the fight, irrespective of who was with him and who was not. It was this utterance and outlook of Netaji that convinced the soldiers that they had complete freedom of choice even on the eve of marching to the front. This freedom itself increased a hundredfold their spirit of daring and self-sacrifice. When he told them bluntly that he had nothing to offer them except hunger, thirst, hardships and death, their roar of *Netaji Ki Jai* rent the air. And, they were true to *their* word of honour; some of them lived on jungle grass alone for eleven days and yet carried on the fight on the warfront.

In a simple and effortless way, he made the soldiers feel that he was truly one of them: a feat which becomes the more difficult the more removed the commander is from the ranks, but which came easy to Netaji. Most unexpectedly, he would drive into one of the camps when the soldiers were about to sit on the floor in parallel rows back to back for their dinner. He would walk straight to the kitchen, see for himself what had been cooked and in what hygienic or



Netaji caught by camera in rare moment of relaxation at sports meet of the INA at Singapore. Leaning against his knee is the little girl Indira who delighted INA audiences with her dance and music.

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unhygienic conditions, then go on to the dining hall and quietly sit on the ground in the middle of one of the rows and ask to be served along with the men. He would eat the soldiers' food along with them, quietly and without any fuss, and then comment on the quality to the Camp Commandant, after the meal was over. The men could not but be deeply moved by this unexpected and unostentatious identification of Netaji with his humble sepoys. That was a red letter day in the lives of those men.

His solicitude for the men became proverbial. There was no detail too small, no fact too trivial for him to find out. The exact weight of the various items of their food rations was at Netaji's fingertips. No quartermaster could bluff or mislead him. The men knew that if Netaji could possibly give them a little more oil or some fish or meat occasionally, no officer could deprive them of it once it reached the stores.

A classic example was the ack-ack battery at Annequin which was hourly subject to enemy bombing, in the midst of the thick jungles and away from civilisation, on the Burma-Thailand border. We met the Commandant and the men of the battery on our trek to Bangkok. They had rice, and sometimes some *moong dal*. Daily they collected jungle grass which did for vegetables; but their salt ration was always a doubtful factor. Whenever their salt ration arrived—which was not too frequently—they celebrated the day by having an extra morsel of rice. We were given exactly this ration when we halted at the battery for a few hours; for us who had been trekking the weary way to Bangkok for over ten days, the rice, *dal* and jungle grass with salt tasted a feast. Possibly we couldn't have touched it if we had to go without salt for days. While Annequin, with its daily baptism of fire, had often to go without salt, more fortunate camps, for instance, in Malaya had to go only without oil for the vegetables.

These deficiencies caused a great deal of nutritional disease in the camps; but the soldiers never complained on

their own when Netaji questioned them individually ; only their commandants told Netaji. On the contrary the soldiers assured him that it made no difference what they got or did not get in their rations. At any rate, what they were getting was quite sufficient and they were quite happy. They said all this, as can be surmised, solely because of their personal devotion to Netaji. The human relationship between Netaji and his soldier was thus unique. Each was prepared to do anything for the other. It was truly a hypnotised army ; and it hypnotised him, too.

There was nothing in this world that a Commander like Netaji and an army like the INA would not dare face, confident in the love and strength of each other.

CHAPTER V

STATESMAN AND DIPLOMAT

SINCE my return to India in 1945, at the end of the World War, I have heard the criticism from the lips of even otherwise well-informed persons that Netaji ought not to have taken the aid of the Japanese. Some others have repeated unthinkingly the war-time British propagandist accusation that Netaji had "joined" the Japanese and was a tool in their hands for the invasion of India; and, if the Japanese had succeeded, they would have taken the place of the British as India's rulers.

It suited the British to broadcast this disgraceful libel because they knew exactly where the shoe pinched them. Their military experts told them that Netaji and his INA could not be ignored; on the contrary, they were a dagger pointed at Delhi, the seat of British power in India.

The British accusation may, therefore, be dismissed as utterly baseless war-time propaganda; the man who was twice elected President of the Indian National Congress and who literally wore himself out inch by inch in the epic fight for India's freedom, could certainly not love India *less* than did Wavell or Mountbatten!

Now, to turn to the criticism that Netaji took a serious risk in taking Japanese aid because he could not have prevented the Japanese from imposing their rule on Indians, once they were well entrenched on Indian soil. I am sorry to have to say that such critics betray a degree of ignorance of Netaji and the Japanese that is unpardonable.

In his dealings with the Japanese, Netaji took his stand four-square on certain fundamentals and refused to budge an inch, even when such a stand meant an imminent and total break with the Japanese and an end to all his dreams of freeing India. For those of us who were privileged to

watch him night and day handling Japanese Generals, statesmen, diplomats, administrators and businessmen, it was really a wonder how Netaji could be so constantly and intensely alive even to the remotest possibility of a situation ultimately leading to a compromise of India's complete sovereignty and independence.

The Japanese were left in no doubt about this mental attitude of Netaji, and they were sore about this, and said so openly. In fairness to the Japanese nation, I must admit that the higher-ups were always decent and their actions were above board; but not so all the lesser men in the Japanese government and in the armed forces.

Netaji never relaxed his vigil in his dealings with the Japanese; indeed, it is a pity that he was compelled to be constantly on his guard instead of being free and unrestrained in his friendship with them.

The lesson of China was not at all lost on Netaji. He warned the Japanese time and again that delay in their arriving at a friendly settlement with the Chiang Kai-shek régime at Chungking would prove disastrous for the conduct of their war against the Anglo-American alliance.

He won the unqualified admiration of the great East Asia leaders like Dr. Jose Laurel (President of the Philippines) and Dr. Ba Maw (Head of the State, Independent Burma) for his vigorous independence in his parleys with the tallest among the Japanese leaders.

There was something quietly majestic about his bearing, a rhythmic dignity about his gait, something electrical about his very presence, and at the same time, something very charming about his child-like smile, that fascinated and deeply impressed one and all in any international gathering that he attended at Tokyo.

He truly strode East Asia like a Colossus and dominated the entire scene without being self-conscious about it. In the midst of a group of Japanese he looked a stalwart—over six-foot in his top-boots, khaki breeches, khaki tunic and

khaki forage cap—the unique yet simple uniform of the Supreme Commander of the INA.

He was a stalwart both physically and figuratively. He commanded the respect of the Japanese. But some of the small-minded Japanese would not so readily acknowledge his complete equality with the highest Japanese dignitaries. Some of them spent all their time devising pinpricks for Netaji; while they would suggest to him to observe all etiquette and formalities with Japanese ministers, generals, admirals and air marshals, they would trot out some fantastic excuse or other for an occasional waiving of such formalities or etiquette to be observed by the Japanese. "Incidents" of this kind took place at regular intervals. But every time Netaji made the Japanese eat the humble pie. Often, mere threats sufficed to make the Japanese climb down; sometimes he carried out those threats. At the last moment, he threatened to absent himself from dinners because the Japanese had failed to observe certain formalities which they had earlier promised to do.

When a new Japanese Commander-in-Chief arrived in Rangoon, the Japanese liaison officers suggested to Netaji to depute one of his Senior officers to call on the Commander-in-Chief at his residence by way of a courtesy visit. Netaji said "No." He insisted that the C.-in-C. should first call on him and then he should himself return the call, and there would be no need to depute any officer.

The Japanese were in no doubt as to the place Netaji occupied in the hearts of the millions of his countrymen at home. They had no illusions about their own military strength, if it came to a question of imposing their will on the Indian people once they entered India with the INA. They were reminded at every turn that once they stood on Indian soil shoulder to shoulder with the INA, only the overall war strategy would be left to them to be worked out, but full sovereignty over the liberated regions would rest wholly with the Supreme Commander of the INA. They would look to him for all supplies, and the adminis-

tration of liberated areas would be the exclusive responsibility of the Azad Hind Government.

But, it may be asked, what was the sanction behind Netaji if the Japanese broke faith with him after crossing the border, and while advancing into India? That sanction was the *fiery spirit* of the INA to which the Japanese themselves bore witness and the total non-co-operation and sabotage by the civilian population in the liberated regions. A combination of these two formidable weapons, if directed by Netaji against the Japanese, would prove too much even for the Japanese forces.

The Japanese knew this very well. That was why Netaji was more than confident that he was not taking even the slightest risk in accepting Japanese aid in his epic armed struggle for India's independence. Only those who, having ears refuse to hear, having eyes refuse to see, having intellect refuse to think for themselves, and, being too prejudiced, refuse to be fair—only such people could go on repeating their regret that Netaji took Japanese aid.

As for the insinuation that Netaji was at any time a tool in the hands of the Japanese, there is no need to say much in refutation. The man whom the mighty British Empire could not subdue, the man who insisted on his independence in running the Azad Hind broadcast from war-time Berlin, the man who refused to have India's Independence with Japanese aid except on his own terms, that man might have been anything else but certainly no tool in anybody's hands.

Nothing was dearer to him in this world than India's independence; but he was prepared to do without it, if the price asked was a compromise on any principle.

He felt it his moral duty to India to take Japan's aid; he made more than sure that India would be no loser at all.

He was quite sure of himself; he was supremely confident that he could handle any contingency; he, therefore, went ahead without a moment's hesitation.

In regard to Netaji's role as the leader of the Indian freedom movement in East Asia, I have also noticed traces of obscurity and self-contradiction in the attitude of some Americans.

The Americans strongly resented the Azad Hind Government's declaration of war on the United States also, along with the declaration against Britain. While they conceded in theory any subject nation's right to fight for its freedom from alien rule, they were annoyed over Indians taking up arms against Britain when, as an ally of America, Britain was herself engaged in a life and death struggle. And, lastly, the Americans resented Netaji's alliance with Japan, the mortal enemy of the United States in the Pacific.

On the surface, these objections were quite understandable, but how far were they justified in the eyes of right-thinking men?

First, let me take the declaration of war by the Provisional Government of Azad Hind on the United States of America. As a member of the Azad Hind Cabinet I was present at the historic midnight meeting of the Provisional Government on the night of 23rd-24th October, 1943.

Netaji was in the chair. All the ministers and advisers were present. Netaji himself, in a brief speech, moved that the Provisional Government declare war on Britain and her ally, America. Practically no discussion followed and it looked as if the motion would be carried unanimously. The meeting was taking place on the spacious rear *verandah* of Netaji's bungalow. Colonel Loganadan ('uncle' to everybody) who was sitting at the far-end to Netaji's left, then struck a discordant note. He never hesitated to speak out his mind to Netaji on any important issue.

"Why drag in America, Sir? Why not leave her alone and confine the declaration to Britain?" asked 'uncle,' speaking straight to Netaji. "After all," uncle added, "Britain had begged America to help her in this war, and as we have nothing particularly against America, why not

try and retain America's goodwill for us? Why range America also officially against ourselves?"

Netaji saw no ethics in 'uncle' Loganadan's viewpoint; he failed to see even expediency. He took his stand on the moral plane, and said that they should be honest about their attitude towards America. The presence of American forces on Indian soil was a reality, a grim reality, too, because it meant that the task facing the INA on Indian soil had been made doubly difficult. The INA was not concerned with any other issue except the expulsion of the British from India in the shortest possible time. American forces in India were actively obstructing the march of the Indian liberation forces towards their goal of Freedom. And no nation on earth, whatever the circumstances, had a right to fight against another nation which was merely struggling to achieve its own liberty. In the alternative, America ought to have forced Britain to concede India's national demand for Independence without further delay. America ought to remember her own fight for independence against the very same British over a century ago. It would be immoral and beneath the dignity of the Government of Free India to shirk the issue and to appear to curry favour with America.

Uncle Loganadan saw Netaji's viewpoint and readily admitted that he had not looked at the matter from those angles.

The declaration of war was carried unanimously.

As for the objection about embarrassing Britain, Netaji was convinced of the perfect morality of exploiting any and every opportunity of fighting Britain for the sacred cause of the freedom of one-fifth of the human race. He went a step further. He was emphatic that it would be a crime against God and man to let go a golden opportunity, thereby allowing the continuance of Britain's domination of India. There was no question of betrayal or of breach of faith; because, Netaji had proclaimed from the house-tops, long before World War II broke out, that he would take full advantage of it; Britain knew exactly where she stood with him and

treated him as her worst enemy in India ; he never squealed ; of course, he outwitted and outmanœuvred Britain ; so, the British should not complain, nor should any of their friends.

Now, to take up the most important objection from the American viewpoint, namely, Netaji's alliance with Japan, the "aggressor" in China and the perpetrator of the attack on Pearl Harbour. America took the aid of France to win her own independence from Britain, and, in World War II, Britain was not only taking America's aid but had gladly placed her Generals under the command of an American General in Europe. If a mighty Power like Britain could go round with the begging bowl in hand, there could be no objection to Netaji's taking Japan's aid. After all Britain was not fighting to win her freedom but Netaji was fighting for India's freedom. Why, then, should he not accept the proffered hand of Japan ? Were the Japanese in any way worse than the British ? They could not be so, at any rate in one respect. Japan had not lorded it over another country of the size of India for a century and a half. Then, should Netaji have declined Japan's aid because of her "aggression" in China ? He was not an arbiter among independent nations of the world ; he must first make his own people independent, and only then start apportioning blame among free nations ; not that he did not have full sympathy with the Chinese people.

It must be remembered that, as President of the Indian National Congress in 1938, he had sent an Indian Medical Mission to China as a practical demonstration of his own and the Indian people's sympathy with the people of China ; and, as a matter of fact, Netaji never missed a chance of telling the Japanese topmen to come to terms with the Chiang Kai-Shek régime because he wanted to see the end of the war on China's soil at the earliest possible moment. Netaji's attitude towards China was clear, and his conscience was more than clean.

As for the Pearl Harbour attack, Netaji was fully aware of the feeling of vengeful hatred that this attack created in

the minds of Americans ; but that was a matter for settlement between two world Powers. And, did not America, after all, settle her score with the atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki ?

Netaji had no other quarrel with America as far as India was concerned ; he had no malice against her ; but he made no secret of his feeling that it was a thousand pities that America should have helped Britain indirectly to continue her stranglehold on India. He was only concerned with this aspect of the war and with nothing else. With him the acid test was : who is fighting for India's freedom and who against it ? Other considerations merely sought to sidetrack the issue and he refused to be a party to it.

NETAJI, BA MAW, AUNG SAN AND THAKIN NU

Indo-Burmese relations during the years 1943 to 1945 (the most critical phase of the East Asia War for the INA) were influenced by the personal attitudes and reactions of Netaji on the one hand and Adipadi Dr. Ba Maw, General Aung San and Thakin Nu on the other.

The Japanese had acknowledged the independence of Burma ; Ba Maw was installed as the Head of the State as well as Premier ; General Aung San became Commander-in-Chief, and Thakin Nu the Foreign Minister. All three were glamorous heroes of Free Burma, having played important roles in using the East Asia War to achieve their country's freedom.

Here was Netaji on Free Burma's soil as Head of another Free State (Azad Hind), holding the allegiance of Indians in Burma, mobilising the man-power and material resources of Indian nationals in Burma, and, as Supreme Commander, marshalling the Free India Army (INA) on the march from Singapore and Malaya to the Burma-India Border.

Three separate, though allied, authorities were thrown together in Burma ; in view of the exigencies of the War, the

Japanese exercised supreme authority in purely military affairs; the Government of Independent Burma ran the internal affairs of the country, Netaji's Government of Azad Hind sought the goodwill and assistance of the Japanese as well as the Burmese authorities in using Burma as a spring-board for the INA attack on the British armed forces in India. This meant intensive recruitment and training of Indians in Burma, military camps, parades, mass demonstrations, celebrations and collection of money and material—in fact, all the activities of an independent authority. But, then, how to avoid any suggestion of violation of Burmese Sovereignty was the delicate problem.

Adipadi Dr. Ba Maw was very touchy on this point. He reacted promptly to every report of encroachment on this sovereignty. The position was difficult for both Adipadi and Netaji. Personally they were great friends. They had known each other intimately for years; Netaji had been a State prisoner of the British in Mandalay Jail until he was brought back to India in 1927; the intervening sixteen years and the East Asia War had brought these two heroes of two neighbouring nations closer together. Both had suffered and sacrificed for the liberation of their respective countries. One had already realised his dream with the flight of the British from Burma in 1942; the other was still preparing for the final attack on the alien ruler in his motherland.

Netaji was not only a sincere friend, but also a statesman and diplomat of consummate skill. He first gave Ba Maw, Aung San and Thakin Nu his earnest assurances of respect for Burmese sovereignty. He begged of them to interpret all his words and view all his actions in the light of these basic assurances. He told them beforehand, that for the sake of India's freedom, which the Burmese also desired and favoured, he would have to take complete charge of the Indian population in Free Burma, mobilise their resources in man-power and materials, fly the Indian National Congress flag, parade the Indian National Army and temporarily turn Rangoon and some other centres of Indian habitation in

Burma into bases of operation. On the surface, however, all or anyone of these activities might appear to be violations of Free Burma's sovereignty.

Ba Maw assured Netaji of his own whole-hearted co-operation and the enthusiastic goodwill of the Burmese people for him and the INA in their inspiring fight for India's freedom. But, I am afraid, the understanding did not work in practice, at least fully. Unfortunately, there were certain elements who made it their business to look out for minor and inconsequential incidents and to magnify them as deliberate slights to the sovereignty of Burma. Dr. Ba Maw did not pay much heed to these trouble-makers for some time; but then the mischief-mongers, Indian as well as Burmese, were ever on the alert and went on poisoning Dr. Ba Maw's ears; the result was, first, a slight cooling off of his relations with Netaji, and then, a definite estrangement between the two, to a degree.

Netaji shifted the Headquarters of the Government of Azad Hind from Singapore to Rangoon in January, 1944. It was sixteen months later (in April, 1945) that he and the Government evacuated Rangoon, leaving only the Supreme Command Headquarters of the INA behind, in charge of Major-General Loganadan, to protect the lives and properties of the Indian nationals in Burma in the interval between the retreat of the Japanese and arrival of the British.

Those sixteen fateful months of Indo-Burman collaboration on the soil of Free Burma, started off in an atmosphere of cordiality. Netaji and Dr. Ba Maw exchanged courtesies, and put the leading members of their Governments and armies in touch with each other so as to ensure the smooth achievement of practical day-to-day co-operation between the two Organisations (Indian and Burman).

Dr. Ba Maw's Government was from time to time faced with acute problems such as for instance, cloth and finance. But Netaji had mobilised all Indians in East Asia, and money and materials, including cloth, flowed into the Azad Hind Headquarters in an unending stream. The Burmese nationals



Netaji (right) meets Japanese Foreign Minister, Mr. Mamoru Shigemitsu, in Tokyo, to settle problems of mutual interest to the Government of Japan and the Provisional Government of Azad Hind.



Netaji is greeted by Adipadi Dr. Ba Maw, Head of State and Premier of Independent Burma, on the Indian Leader's arrival in Rangoon in January, 1944. In national costume and looking on with a smile (sixth from left) is Thakin Nu, then Foreign Minister and now Premier of Burma.

were witnessing with astonishment this phenomenon of astounding progress and prosperity of the Azad Hind Government, while their own State (of Independent Burma) was struggling hard to keep things going even in the matter of the barest necessities of life. The people began making invidious comparisons between Netaji and Ba Maw. Of course, that was not at all fair to Ba Maw. His success in tackling the Burmese problems depended entirely on the enthusiasm and wholehearted co-operation of the Burmese people. Netaji's war-cry of *Chalo Delhi!* had roused the Indians throughout East Asia into a state of frenzy. They were literally "freedom-mad."

It was quite natural that the Burmese people were not and could not be roused to the same pitch of enthusiasm and self-sacrifice. The only slogan that Dr. Ba Maw could have given his people at that time was: "Defend your motherland at all costs." That would not have been sufficiently inspiring, because, after all, the Burmese knew very well that to keep the British out of Burma was the business of the Japanese; the Japanese Army, Navy and Air Force could be depended upon to defend Burma against British attempts to reoccupy it. Therefore, the Burmese did not consider themselves as placed on a war footing. Their thoughts turned to the necessities of normal life in the midst of the death and destruction caused by the extensive Anglo-American bombing of Burma. They thought of cloth and other consumer goods which used to come to Burma by shiploads in peace time; they wanted even the many luxuries of life to which they had easy access in normal times. But the hard realities roused their discontent; in a city like Rangoon, the Burmese who lived in houses of brick and mortar could be counted on one's fingers ends; the bulk of the population lived in huts of bamboo-matting, with the inadequate supply of drinking water and unsatisfactory sanitary arrangements characteristic of "camp" life in bamboo huts. The total absence of local industries accentuated the disappearance of imported consumer goods and

the non-existence of cotton textile mills resulted in total famine in cloth in many areas; there were reports of men and women going about in discarded and tattered gunny cloth. Many women of respectable families never stirred out of their houses because they had no decent cloth with which to cover their bodies.

In contrast to this depressing picture, the total mobilisation of Indians throughout East Asia, primarily for military purposes, led to a flow of goods into Burma, however small the quantity, from Japan, China, the Philippines, Malaya, Java and Thailand. Netaji of course made a sporting gesture whenever he found he had a little to spare from these supplies for the Burmese people. But that was only a drop in the ocean. The Burmese Government found itself in a helpless position in the matter of meeting its own people's needs.

The dynamic activity and the apparent affluence of the Azad Hind Government were in vivid contrast to the difficult material situation with which the Free Burma Government was grappling from day to day. It was only natural that this contrast should have been noticed by the Burmese people in cities and towns. No wonder then that Netaji found himself in a delicate and embarrassing position, while Dr. Ba Maw found his task even more difficult and some times irritating. I know from personal knowledge that Netaji was all the time alive to the need for great circumspection on his part; and he certainly took all care to see that none on the INA side said or did anything that might offend the susceptibilities of Dr. Ba Maw or the Burmese people. At the same time, he had to intensify the activities of the Azad Hind Government and the INA in preparation for the final assault on the British fronts across the Burma-India Border, namely, Imphal and Kohima.

Even from the early days of the Azad Hind Government and the INA on Burmese soil, it was known that General Aung San did not see eye to eye with Dr. Ba Maw; Aung San sometimes struck a discordant note even at important

public gatherings. Thakin Nu, the Foreign Minister, wisely kept a discreet silence over the rift between the Head of the State and Commander-in-Chief. Netaji was distressed at the very first sign of internal differences in the Burmese Cabinet over major issues of policy. He was very keen on doing whatever he could to bring about complete rapprochement between the two front-rank Burmese leaders. But there was an obvious limit to what he could do if he was not to be misunderstood by either of them.

Today, General Aung San, alas, is no more, having fallen a victim to the assassin's bullet; Dr. Ba Maw is alive and in retirement from politics; Thakin Nu is Premier, having taken over the reins in the crisis that followed the assassination of General Aung San and members of his Cabinet.

I had known Dr. Ba Maw since 1936—eight years before I returned to Rangoon, this time as a Minister of the Azad Hind Government. Then he was a Minister in the dyarchic Government under the Governorship of Sir Archibald Cochrane and I had been transferred from Bombay to Rangoon as Manager of Reuters and the Associated Press of India. He was always independent and assertive; he did not bow to Cochrane in the late 'thirties and he refused to bow to the Japanese in the early 'forties.

I met General Aung San and Thakin Nu for the first time in the latter's house at a dinner given in honour of some of the Ministers of the Azad Hind Government including myself. Thakin Nu and his wife were ideal hosts; the table had been specially decorated with a design of the Indian National Tricolour done in coloured chalk powder; it looked delicate and exquisite, and characteristically Burmese.

As was expected, General Aung San arrived late, but he made up for it by livening up the talk round the table by some typically Aung San quips. His frankness on any topic was devastating and often embarrassing. Both the host and the hostess were smiling their best indulgence to the somewhat whimsical Commander-in-Chief of the Burmese

Army. Many of his jokes were against himself and he too enjoyed them as much as his listeners did. A few days later he invited Netaji, Ministers and senior officers, and officials of the INA to a tea party. We arrived punctually. Five, ten, fifteen minutes . . . half an hour after time, and yet no news of the host. The atmosphere was getting strained in spite of Netaji's efforts to make easy conversation with others on the Burmese side. Then at last walked into the hall General Aung San and sat down by Netaji's side. As far as we could see from our places a few feet away, he offered no elaborate or loud enough apologies for being so late. He looked somewhat glum and unusually quiet. We were puzzled, even after the party got going. We felt that something was amiss somewhere. To ease the slight tension in the air and to get a laugh out of our group someone on our side said: "Either Aung San has a bad tummyache or is coming straight from a quarrel with his wife!" Of course, it was nothing more than a joke at the expense of the lovable Aung San who would have himself laughed outright if he had overheard the guest. He must have hurried to the party from some very important official conference which lasted longer than expected. That was probably why he looked rather pre-occupied till nearly halfway through the party.

Great warmth and cordiality marked the relations between General Aung San and Thakin Nu on the one hand and Netaji on the other. They made no secret of their admiration for the Indian patriot who was marshalling a liberation army against heavy odds, and whom they wished all luck. Netaji loved them both very deeply and held them up to the INA as models of resurgent youth reaching the top of the ladder in the National Administration.

When the gulf between Dr. Ba Maw and Netaji began widening in the early part of 1945, General Aung San and Thakin Nu made earnest efforts to bring the Heads of the two States nearer each other. But throughout those unhappy days, Netaji never lost patience or his faith in the ultimate favourable outcome of his mission.

Besides these and other major aspects of Netaji's policies as head of the "Free India" movement, I was curious to watch his attitude towards all people who came into contact with him. I was particularly curious to see whether, consciously or unconsciously, he showed any special favour or consideration to a Bengali merely because he was a Bengali.

I was convinced beyond a doubt that there was not the slightest trace of provincialism in Netaji's mind at any stage. This is not to say that he was not happy to meet a Bengali ; or to talk to him in Bengali or exchange reminiscences with him on events in Bengal at a time when he had himself been the stormy petrel in Bengal's turbulent politics.

But when it came to serious affairs of State, all were Indians first and Indians last in his eyes. Merit alone counted ; he chose his colleagues and co-workers in the Government, the INA and the ILL with the utmost freedom from all bias and with an inborn national outlook. He took all India in his mental sweep and consistently forgot the language or religion of his associates. He showed in his deeds, day after day, that he was far, far above any such petty considerations like the mother-tongue or the birthplace of an Indian. That the man was a son of India was more than sufficient for Netaji.

Those who lived with him in his household bailed from all over India. His physician Colonel Raju comes from Andhra ; Colonel Rawat, his Adjutant from Garhwal (U.P.) ; Captain Shamshere Singh, A.D.C., from the Punjab ; another A.D.C. was a Gurkha ; Major Swami, Officer on Special Duty, and Bhaskaran, confidential Steno to Netaji, hail from Tamilnad and Kerala respectively. It so happened that no one of any importance staying with him in his Bungalow hailed from his own Province.

One of Netaji's go-getters, Yellappa, was a native of Coorg ; his Chief of Staff and Second in Command of the entire INA, Major-General Bhonsle, is a son of Maharashtra ; others who held top ranks in the Army were Muslims ; his

Vice-President in the IIL was a Christian, John Thivy ; the Officer whom he entrusted with the enviable task of erecting a memorial for the INA Shaheeds in Singapore was Colonel Stracey, an Anglo-Indian.

Thus Netaji gave the Provisional Government, the INA and IIL a thoroughly cosmopolitan character, and made them a shining example of unity of the Nation for all India and for the world to see and admire.

PART III



Netaji addresses a press conference on 21st March, 1944 at his Advance Headquarters in Burma, after INA crossed Burma-India Border and planted Indian Tricolour on the sacred soil of India on 18th March, 1944.

CHAPTER I

NETAJI THE SAVIOUR

SUBHAS was the spearhead of the restless, daring Indian youth dreaming of a great and free India, when he fought political battles in India between the years 1920 and 1940. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was the Colossus who strode East Asia and organised and led an army of Liberation against the mighty British Power entrenched in India, between the years 1943 and 1945. Alive or dead, this Man of Destiny, is and will be a force in India's history for a long long time.

In dark hours, the youth of the nation, and generations yet unborn, will draw strength and inspiration from this man's dare-devil spirit, dogged perseverance, indomitable courage, unshakeable faith and irrepressible optimism.

In the two brief years that he led the Indian Independence Movement in East Asia he *lived* a dream that the youth of India had dreamt for decades and gone to the gallows for daring to attempt to make a reality of it.

In those brief twenty-four months he showed to the world that a single Indian could lead an Army and shake the British Empire in India to its foundations. He showed to the world how Indians could rise to the greatest heights of courage and self-sacrifice. He showed to the world that, given the smallest opportunity, Indians could organise a national army and an Independent Government of their own and achieve a rare type of solidarity among themselves. He showed to the world that young Indian womanhood, hitherto sheltered and protected under the parental roof, could brave all dangers and march to the front with rifles slung on their shoulders. He showed to the world that, given the right lead and inspiration, Indians could be the equals of the most advanced nations of the earth. Finally,

he showed to the world that, while advancing on the material plane, Indians could keep their place on the moral and spiritual planes also.

His courage was the most outstanding trait in his character. He feared only God.

The worst disasters did not perturb him much or for long. He feared no world-power, nor a combination of world powers ; his faith and courage were of that very rare order.

A lesser man than Netaji might have been appalled at the sight of the British hordes arrayed against him in a solid phalanx across the Burma-India border. He was a *Karma Yogi*. *Action* first, *Action* second, *Action* last was his religion. He was prepared for a protracted war against the British, with their formidable war-machine moving forward like a steam-roller and threatening to crush beyond recognition the entire INA and, with it, all the dreams of Netaji. But, Netaji did not lose a wink of sleep on that account. It mattered little if it meant a crushing defeat ; for that defeat could only be temporary and give a little breathing time to the British. More heroes, in their tens of thousands, would rise out of the blood of the martyrs, and continue to wage a relentless war for India's Independence, ultimately leading to inevitable victory.

It was this courage and optimism of Netaji that breathed a new life into the Indians in East Asia and inspired the lowliest and timidest of them to perform amazing acts of heroism, bravery and self-sacrifice.

The moral and spiritual victory of India over Britain had been definitely achieved by Netaji on the battlefields of Imphal and in the Indian homes in East Asia.

By his practical achievements in the realm of administration as Head of the Free India Government, Netaji demonstrated his infinite capacity for grasp of details and planning and organisation. The multitude and variety of Departments that he created and administered successfully bears eloquent testimony to his versatile genius. One moment he could forget himself in seeing visions of Future

India and the next moment he could discuss with experts the minutest details of, say, the manufacture of water-bottles, shovels, vitamin B tablets, and dry rations for the INA soldiers going to the front. Such was the elasticity and suppleness of his mind.

With equal ease, he could discuss with Tojo, the transfer of Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the Free India Government; and with his own Divisional Commander, the operations going on, on the eight sectors of the Burma-India front; with Dr. Ba Maw the highly complicated political situation in Burma; with Wang Ching Wei, the intricate problems of Nanking *vis-a-vis* Chungking; with President Jose de Laurel of the Philippines, the Filipinos' differences with the Japanese; and with the tonga driver in the League Headquarters the price of gram and grass for the horse. No detail was too small for him, and no man was too unimportant. He had a place in his head for every matter and a place in his heart for every man.

Whether dead or alive, Netaji will hold aloft the torch for the youth of India to pick its way through darkness, and to fight its way to the goal of a happy and prosperous India.

The Architect of India's freedom, Mahatma Gandhi, and that prince among men, Chittaranjan Das, were the two greatest influences in Netaji's life. He imbibed all from Gandhiji except his creed of non-violence. Netaji's creed was violence, as much as Gandhiji's was non-violence.

While Gandhiji undoubtedly trained the nation, through moral courage and the spirit of willing suffering and self-sacrifice, and took it stage by stage on the road to freedom, Netaji is the man who spoke to the British in the only language they found easier to understand, namely, the sword.

But for Netaji and the INA (and later the RIN) the British would have easily carried on in India for another ten years at least. Indeed, Netaji's second war of Independence (1943-45) hastened the British evacuation of

India by ten years. To be free ten years earlier means an enormous gain for India, morally and spiritually, no less than materially.

Narrow-mindedness, short-sightedness, or considerations of prestige or power politics must not prevent the foremost national leaders of India from acknowledging Netaji's rightful place in India's history.

If India is to remain free, Netaji's inspiring example must be kept constantly before the people, in its correct perspective. This is a sacred duty that devolves on our national leaders. They have so far done him less than justice; I hope that they will soon make amends for this. Many of them lacked implicit faith in non-violence. Yet, for reasons of their own, they dared not openly to differ from Gandhiji. But Netaji had not only the courage to voice his differences but paid the penalty of being ousted from his office as Congress President. More, he unflinchingly put his convictions into practice and delivered a mortal blow to the British Empire in India.

A bold and frank acknowledgment of Netaji's achievements need mean no disloyalty to the memory of Gandhiji. The Subhas era is a rational evolution of the Gandhi era. It is Subhas era now and for ever. For, if India—Free India—is to survive in this world and prosper, then the nation has to look more and more to the spirit of Netaji for effective guidance.

Free India has to think in terms of the seeming miracles that Netaji performed in the name of Free India in East Asia—the forging of unity of the nation without distinctions of caste, or creed; the organisation of the civilians into a solid nationalist body; the imparting of military training to men and women, boys and girls; the creation of a first-rate army, and diplomatic contacts with world powers; and the building up by exhortation and example of the spirit of unparalleled self-sacrifice for the sake of the nation.

Take only one of Netaji's many brilliant achievements—namely, the formation of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. He

took this work in hand in spite of active discouragement from many whom he consulted in Singapore. But he went ahead. He decided that he would wean away Indian girls from their life of cloistered ease and luxury, put them into camps in khaki uniform, give them intensive training, the same as given to regular soldiers, including the use of revolver, bayonet, rifle and machinegun, and send them in military formation to the firing line. The ideal he set before them was Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi, who died fighting the British.

All this meant not only violence or force, but force of a modern and organised type, and giving training in such force to the flower of India's womanhood. Netaji put a revolver, a rifle and a bayonet into the hands of every Indian girl who was ready to serve her Motherland. That very moment Netaji brought about a moral and social revolution. The sight of these girls who threw aside their characteristic reserve and modesty in their country's crucial hour, thrilled all East Asia—Indians, Thais, Burmese, Malays, Annamese, Indonesians, Filipinos, Chinese and Japanese.

It was a direct challenge to Indian manhood, except the aged and the infirm, to step forward and swell the ranks of the INA. It was an eye-opener to the parents of the girls whose bosoms swelled with pride at the sight of their once shy, timid daughters marching with heads erect and faces aflame with courage and patriotic fervour. No wonder that their brothers hastened to the nearest IIL office to volunteer for the INA.

Their patriotism, courage and absolute self-reliance worked an incredible transformation in these girls; they surpassed even Netaji's optimistic expectations. It was only natural that therefore Netaji should have been extremely proud of these girls whom he looked upon as his own sisters and daughters; as the pioneers of a social revolution in Free India. Cast thus in the mould of heroines, they would one day bear sons who would one and all be heroes, imbibing

patriotism and bravery even when sucking their mother's breasts.

If India's womanhood could be modelled on the Rani of Jhansi Regiment on an all-India scale, we would be solving many of our social problems at one stroke. If we had done it years ago, even placing lathis in our women's hands, we might have had much fewer riots. The bully thrives only where there are enough cowards. Our unarmed men quite naturally became cowards at the very thought of the honour of our helpless womanhood in the face of hooligans. Ranis of Jhansi could automatically solve many other social problems also, as, for instance, the dowry system. No man would be such a cad as to ask for a dowry if the bride is a Rani of Jhansi; otherwise, he would be the laughing-stock of his chivalrous friends.

The logical sequel to the Rani of Jhansi Regiment in East Asia was the organisation of *Bal Senas* for boys and girls between the ages of nine and fourteen. These boys and girls were given an intensive three-week military training, including in some cases rifle-training also. When they went back to their homes from their respective camps, they became Bal Sena leaders in their localities and gave training to other boys and girls. This caught the imagination of Indian youth. For instance, in Rangoon and Mandalay, they made no small contribution to the enthusiasm of their own parents and other elders in their neighbourhood. Whenever a group of urchins, playing in an alley, saw an INA or IIL officer in the distance, they would shout *Jai Hind* and *Netaji Ki Jai* in unison.

An amusing incident was reported from Mandalay, after the British re-occupied it in the summer of 1945. The first thing they did was to ban the greeting of *Jai Hind* among local Indians. The elders were rather cowed down by the first rough impact of the British forces; but little boys shouted *Jai Hind* whenever they saw a British Officer, and showed him a clean pair of heels. The streets of

Mandalay reverberated more with juvenile shouts of *Jai Hind* after the ban than even before.

Those little boys and girls all over Burma, Thailand and Malaya, who joined the Bal Sena in large numbers, fully understood, in their own simple way, the essentials of the then political situation. They knew Netaji very well; they understood the meaning of the INA, IIL, and the Provisional Government of Azad Hind; they understood also the meaning of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. They knew all that was necessary to drive the British rulers out of their motherland—India. They understood that Bal Sena was the preparatory school for going into the INA or the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. So they took their training seriously and showed amazing results within the brief period of three weeks.

Actually one of them, a loveable little fellow of about nine or ten, commanded a parade of his comrades when Netaji took the salute in Rangoon. The tiny tot was in battledress, complete with revolver hanging from his belt, and strode up to Netaji in majestic pride, gave him the smartest salute and reported to him that his company was ready for Netaji's inspection. Of course, Netaji's face was aglow with pride at this sight, and his eyes were moist with emotion at the thought of millions and millions of such children in Free India growing up to defend the honour and freedom of their country.

Similarly, a slip of a girl called Indira, the daughter of Mr. P. G. Nair, who was working in the Azad Hind English Press, was very much liked by Netaji. This girl, aged about ten or eleven, went on entertaining the INA soldiers in their camps with her music and dances. She took an active part in almost all the variety entertainments sponsored by the Publicity Department—which were many—and being a charming kid, full of that pride and spirit which the magic words of Netaji instilled in her, she was able to thrill the entire audience by her performances.

CHAPTER II

FLASHES OF THE FIGHTER

NETAJI was all the time conscious that he was born to fulfil a destiny. In his own mind he was always clear as to what he wanted and how he was going to get it.

July, 1943 to August, 1945—the most momentous twenty-four months of Netaji's life—have a message for Free India which faces so many perils from the very moment of its birth.

Netaji's differences with Gandhiji were fundamental. If Netaji had been alive and had come to Gandhiji at the end of the World War II, he would have stuck firmly to his stand that *Ahimsa* (non-violence) could neither win India's freedom, nor defend that freedom even for an hour. Events that have happened in India in recent months have more than vindicated that stand. Having made his fundamental position *vis-a-vis* Gandhiji very clear, Netaji would have sought the nation's verdict as to whether he (Netaji) was entitled to retire to the Himalayas or he must continue to serve India in her emancipated state according to his lights.

Now, let us go back to the epoch-making twenty-four months during which Netaji waged the war for India's liberation with the aid of a fully equipped national army raised outside India's borders:

He convinced even the most narrow-minded or illiterate Indians in East Asia of his purpose and his plan.

In his numerous speeches addressing mammoth gatherings of Indians in Singapore, Malaya, Thailand, Burma, Java, Indo-China, Philippines and Japan, between the years 1943 and 1945, Netaji unfolded his carefully-worked-out plan for India's liberation. If I may sum up all his speeches in those twenty-four months, I would emphasise the following outstanding points.

Netaji said in effect :

“ Britain never visualised the possibility of an enemy attacking her Empire in India from across the Eastern Frontier. British strategists have always strengthened only the North-Western Frontier. So the East Asia war has made Britain's eastern frontier in India vulnerable to attack, and the fall of Singapore has given Britain's enemies a first-rate base of attack, and Indians in East Asia have a golden opportunity to use this base for launching a fight for India's liberation.

“ The only thing we have so far lacked is an armed force of our own and now we have that also in the form of the INA. It is up to us now to take this Army of Liberation across the Indo-Burma border and inflict the first defeat on the British forces on Indian soil.

“ When the people inside India see with their own eyes that a Liberation Army has given the first defeat to the British on Indian soil, that will be the signal for a general uprising in Bengal and Assam, which will soon spread to the rest of India. But this is not going to be an easy task ; on the contrary, it is going to be a long and hard struggle for which we must be fully equipped.

“ We have the Indian Independence League which has organised and unified the Indians throughout East Asia ; we have the Provisional Government of Azad Hind under whose leadership the Army will march against the British in India, the Provisional Government of Azad Hind has been recognised by nine world powers ; the provisional Government has its own territory in the Shaheed (Andaman) and Swaraj (Nicobar) Islands.

“ The British can be driven out of India by armed might only. We in East Asia are in the fortunate position of organising that armed force, and we shall supplement the efforts of our countrymen at home who have been carrying on an unarmed and unequal struggle.

"We in East Asia alone are in a position to give the decisive blow, and, God willing, we *shall* give that blow and shatter India's chains of slavery.

"But then, you the three million Indians in East Asia—men, women and children, rich and poor, millionaire and milkman, young and old—each and all of you must come forward to play your glorious part. No sacrifice that you make to liberate your three hundred and eighty million countrymen at home will be too great; in fact, even if all of you, three million Indians in East Asia, give up all you have and become beggars, and also sacrifice your lives in the fight to liberate your three hundred and eighty million brothers and sisters at home—even all that colossal sacrifice would not be much to boast about. You must thank God for giving you this great opportunity to sacrifice all you have for India's freedom.

"India must be freed with the blood of her own sons and daughters. India must be freed with the aid of the money and materials provided by Indians alone.

"I refuse to go to the Japanese begging for anything to carry on this war, unless it is absolutely necessary to do so. Freedom won easily and with somebody else's help, will also be lost easily. We shall be strong enough to defend only that freedom which we have won through our own sufferings and sacrifices. So I call upon you to carry out the total mobilisation of Indian man-power, money and materials. If you do so, then no power on earth can stand between you and freedom.

"Once you attain that freedom, no power on earth can snatch it away from you. You can then hold your heads erect before the world and claim equality of status with the mightiest world power.

"You must not be disheartened by occasional reverses on the fighting fronts. You must remember that your British enemy is thoroughly exploiting your own country's man-power and material resources to defend the British

Empire in your motherland; and the British are receiving all-out aid from the Americans.

"So, you are up against a stonewall. The British took one hundred years to entrench themselves in India; so you must be prepared to wage a protracted war against them. You cannot hope to drive them out in a year or two; the more difficult this struggle for India's independence, the greater the sacrifices that Indians in East Asia must make. You ought to be fully conscious of the important role you are playing in India's history today. On you depends the fate of India for centuries to come—whether she shall continue to be a slave or win her freedom and take her rightful place in the comity of free nations of the world.

"That India is going to be free at the end of World War II, I have not the slightest doubt. Even if Britain emerges victorious from this World War II, she can only emerge as a fourth-rate World power—too weak to maintain her strangle-hold on India.

"India will be free anyway, but what shall the future historian say of you, Indians in East Asia? Your names will be written in letters of gold. It will be said of you, that you the sons and daughters of India in foreign lands voluntarily and cheerfully went through untold sufferings and sacrifices, that your motherland may be free.

"There can be no halfway house. You must all become freedom-mad. None of you dare think in terms of giving only five per cent or ten per cent of your wealth to prosecute this war of India's independence. The tens of thousands of men who have come forward to swell the liberation army do not bargain by saying that they will shed only five per cent or ten per cent of their blood on the battlefield. The precious life of one true and patriotic soldier is worth more than a crore of rupees. Then what right has anyone of you, the rich men, to bargain and say that you will pay only a certain per cent?

"*karo sab nichhazar* (sacrifice your all).

"*bano sab fakir* (and become ascetics).

"That is what I want you all to do. Give up your all for India's freedom, and become beggars, and if that is not enough, give up your lives too. Even that is not too much of a sacrifice.

"Give me your blood, and I promise you freedom. March on without looking back and I will lead you to Delhi.

"I shall not rest, and you must not rest, until we hoist the National Tricolour on the Viceroy's House, and the INA holds its victory parade inside the Red Fort."

These inspiring words of Netaji, his dynamic personality, transparent sincerity, magnetic charm, indomitable courage and infectious optimism—all these great qualities combined to produce an electric effect the like of which has never before been witnessed in India's history.

The tens of thousands of Indians, who heard or even read these words in cold print, were moved to the depth of their being and came forward to throw away all they had in this world and even their lives at the bidding of this Man of Destiny. They looked upon him as a modern *avatar* (incarnation.) They became literally freedom-mad. All thoughts of rich and poor were forgotten. All distinctions of caste and creed were swept away.

Jai Hind (victory for India) was the one shout from millions of throats; *Azadi* (Freedom) was the one passion that ruled millions of hearts.

And this freedom-madness swept East Asia like a prairie fire.

The unending procession of Indians that filed past Netaji in Bangkok, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Rangoon, Batavia, Saigon, Shanghai and Tokyo—multi-millionaire, petty-trader, doctor, lawyer, clerk, milkman, watchman, dhobie, barber, schoolboy, schoolgirl, rich women, poor working women, indeed, a cross-section of the Indian community in East Asia; this procession of Indians filed past Netaji, offering their mite or all they had on the altar of India's liberty. It was a sight for the gods to see, and it

thrilled also the Thais, Malays, Burmese, Indonesians, Annamese, Chinese, Filipinos and Japanese.

When Habib of Rangoon gave away all his worldly possessions to the tune of over a crore of rupees, the wave of total mobilisation reached its climax.

Rupees twenty-five crores were poured into Netaji's war chest by Indians in Burma alone.

This total mobilisation was not, however, an easy task for Netaji to achieve. Rich Indians in East Asia, like rich Indians in India and like all rich men all over the world, were not easily moved by Netaji's appeals. Melting their hearts proved a rather tough job even for Netaji, particularly in the early days. As a psychologist, Netaji studied them most carefully; he was determined not to lose his temper or patience with them but he did not waver for a moment in his decision to reduce them to utter poverty, if necessary, in getting their money for India's war of liberation.

I happened to sit only a few feet away from him when he addressed the wealthy Indian merchants of Singapore and Malaya at mass rallies in Singapore soon after he launched the total mobilisation drive. He was frankly disappointed at the initial indifference of the moneyed Indians to his passionate appeals for funds. His disappointment was considerably offset by his gratification at the sight of the tremendous enthusiasm of the comparatively poor Indians. Then he slowly stiffened his tone, when addressing the rich. He coaxed and cajoled them and, sometimes, he uttered mild threats also. Much against his will, he translated some of the threats into action. Subsequent developments justified his threats and the execution of those threats.

The trend of his talk to them at various stages may be summarised in the following words:

"In international law, we Indians, as the subjects of Britain, are enemy aliens to the Japanese who are at war with the British; but the Japanese know that our country is groaning under the heel of British imperialism and that we are not willing subjects of the British. On the contrary, we

have been fighting the British for the last quarter of a century ; that is why the Japanese have allowed Indians to move about as free men in territories occupied by them. They know that Indians in East Asia are carrying on a fight for India's independence and making great sacrifices.

"Some of you, Indian merchants, have taken advantage of your freedom to carry on business and make enormous profits, but you are reluctant to do your duty as Indians in the fight for India's freedom. You claim to be Indians only for the purpose of making money. This will not do.

"I appeal to you to be fair and reasonable and come forward voluntarily to do your duty by India ; If you fail to do so, I shall take money from you by imposing a levy. Whatever happens, I am determined to see that a handful of wealthy Indians do not set a bad example to other rich Indians and to the masses.

"Do not run away with the idea that you are too clever. I want to be fair and just but do not, for heaven's sake, force my hands into taking action. With or without your help, India *will* be free. For your own sake, let it be with your help also.

"You cannot have it both ways. You cannot be an Indian only for making money and cease to be an Indian when it comes to doing your duty. Either you are with us or you are a friend of the British. If the latter, then there is only one place for you for the duration, that is, the prison ; it would be a shame if in your greed and selfishness you would rather not be considered as Indians."

But it must be said to the lasting credit of Indians in East Asia that in all that wide territory there were only a handful of rich Indians who were intransigent, who were so despicably fond of their ill-gotten wealth that they would not listen to Netaji's pleadings. After trying every other means, Netaji, as a last resort, had them detained in custody as they were a real menace to India's true interests. Netaji took this step with a great deal of reluctance. He went

through an agony of soul before ordering that these men be taken into custody.

Once this was done, there was a dramatic change in the atmosphere; these unreasonable men swung to the other extreme. Of course, Netaji did not want that extreme either. But throughout, he showed them the utmost courtesy in his personal dealings with them. He made it more than clear to them that he harboured no malice against them in spite of all their misdemeanours.

As I said earlier, such men were only a handful in all East Asia. I have described Netaji's methods in collecting funds at some length with the express purpose of showing his own peculiar approach to the classes and the masses.

The phenomenal response he got from the large mass of Indians in East Asia for total mobilisation leads me to the irresistible conclusion that he evolved a new approach that is peculiarly Indian.

Other nations of the world have been through crises in their lands against the backgrounds of world peace as well as world upheavals. In recent years, we have witnessed a variety of approaches to the classes and the masses by their national leaders, such as, for instance, at the Red Square, at the Sportsplatz, at Trafalgar Square, and at Madison Square. Undoubtedly, they were also peculiarly national.

In solving our national problems which are daily growing more and more acute, we too have to evolve an approach that is based on our culture, civilisation, tradition, national genius and character. Even our most ardent Communists, Socialists and Rightists will err grievously in blindly copying the methods of their comrades abroad.

Having said so much about Netaji's unique approach to the Indian masses, I must also say that sometimes that approach was not without its faults.

When addressing mammoth rallies in Singapore, for instance, he could not, at times, resist certain impulses to overstep the limits of optimism. An outstanding example of such impulse was a sensational assurance he gave in public,

which nearly swept the three million Indians in East Asia off their feet.

It was, I believe, in the month of September, 1943, barely three months after his arrival in Singapore, and the INA had only just started moving towards Burma on foot. He was driving to a mass rally in Singapore. I was sitting with him. He turned round to me and said in a casual tone: "I am going to say that the INA will stand on Indian soil before the year is out," *that is, in less than four months from that day*. I was stunned. I just could not figure out how the thing could come off. I asked him whether he was quite sure, whether he had any very special reasons for saying so, and whether the Japanese had promised any extraordinary aid for him to encourage this sensational optimism. He saw distress in my eyes; he merely smiled and said that it would turn out all right. At that time I believed that there must be some top secret which, of course, I did not wish to know but which, I thought, made him feel so cocksure. Until we reached the Rally ground, I begged of him to think twice before making the announcement. But I failed to dissuade him. He made the announcement and the audience of fifty thousand simply went mad and cheered him for full two minutes. The Japanese liaison officers among the audience were thrown into utter confusion, as when he fore-shadowed the formation of a Provisional Government in his very first speech in Singapore. They too consoled themselves by saying that perhaps he had some very special understanding with the Japanese High Command to help the INA achieve this obviously impossible end. When December was nearing, he reminded *me* of *his* promise to stand on the soil of India before the year was out! He would not, even then, admit his mistake. He still hoped that he could keep his promise. "It was no doubt the biggest sensation in September, Sir, but the chickens will come home to roost very soon," I said. He would not, even at that late hour, modify his word and give some excuse for doing so, such as the uncertainties of war, upset of calculations, etc.

On the contrary, he went on repeating his promise till early December.

Came the end of December. He was about to leave for the Andamans which, along with the Nicobars, had been handed over to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind by the Government of Japan in an announcement by the Japanese Premier, General Tojo, at the East Asia Conference the previous month. Netaji was rather subdued when he spoke to me this time. "The year will be out in a few days, and what about my promise to stand on Indian soil before the year is out? We have only Shaheed and Swaraj Islands (formerly the Andamans and the Nicobars) with us as our own territory; still they *are* Indian territory. I shall be in the Andamans on 31st December. I know it can be no substitute for the real stuff. But one cannot always help!"

I did not say much but looked at him in a way that said: "Well, I told you so, and begged of you not to make *that* promise in a hurry!"

CHAPTER III

DEMOCRAT OR DICTATOR ?

WHEN Subhas shone forth in East Asia as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Head of the State, of the Provincial Government of Azad Hind, Premier, Foreign Minister, War Minister and Supreme Commander, Azad Hind Fouj (INA), did he still remain a democrat or did he became a dictator after the fashion of Hitler and Mussolini, his allies in the fight against the British ?

It may sound paradoxical ; nevertheless, my straight reply is : he was a democrat at heart and a dictator in effect.

“How is this possible ?” I may be asked. I watched him conduct the affairs of State for close on two years in those momentous times (1943-45). I can easily quote dozens of instances to show that he was conscientious and fastidious in his democratic ways, and yet I know in my heart of hearts that he had his own way every time.

He was a dictator in effect in this sense : He did high-powered thinking, planning and working out of the minutest details in regard to every important matter, civil or military, occasionally sounding his “inner cabinet” on broad policy and details. He convinced himself first of the wisdom of his move, the foolproof character of his planning, and the practicability of its execution. Then he would take his own time to look at his plans and details from every possible angle, remove any defects that he discovered during the scrutiny, and make the plans as near perfect as humanly possible. Finally, he would come to the Cabinet meeting or meeting of his Military High Command fully prepared to explain, patiently and at great length, the why and the wherefore of his main idea, listen attentively to the differing viewpoints of his colleagues, answer everyone of the

objections, then elucidate and elaborate every point of detail, and close by painting a convincing picture of the ultimate fruition of his plan.

This process invariably took a great deal of his time ; but then he came also invariably prepared to speak out fully and listen patiently to everyone who had anything useful to say and thus secure the wholehearted agreement of all.

He was a stickler for democratic procedure. He insisted on calling a meeting of the Cabinet every time policy was to be decided. Until the Cabinet took a decision on policy he would not drop a hint of the coming decision even to the highest ranking Japanese or the most influential newspaper. But once the decision was officially taken by the Cabinet, *then he would use his discretion to speak in the name of the Government* in explaining the implications of such a decision, and the possibilities of success or failure of certain moves in pursuance of the decision.

He always took particular care to put his Cabinet colleagues absolutely at ease by avoiding all signs of impatience, intolerance or resentment of even entirely divergent views ; on the contrary, he carefully listened and tried to understand all the arguments marshalled in favour of the opposing view. This was a real education in democracy to his colleagues ; he never believed in *confronting* his colleagues with a *fait accompli* and then wangling their unwilling approval. Thus he brought out the best even in the most mediocre of his colleagues.

In another chapter I have given a glimpse of the opposition of Major-General (then Colonel) Loganadan to bracketing America with Britain in the Provisional Government's declaration of war on these two countries. The interest that this announcement aroused in America may be gauged from the fact that the American radios promptly quoted the Singapore Radio for the announcement and the statement of the spokesman of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind.

Here are Netaji's own words to show the importance of the Declaration :

"Last night at 12.55 a.m., we declared war through the radio and it is interesting to note that at 2 a.m., the enemy radio stations also gave out the news of our Declaration of War. This shows how alert they are in watching what steps we are taking. The Britishers know me well enough during my fight against them in India and they know well enough also that I will not make a declaration without having the strength to enforce what I say. Our declaration is not again a propaganda stunt. The coming events would show that we meant what we said.

"Before I place our resolution declaring war on Britain and America before you for your ratification, I would ask you to give your decision after full consideration.

"Our Declaration, I repeat, is not an empty threat. We are resolved to carry it out with the last drop of our blood in enforcing the Declaration. I know that I need not put this question to the Indian National Army because I know their mind and their deep anxiety to be on the Road to Delhi. I am now asking the Civilians as to whether they are one with us in making this Declaration, because if they are one with us, they should come forthwith to give the fullest effect to our Programme of Total Mobilisation."

Other decisions of policy, major or minor which Netaji brought before the Cabinet for full discussion and unanimous approval included those relating to the move of the INA from Singapore to Burma, the renaming of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as Saheed and Swaraj Islands, the appointment of a Cabinet Committee to report on methods of national unification in dress, food, greetings, ceremonies, etc., the shifting of the Headquarters of the Government from Malaya to Burma, the creation of more Ministries to intensify the Total Mobilisation Programme, the granting of awards of recognition to those who sacrificed their all for

the cause, the policy to be pursued by the Government and the INA in the regions to be liberated from British occupation inside India and many such matters of vital import to Indians in and outside India.

Netaji could claim that in all essential matters he carried his Government and INA associates with him. This does not mean that he never overruled an individual Minister or INA Commander on an important issue. Indeed, he did so on a few occasions but only after trying to convince the other man, and never arbitrarily.

I believe I have said enough to show that Netaji was really and truly a democrat, and consistently acted as one.

But how, then, was he a dictator in any sense ?

That was the intangible, elusive and inescapable part of him. For all practical purposes he was a dictator on supreme occasions.

With his massive intellect, vivid imagination, unfailing instinct, wide experience, and characteristic daring, he conceived and worked out every single step that would ultimately lead to the Promised Land. The sheer boldness and majestic sweep of his planning admitted of little or no room for ordinary minds to suggest practical alternatives or worthwhile improvements. His planning was such that it deserved acceptance *in toto*; a thing of his conception immediately captured the imagination of his associates, it dazzled them and inspired them to put forth their best to make his idea or vision a reality. His dictatorship was no bitter pill, for only in the most acceptable and happiest sense was he a dictator.

He said to Indians in East Asia :

You shall give up your all for India's Freedom ;

You shall lay down your lives on the Road to Delhi ;

You shall keep up this struggle until India is free ;

You shall wipe out from your minds all thoughts of caste, creed or community ;

You shall become freedom-mad.

This was his *dictat* ; and these words were lustily echoed by three million throats.

But again this was no *fiat* from a dictator. It was inspiration from an *avatar* (incarnation).

I would content myself with quoting from the Bible the words of Nicodemus to Jesus: "for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."

CHAPTER IV

GANDHI AND SUBHAS

ANY narrative of the achievements of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and of the INA in the armed fight for India's Independence would be incomplete without being set against the background of the attitude of Mahatma Gandhi towards Netaji and *vice versa*, during a quarter century of Gandhiji's leadership of the nation.

As a matter of fact, the clash of these two very powerful personalities in the Indian political arena created outstanding landmarks in the country's history of the relevant period. Some of these were: the promotion of the Indian Independence League in India in 1928; the Congress declaration of complete independence as the goal in the Lahore session in 1929; contest of the Congress Presidential election in 1939; formation of the Forward Bloc later the same year; and Netaji's disappearance from India in 1941. Apart from Mr. Jinnah who latterly fought more for the dismemberment of India than for her freedom from the foreign yoke, the only outstanding leader who had irreconcilable ideological differences with Gandhiji was Subhas Chandra Bose.

It is, therefore, essential to understand the inwardness of Netaji's approach to Gandhiji as revealed particularly in East Asia, before anyone can arrive at a correct appreciation of Netaji's attitude towards Gandhiji in politics. For this reason alone, I consider his broadcast to Gandhiji over the Rangoon Radio on 6th July, 1944, a classic in soul speaking to soul. Every line of his personal references to Gandhiji is the handsomest and most sincere tribute that one leader has ever paid to another.

For obvious reasons I attach the greatest importance to this broadcast which I hope and trust will be read by

Indians who wish to know in what high esteem Netaji held Gandhiji when the former was in the midst of a life and death struggle for India's liberation.

I accompanied Netaji to the broadcasting station night after night, and it was my official privilege to sit at the same mike, facing Netaji, and to introduce him to his listeners. I had read beforehand what he was going to tell Mahatmajji over the Radio that particular night. I was dying to see the expression on Netaji's face when he would come to the concluding words of his broadcast to Gandhiji, namely :

"Father of our Nation! In this holy war for India's liberation, we ask for your blessings and good wishes."

As I remained seated across the mike desk, my eyes were glued to Netaji's glowing face. He was coming to the last poignant words. I was all agog in my seat. I looked at his face.

There was a pause.

Then he began: "Father of our Nation!" His voice had become somewhat hoarse; then it quivered a bit; a solemn look came over his face; then his throat cleared, the words now came out clear and strong: "In this holy war for India's liberation" . . . then again a slight pause, a slight lowering of the pitch, a tone of supplication: ". . . we ask for your blessings and good wishes."

If Gandhiji had been there on the spot, I am sure the great man would have granted a prayer like this which was profoundly genuine.

Who, then, I ask, has a right to step in between these two men and create bad blood and misunderstanding through ignorance and failure to grasp the fundamental goodness of the two great patriots?

Netaji was all the time aware of the whispers of ignorant or mischievous people who professed to champion Gandhiji's title to unquestioning obedience from one and all within the Congress. These men failed to grasp the basic strength of Netaji's character. The storm that these people tried to raise against Netaji on the plea of unity under Gandhiji's

leadership left its inevitable trail of irritation, disappointment and occasional dislike of Netaji in the mind of Mahatmaji. From the moment Netaji landed in Singapore in July, 1943 till the Japanese surrender in 1945, those of us who were very close to Netaji watched his feelings and attitude towards Gandhiji with a great deal of attention, curiosity and anxiety. The two most critical events of those days in India were Gandhiji's talks with Mr. Jinnah, and the Wavell conference of June, 1945.

On both these occasions, Netaji made himself more than clear although what he said was not perhaps acceptable to some of the members of the Congress Working Committee.

Here I must reiterate Netaji's own creed which he never even once changed in the quarter century of his political career. He believed that only by force and with armed aid from outside could we ever hope to dislodge the alien ruler from India's soil. Whatever the consequences to him personally and whatever the odium he had to bear in opposing a revered personality like Gandhiji in private and in public, he refused to change his creed even by an iota. He was, therefore, firm to the last in his stand on force as the only weapon, and *complete, immediate* independence of India as the only goal. Subject only to these two provisos, he acknowledged Gandhiji as a World Teacher in the realm of spiritual and moral progress; he had the most genuine admiration for Gandhiji's unparalleled courage in handling a mighty world power like the British; he acknowledged Gandhiji as the architect of Modern India.

Genuine respect and admiration for the great man but sharp and irreconcilable differences over methods—it is this standpoint of Netaji that produced a paradox and puzzled his opponents.

Netaji was convinced of the righteousness and wisdom of the path he had chalked out for himself. He was supremely confident that his methods would succeed. To him the cause of India was paramount; everything else was of secondary importance. This fundamental faith of Netaji was mis-

understood and misinterpreted by some of Gandhiji's associates as irreverence, defiance, or revolt. But Netaji never looked at this question from the narrow angle of vision of those partisans.

To return to Gandhiji's talks with Mr. Jinnah, and the Wavell Conference.

Day after day, Netaji broadcast to India urging Gandhiji and the Congress to avoid any compromise either with Mr. Jinnah or with Lord Wavell. He knew that the talks would needlessly divert the attention of the nation from the freedom struggle to futile hopes. Netaji knew what Mr. Jinnah wanted, and he knew also that India could ill-afford to give what Mr. Jinnah wanted at once or ultimately—namely, dismemberment. Netaji knew what Lord Wavell wanted, namely, India's willing co-operation in the British war efforts in return for some more seats in the British Viceroy's Executive Council. Netaji felt very strongly that a compromise with Wavell would prove suicidal to India, by removing the Indian problem from the *international* plane and turning it into a domestic issue of the British Empire. So, Netaji opposed tooth and nail all ideas of a compromise with Lord Wavell. In his own mind, Netaji had no doubt that India's victory was round the corner, even if Britain won the war.

And Netaji was not an arm-chair critic exhorting Indians inside India to continue the struggle. He had already opened a second front and shown that he was supplementing the heroic efforts of the Congress.

He, therefore, heaved a sigh of relief first when Gandhiji's talks with Mr. Jinnah failed; then, again, when it was announced that Gandhiji was not himself participating in the talks with Lord Wavell. He guessed the significance of Gandhiji's personal boycott of the talks, and the consequent likelihood of their ending in failure.

I am aware that there were a few Indians in East Asia also who doubted the political wisdom of Netaji in strenuously opposing any understanding with Lord Wavell with a view

to solving the Indian political deadlock. They went to the length of even questioning Netaji's title to defeat the object of the Wavell Conference; they argued that, if, after all, Gandhiji or the Congress Working Committee were likely to come to an agreement, why should Netaji carry on such an unrelenting propaganda against the talks; and what were his credentials especially when he was not by the side of his comrades in India who were trying to tackle the situation on the spot? Well, in his own mind he was clear that he was only trying to avert a tragedy whose consequences would be felt by India for decades, if not for generations; and, he was, therefore, bent upon doing his best which could only be through his radio broadcasts; he flew all the way from Bangkok to Singapore and broadcast to India personally night after night for nearly one month; as for the credentials entitling him to entreat Gandhiji and the Working Committee to have nothing to do with Lord Wavell, he reminded his listeners in India that he was not an arm-chair critic, and that some of his comrades who were alive when he was in Burma two months earlier were no more in this world, having laid down their lives on the battle-fields of Imphal and Kohima. He was also in the thick of the fight for freedom; so he meant what he said, and he had a right to say how the British should be handled.

I make no apology for quoting his own words:

"Comrades, I would never have opened my mouth and said one word to you, if I had been sitting as an arm-chair politician here. But I and my comrades here are engaged in a grim struggle. Our comrades at the front have to play with death. Even those who are not at the front have to face danger every moment of their existence. When we were in Burma, bombing and machine-gunning was our daily entertainment. I have seen many of my comrades killed, maimed and injured from the enemy's ruthless bombing and machine-gunning. I have seen the entire hospital of the Azad Hind Fauj in Rangoon razed to the ground, with our helpless patients suffering heavy casualties.

"That I and many others with me are still alive today, is only through God's grace. It is because we are living, working and fighting in the presence of death that I have a right to speak to you and to advise you. Most of you do not know what carpet-bombing is. Most of you do not know what it is to be machine-gunned by low-flying bombers and fighters. Most of you have had no experience of bullets whistling past you, to your right and to your left. Those who have gone through this experience and have nevertheless kept up their morale, cannot even look at Lord Wavell's offer."

All the time, Netaji was somewhat more confident about Gandhiji than about the Working Committee taking the right line in tackling Wavell.

At the time of the Wavell Talks, I was in Saigon supervising the intensification of the Saigon Radio of the Azad Hind Government to make up for the loss of the Rangoon Radio. Netaji broadcast to India daily from Singapore opposing the talks with Wavell. At our end in Saigon, we took down Netaji's talk night after night and relayed it the next night in at least three languages, namely, English, Hindustani and Tamil.

Soon after he reached Singapore, I got a letter from Netaji expressing anxiety over the possible attitude of Gandhiji personally to Lord Wavell's offer. I replied to Netaji making a wild guess which I put down to my own "intuition." I said that Gandhiji would for some important reason or the other, get out of the talks at the appropriate moment, and the talks themselves would fizzle out. After posting the letter, I worried whether I should have sent that reply to Netaji. Soon after, news came through that Gandhiji had declined to act as the spokesman of the Congress; ultimately, the talks failed.

I got a one line message from Singapore signed by Netaji. It read: "Congratulations on Wavell Conference failure. Come immediately for consultations regarding future organisational plans."

I have digressed.

To return to Gandhiji and Subhas, I have discussed this delicate and vexed aspect of Indian politics at considerable length for a very important reason. I wish to place at least Netaji's attitude towards Gandhiji in the proper perspective and to show that there is no need whatever for even the staunchest disciples of Gandhiji to take up a defensive, offensive, antipathetic or even apathetic attitude towards Netaji in the year of grace 1951, merely to prove their loyalty to Gandhiji.

I remember two occasions, both in Singapore, when Netaji said something to me about Gandhiji, when we were sitting alone on the rear verandah of his residence.

News had come through of Gandhiji's indifferent health in jail. Netaji was very worried. "I hope to God that nothing will happen to him (Gandhiji)," said Netaji and added: "There isn't another man in all India to step into his shoes at this, the most critical, moment in India's history."

Then there was another item of news that after the collapse of Germany when the Allies were puffed up with their victory, Gandhiji uttered a warning to the victorious allies not to get swollen-headed and ride to their own downfall.

"There isn't another man in the world today who dares talk in this language to the Anglo-Americans on the morrow of their victory. Only Gandhiji is capable of it," said Netaji with genuine pride and admiration dancing in his eyes.

Netaji was a true disciple of Gandhiji, except on the question of non-violence.

World civilisation never stands still; it goes on changing and improving and progressing from age to age.

I hope I am not saying anything that would shock the orthodox Gandhites when I hazard the theory that the Subhas Era is a natural evolution of the Gandhi Era, or, at any rate, a continuation with the minimum necessary changes.

Whatever the general verdict on this theory may be, Netaji acknowledged Gandhiji as the "Father of our Nation" both in private and in public.

The INA and the millions of Netaji's admirers in India and abroad take their cue from these memorable words he uttered on 6th July, 1944, which the nation has now adopted as its own. On 15th August, 1947, the entire country hailed Mahatma Gandhi as : " Father of our Nation."

History has repeated itself. Netaji resigned his presidentship of the Congress and formed the Forward Bloc in 1939.

Now, twelve years later, Acharya Kripalani and Dr. Profulla Chandra Ghosh have repudiated the Congress.

The complete breakaway of Profulla Ghosh (which came as a surprise to the nation) and that of Kripalani (which was no surprise at all) are but faint and belated vindications of the Spirit of Subhas spearheading the restless elements which come to the surface in times of national crisis. A great deal depends upon the attitude of the small, extremely orthodox, but influential group of "no-changers" high up in the Congress. It must be remembered that Profulla Ghosh and Kripalani, staunch disciples of Gandhiji, are themselves distinguished deserters from the ranks of that rigidly orthodox group. What happened to Subhas or what may or may not happen to Ghosh and Kripalani is of secondary importance ; what is vitally important to the nation is the way the Congress faces the realities forced on its attention by undisputed stalwarts like Profulla and Acharya Kripalani. As the Congress is even today the only national political institution in the broadest sense of that term, the future of the country hangs on the Congress reaction to these revolts now and in future.

CHAPTER V

MARTYR AND MAN OF GOD

THE world has seen many martyrs in the past and will see many more in the future also. Their sufferings and sacrifices will stand out in history as unparalleled examples worth emulating in all times and in all climes.

Netaji's martyrdom was, however, unique. His sufferings were in no way inflicted on him by any outside agency. In the execution of his far-reaching plans for the liberation of India, he anticipated physical and mental agony, and bore it all cheerfully and without a murmur when it came.

I do not propose to recall at length the sufferings and sacrifices he brought on himself until he disappeared from his home in Calcutta in January, 1941. I have already made a brief reference to his wartime travels from India to Europe and the Far East to lead the army of India's Liberation. In this connection, one episode must be considered the most dramatic—the ninety-day submarine dash from Germany to East Asia early in 1943.

It was ninety days of hairbreadth escapes almost every day from torpedo or gunfire.

He was accompanied by only one Indian from Berlin, Abid Hassan, who acted as his private secretary for some time after Netaji reached East Asia. Abid did not tell me the whole story of the ninety-day adventure on the high seas—rather, under the high seas—all the way from Germany to Sumatra. He gave me only a scrappy account of the trip.

Netaji and Hassan were huddled in a corner of the submarine not wanting to be in the way of the crew who had to be alert night and day to avoid being torpedoed under water or being rammed to extinction on the surface by enemy naval craft that were scouring the seas for German

submarines. Netaji could not move his limbs freely; all he could do was a lot of deep thinking and planning. He could not even have a shave or did not wish to; he grew a beard in those ninety days, more perhaps with an eye to disguise as he did before he disappeared from his Calcutta home in 1941. Abid sported a "goatee." If the submarine had been captured, it would have been very difficult for a foreigner seeing Subhas, *without* his glasses and *with* a sizeable beard, to guess that it was the Indian revolutionary leader who was making an underwater dash from Berlin to Tokyo. If captured, both Subhas and Abid, with their fair skin, beards and fluent German, would have passed for men of the submarine crew.

At the end of those ninety difficult and anxious days, Netaji must have lost over a stone in weight, for he looked unusually thin even when he reached Singapore five or six weeks after he reached the haven of safety.

From the day he landed in Singapore (2nd July, 1943) till the day his plane crashed in Taihoku in Formosa (18th August, 1945), when he sustained fatal burns in the crash resulting in fire, his mind or body knew no rest or peace. Worries, anxieties, agonies, hunger, risky trips to the front, hairbreadth escapes from bombings and machinegunnings, forced marches on blistered feet—no, there is not one form of physical or mental suffering and torture that Netaji did not undergo, though willingly and cheerfully. Any other mere man in his place would have cracked up long ago under the strain. He went through enough to give him a complete nervous breakdown within a year of his taking over the leadership in East Asia. But then he was the chosen of God; he was made for martyrdom; he was born to set an unparalleled example of the human spirit cheerfully accepting and enduring every conceivable ordeal—of body and mind, for the sake of his country.

Indeed, even as a martyr alone, he has no compeer in history. And, as a revolutionary hero, Netaji lived a charmed life throughout.

I was an eye-witness of at least one incident in which Netaji escaped death by the fraction of an inch.

It was on the morning of 18th October, 1944. Netaji was taking the salute standing on the base in one of the parade grounds in Mingaladon about fourteen miles from Rangoon City. The occasion was the first day of the Provisional Government Week, to celebrate the First Anniversary of the Proclamation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind on 21st of October the previous year at Singapore. The idea was to start the celebration on the 18th, three days before the historic day, and to conclude it three days after, namely, on the 24th. But the very first day, and the very first function of that day nearly threw us into an abyss of disaster. How Netaji escaped being killed on the spot is even now a wonder to me.

The function started with an address from Netaji to the soldiers of the INA and girls of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment drawn up on the *maidan*. A row of chairs had been placed behind the saluting base, some five yards away, and I was seated on one of them along with Ministers of the Burma Government, my colleagues of the Azad Hind Government, senior IIL officials and INA officers, and Japanese military and civilian officers who had been invited.

Right from the start of the parade, we heard intermittent reports of gunfire high up in the air. We thought that perhaps Japanese fighters were carrying out manoeuvres; so we did not pay much attention to those shots. Later it turned out that Japanese fighters were trying to chase away enemy planes approaching the skies over the parade ground. The morning was clear with bright sunshine, and the Indian Tricolour proudly waving at the top of the flagmast next to the saluting base could be seen by enemy airmen eight to ten thousand feet up in the air. And the troops drawn up on the ground and Netaji standing majestically in the uniform of the Supreme Commander, provided an unmistakable target even for an airman moving at a high speed.

The ack-ack started thundering, and then I saw a fighter plane painted in camouflage colours suddenly emerging from behind us, fly low over the tree tops fringing the ground to our right, and the white pilot peering through his goggles over the port side of the cockpit at the parade ground below. All he had to do at that moment was to touch a button and his machineguns would have mowed down Netaji, the Ranis who were just then marching past and those of us who were seated just behind the saluting base.

Major General Zaman Kiani, Commander of the First Division, who was standing to attention on the ground to the left of the saluting base, turned to Netaji and begged of him to jump off the five-foot high base. Netaji did not budge, he did not even turn round to look at Kiani. Again Kiani shouted to Netaji: "*Yeh, front nahihai, sab, mchrbani karke aap necche uthariye.*" (This is not the front, Sir, please step off the base).

By now, the girls had reached the other end of the ground, but then the soldiers were about to follow, and a splinter from one of the ack-ack guns whizzed past us, and hit a soldier at the base of his skull and killed him on the spot. The man actually fell within a few feet of where Netaji was still standing. He could not any more resist the frantic appeal of Kiani who was bent on saving Netaji's life from certain death. On his own, Kiani commanded the soldiers to disperse and take cover. Then Netaji coolly walked down the steps of the saluting base, strode unconcerned to the edge of the parade ground, and sat under a tree until the duel between the ack-ack guns and the fighters was over.

I must admit that I was badly shaken because I had also missed that fatal splinter by only a few feet, and I was one of the first to see the soldier with the skull ripped open. In the excitement over seeing the low-flying enemy plane, and watching Kiani's frantic appeal to Netaji to get off the base, I forgot to throw myself on the ground when splinters started whizzing very close to our group. Even now, my

heart skips a beat or two when I recall that narrowest of Netaji's escapes.

Commanders like Major-General Shah Nawaz who accompanied Netaji on his periodical tours of the fighting fronts have witnessed many other instances of Netaji's providential escape from death.

As for other less fateful bombing and machine-gunning incidents that Netaji has been through, these experiences have been many indeed, and Netaji took them gamely like any true warrior; he never gave them another thought, but by a personal example of coolness and composure steadied the nerves of all around him.

The way Netaji always behaved at the time of bombing or machine-gunning was a source of acute anxiety to all of us. He would never hurry to get away from his desk or his bed even after hearing the drone of the enemy bombers or fighters overhead.

Naturally, those of us who were near him could not hurry, even if we wanted to! Speaking for myself, I always wanted to hurry for the simple reason that there was no point in stopping a stray splinter from a bomb or a bullet from a machine-gun with one's body (and most probably life) if one had a chance to avoid it and live to fight one more day. I felt pretty brave till a few minutes before the actual bombing started, and again I felt tolerably brave soon after the bombing was over!

But, it is a horrible feeling when the bombs from American Super-Fortresses (B.29's) come thundering through the air. The noise they make after leaving the plane is a sort of combination of the peals of heavy thunder and the terrific din, say, caused by a rain of boulders on a mile of zinc-sheet roofing. And the air reverberates with a terrifying sound; and when the bomb falls on the ground and explodes, the very earth trembles under your feet in those few seconds. The pit of my stomach would be a vacuum, and my heart would sink into my boots, as if through the vacuum in the stomach. The next moment I would recover my composure

and start bringing out forced smiles and rather unconvincing jokes. Anyway, it was an experience worth going through ; death lost most of its terror, because it was one's constant companion.

Machine-gun fire was more dangerous but positively less frightening. It was only gunfire in quick succession. You could stand the sound of a hundred shots in quick succession, until, of course, they mowed you and your comrades down in the twinkling of an eye !

That was life on the fighting fronts of India's War of Liberation and I often used to wonder about the secret of Netaji's striking courage in the face of sudden and imminent danger and death. I always came to the conclusion that he derived his strength from God himself. No mere man could have given him even a fraction of the moral support he needed when at moments he was confronted with formidable problems or impending disaster. He was, after all, no less mortal than his men though a superman among them.

Whenever he was not actually doing some work or talking to somebody, he would withdraw within himself in a trice and would be in communion with God. His faith in the Supreme Being was an inexhaustible reservoir of courage and optimism. Without a trace of haughtiness or rashness he could pitch himself against a combination of even the most powerful forces.

It was his intense spiritual faith that gave him poise, tranquillity, quiet strength, infectious self-confidence, tolerance, charitability, natural humility and, most important of all, a touching and overpowering spirit of humanity.

Even in the midst of bloody battles, his soul recoiled and yearned for peace and seclusion, perhaps once again in the Himalayas whither, as a boy, he had wandered in quest of a teacher or *guru*.

Sanyasi (ascetic) was writ large on his forehead even when the Supreme Commander's cap rested majestically on his head at an alluring angle over his right brow.

Many a night, after dinner, while in Singapore, he used to send his car to the Ramakrishna Mission to fetch the Swami in charge or his fellow-missionary, Brahmachari Kailasam, and spend a good two hours or so in spiritual communion before retiring into his study sometime after midnight, to go through official papers. Or, late at night, he used to drive *incognito* to the Mission, there change into a priestly silk *dhoti*, shut himself up in the prayer room, rosary in hand, and spend a couple of hours in meditation. This helped him face and solve complicated problems.

Most intensely he sought the guidance of God. He felt that in every step forward that he took, God himself was leading him by both hands; hence that immobile face, iron determination, supreme but quiet self-confidence, and an ascetic indifference to success or failure.

The only external symbol of his godliness was the tiny little leather bag—the tiniest article of his personal luggage, holding the two-and-a-half by two-inches *Gita*, the small rosary of beads (*tulsi mala*) and his spare reading glasses. For a long, long time, only his personal attendant knew about this symbol; none else. This was itself typical of the strictest privacy in which Netaji lived with his God. His faith was not an article for parade.

There could be no other source of the rare glow on his face which never faded, of the serenity that would descend on it in the midst of tumultuous events. He *never* even once *spoke* his God in public. He *lived* Him.

Those of us who came nearest to him, sometimes referred to him as “the Buddha”—so serene and so silent was he, whenever he could snatch a moment off from active duties.

He was the most turbulent figure in East Asia from the day in July, 1943 when he landed in Singapore till that fateful evening in August, 1945 when he took off in a plane from the Saigon aerodrome; and yet, if, even during those stormy days, you wanted real peace and spiritual ecstasy,

you had only to sit for a quiet chat with him late at night—rather tired of body, slightly drowsy, completely relaxed in muscle and nerve, half-closed eyes seeing visions of the fruition of plan after plan, stage by stage, gloriously merging in the big panorama of a free, happy and prosperous India, visions which clung to him to the last.

In those supreme moments of dedication he came nearest to God.

It was this conscious, constant, silent nearness to God that gave him the rare, charming, magnetic, dynamic and dominant personality which inspired tens of thousands of men and women and led them to perform rare feats of courage and heroism. The smallest of men grew to their fullest stature when they saw and heard him, even from a distance. At his touch, the most greedy and selfish were converted into men of unheard of sacrifices; even cowards became heroes. One shy, boyish, innocent, infectious smile from this eternal youth worked havoc in the hearts of men and women, old and young, rich and poor, and swept them on to acts of glory.

Some men he riled into parting with thousands of rupees for India's freedom; many others he smiled into parting with lakhs and lakhs willingly for the sacred cause.

It would be no exaggeration to say that the perennially cheerful and smiling face which hypnotised millions of his countrymen into doing his bidding was part of the divine dispensation which guided this man of destiny. Men like him are born in India once in centuries.

In life, and in death after life, I shall wait to see Netaji again.

The only epitaph I wish for myself is (in Hindustani): "*intezar hi intezar*," in other words: "Waiting in Life, Waiting in Death." Let empires and nations pass by me, let wars and interregnums pass by me, let cyclones and tornadoes pass by me, let life and death pass by me, let civilisations pass by me—me, living or dead—I shall be

waiting . . . *Intezar hi Intezar. I Am Waiting*—I can't say for what.

But I won't say I am waiting for him to return in flesh and blood.

I am certainly waiting to see his spirit take Indian youth by the hand and lead them on the path of *True Service to Independent India*, and lead Free India out of darkness, on to the glorious light of dawn.

This is not an idle dream. I know that this will come to pass ; this renaissance and resurgence of Netaji's spirit in the youth of India.

For, with my own eyes I have seen faith almost move mountains and we Indians are peculiarly susceptible to the influence of the faith that moves mountains.

FOR ALL TIME THE SPIRIT OF NETAJI WILL SERVE FREE INDIA, WILL LEAD FREE INDIA.

CHAPTER VI

IS NETAJI ALIVE ?

IS NETAJI ALIVE ?

This question rings in the minds of millions of Indians even today—nearly six years after the last chapter of the East Asian epic of the Indian National Army was written.

Reports are current from time to time that Netaji is alive. Questions are raised in Parliament. All India and Indians everywhere seem unable to believe that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose is no more.

In the Indian Parliament, only the other day (31st March, 1951), a Government spokesman said the Government had no "irrefutable proof" of the death of Netaji, though he was "generally believed to be dead."

And, so, the anxious question rings again in the minds of the people : *Is Netaji Alive ?*

Since my return to India after World War II, I have been asked this question by all manner of people. I first gave my answer at a public meeting of fifty thousand people at Madura (South India) on the evening of 23rd January, 1946, the first observance of Netaji's Birthday in India after the historic Red Fort Trial of INA Officers. I told the audience that Colonel Habib-ur-Rahman was the only Indian to accompany Netaji on the fateful plane dash from Saigon to an unknown destination on 17th August, 1945. And, he had later given me a graphic description of the plane crash of the next day at Taihoku. While Netaji succumbed to the burns at nine o'clock the same night, he (Habib) survived because of comparatively less serious burns as he was in woollens at the time of the crash. I told the audience that I believed Habib's report.



WITH SURVIVORS OF THE TAIHOKU AIR-CRASH.

In back row : Colonel T. who flew with the Author from Indo-China to Japan in August, 1945, a week after Japan's surrender in World War II. Front row : from left, Colonel Nonagaki, the Author and Captain Arai. Colonel Nonagaki and Captain Arai are survivors of the air-crash in which Netaji died.

(Photo taken in Tokyo in June, 1951).

That was in January, 1946. I am writing these lines in April, 1951, nearly six years after the reported crash.

In between, particularly a couple of years ago, I too started listening with interest to those who doubted Habib's version. They included men like Colonel Sahgal and Major Abid Hassan. Particularly the latter's words had to be given due weight because he had been so close to Netaji for some years. Abid refused to believe Habib's story. He was sure that Netaji must have safely crossed over to the Russian Occupied Zone in Manchuria in August, 1945; and either he was still a prisoner or, perhaps, a semi-free man. Sahgal's reasoning was different; he was not convinced by the burns on Habib's hands, and Habib's only woollen khaki uniform, which he was supposed to have been wearing at the time of the crash and which he was wearing in the Red Fort, looked too undamaged to have been through a fire.

The periodical assertions of some of the political party leaders in India that Netaji was alive and would return to India at the "appropriate" moment left me cold. But I could not listen to men like Abid Hassan and Sahgal without being influenced to some extent. Then I myself thought up quite a few reasons for sharing their doubts. For instance, what happened to Netaji's favourite silver cigarette case which could not be reduced to ashes, and what happened also to his reading glasses which he always carried in his bushcoat pocket? I thought it possible that being alive he had taken these with him when parting company with Habib in Formosa. Again, why did not the Japanese take me to Taihoku as they had promised to, and allow me to see Netaji's body for myself? Why was not a photograph of his face or at least of his bare body taken before his remains were cremated? Why was not his body carried in a plane to Singapore or Tokyo as, first Habib, and then I, had requested the Japanese to do?

Well, it is nearly six long years now. Meanwhile, I paid a brief visit to Japan in May, 1951 and there I met two other survivors of the crash, both of whom are Japanese.

I am convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt that Netaji met with his end at Taihoku (Formosa) on 18th August, 1945, as reported by Habib.

There is no power on earth that could hold him in detention against his wish beyond a few days after the official surrender of Japan. And, it is out of the question that he is alive and free but does not wish to come to India yet. Those who trot out this fantastic conjecture are doing that great man very grave injustice.

If he was alive, and even if he was a prisoner in the hands of any Power, he had enough ingenuity to make the fact known to India ; also, he would have either secured his release or died in the attempt.

Again, if he was alive and a free man in any corner of this wide world, he would have contacted Gandhiji or Sarat Chandra Bose, his elder brother whom he loved dearly, in a matter of days, and actually flown on wings of speed to India during the INA trial or soon thereafter.

When I called on Gandhiji at the Nature Cure Clinic in Poona in the last week of March, 1946, he questioned me pretty closely about Netaji's disappearance. He was then convinced that Netaji was no more. Writing in the *Harijan* of 7th April, 1946, Gandhiji said so. Here are extracts from his article under the title : " Is Netaji Alive ? "

" . . . I had nothing but my instinct to tell me that Netaji was alive. No reliance can be placed on such unsupported feeling.

" On the other hand, there is strong evidence to counteract the feeling. The British Government is party to that evidence. Capt. Habibur Rahman has said he was present at the time of Netaji's death and has brought back his charred wrist watch. Another of his companions, Shri Iyer, met and told me that my instinct was wrong and I should abandon the feeling that Subhas Chandra was alive. In the face of these proofs, I appeal to everyone to forget what I have said and, believing in the evidence



Wife of Netaji.



Netaji's daughter.
(Photo taken in 1946.)

before them, reconcile themselves to the fact that Netaji has left us. . . ."

Netaji would be the last man to stand aside and watch when momentous events have been taking place in India, and when his dear Motherland is free and is passing through trials and tribulations.

Moreover, if Netaji were alive today in any part of the world, he would have communicated with his wife who, with their 9-year-old daughter, now lives in Vienna. And, I know for a fact that Netaji's wife has not heard from him since his last known flight (August 18, 1945).

Those who know anything of Netaji would characterise as an insult to him the suggestion that he is still hiding somewhere and will reappear in India at the "appropriate" moment. The suggestion, if still repeated, is a heinous sin against Netaji.

CHAPTER VII

NETAJI'S MESSAGE TO FREE INDIA

I AM convinced that Netaji's achievements in East Asia have a very urgent and important message for our national leaders who are wrestling with vital national problems today. His method of approach to his fellow-countrymen must be studied in all its aspects and used to the advantage of the nation.

We have won our political freedom from an alien race ; but we have yet to win our economic freedom from our own capitalists and industrialists, blackmarketeers and profiteers. Even normally, our economic problem, rather our national economic slavery, was serious enough, but the war-time British administration of India's finance, commerce and industry, with its unscrupulous disregard of all canons of justice or morality, reduced our mercantile community and some of the administrative services to shocking depths of bribery and corruption.

Crores and crores of rupees changed hands in the craziest way ; *lakhpathis* and *crorepathis* (millionaires and multi-millionaires) sprung up like mushrooms. Sharpers became millionaires overnight and put on airs of piety, respectability and righteousness. The country was turned into a vast menagerie of financial hyenas and industrial vultures at whom the mass of semi-starved millions gaped with feelings of disgust, contempt, irritation and hatred.

"Big Money" was undaunted ; it was not unduly worried at this manifestation of plebian wrath. It went about capturing the organs of public opinion in the country as a safety-first measure to prevent any reinforcement of leftist following. Then "Big Money" grew bolder ; it began pontificating on the need to go slow with nationalisation,

etc., and on the urgent need to "create confidence among capitalists and industrialists."

Having done this, "Big Money" watched the country's reaction. The country, of course, went on grumbling and grouching, and even began growling and baring its fangs, but to no avail.

There is no blindness in the world that can compare with the blindness of Indian "Big Money." A drastic major operation is needed to cure that blindness. "Big Money" may ordinarily be left to its fate; but it threatens to drag the National Government with it, down the slippery slope of mass discontent to the abyss of bloody revolution.

It is obvious that bloody revolution is just what some people may want; but that does not mean that we need necessarily invite it and go through its agonies, merely to imitate someone else's fashion.

Tinkering with this problem of national economic slavery to "Big Business" will not do. It is far too late now to hope for success through tinkering. The best brains, not yet caught in the meshes of "Big Business," black-marketing and profiteering must get down immediately to solving the problem. And a solution is utterly impossible until the problem has been studied and understood in all its ugliest aspects.

Our corruption has assumed national proportions. The petty clerk and the petty shopkeeper are also in the racket in their millions; they imitated the bigger fries. We may reasonably hope that their demoralisation is only a passing phase; they could be reclaimed to decent society with a little bit of effort. But our major problem still remains; our Big Business which recognises no change in the political regime of the country, is unrepentent, and is in no mood to make any concessions to social economy, at least to ensure national stability for the immediate future, so that the first National Government of Free India can have breathing time to think and work out its plans.

If the Congress remains static, as it has done so far, it cannot hope to hold the country's allegiance. The choice before the nation will then be between Socialism and Communism. Unless the Congress bestirs itself, the Socialists may well repeat elsewhere their creditable performance in the Bombay City Municipal elections of February, 1948. The Communists will continue to incite trouble in spite of snubs and punitive measures.

I hope and trust that responsible Congress leaders will take the Bombay Municipal election results to heart, read their meaning in the light of Konda Venkatappiah's letter quoted by Mahatmaji, carry out a drastic purge of the organisation, cut themselves completely away from leading capitalists and industrialists, who have axes of their own to grind, formulate a bold, and unequivocal economic policy which would also take all that is best in Socialism and even Communism to the extent it is suited to the Indian conditions, and put such a policy into effect, not bothering even for a moment about Birlas, Dalmias, Walchands and Singhanias.

If these Frankensteins threaten to strangle the State out of existence and thus prevent the execution of such a bold economic policy, then the State must proceed to take over all these Houses and run them for the exclusive benefit of the nation, after giving the proprietors nominal compensation. They might also perhaps be invited to serve as executives, work conscientiously and earn a reasonable wage.

It is quite possible to avoid such drastic measures. That is where Netaji's approach to the problem will be found really useful. A planned effort must be made to "re-educate" even men like Birla, Dalmia, Walchand and Singhanias on the trend of political and economic currents in the world and in India, and lift the veil of darkness from their eyes.

They must be told that at the moment they are the best friends of Communism which thrives because of them; they must be told bluntly that they must, from now on, earn profits for the nation and not for themselves; they

must put aside all thoughts of acquiring political power through sheer bank balances; in fact, they must truly run their concerns in trust for the nation.

There is no need to find a label for such an idea; it need not necessarily be socialism or communism; it would be some 'ism' evolved by Indian genius, based on Indian culture and civilisation, suited to the Indian temperament and to the present-day conditions of India.

"Big Business" would do well to fall in line with this idea with grace; otherwise, "Big Business" will go down in disgrace. Not even a formidable combination of all the capitalists and industrialists of India can prevent such a disaster to themselves, if they do not wake up in time.

This is no threat; it is a word of advice in the best interests of the nation and of "Big Business" itself. I am quite sure that India can still boast of a multi-millionaire or two who will boldly come forward and dedicate all his wealth to the nation, himself to continue only as a trustee with a modest honorarium.

The example is bound to prove infectious. Such multi-millionaires, whom the nation will revere as *Mahathyagis* (Great Renouncers), will go down in history as its illustrious sons who did a glorious deed at the most critical juncture in the nation's history. This tradition of renunciation must be handed down from father to son. Then, not only they, but their successors yet unborn will be honoured and blessed by the nation for years to come. This path of voluntary renunciation is a thousand times better than the one that will be forced on them in due course. Gandhiji and Subhas, the two *Mahavirthyagis* of India, have shown the way.

Equitable distribution of the Nation's wealth cannot, in any event, brook a moment's delay. A start will have to be made immediately and the successive stages must be taken in hand according to plan. This is meant to show that the State is in dead earnest about executing the plan with voluntary co-operation if possible, and without it, if necessary.

The acute economic distress in the country cannot be allowed to threaten complete disruption and chaos. The solution must be racy of the soil. Academic discussions on the merits and demerits of any of the imported 'isms'—Socialism, Communism, Fascism or Nazism—will not do.

The national leaders who are both in the Central Government and in the Congress organisation have got to take courage in both hands, and without any thoughts of prestige or personal likes and dislikes, try the approach that Netaji found so effective and useful. Detailed plans will have to be worked out before the Netaji approach to the wealthy people of India is made.

Mr. Nehru will have to launch a spectacular all-India drive and issue an impassioned appeal for the first *Mahathyagi* to come forward and earn the undying gratitude of free India. The first *Mahathyagi* may well be a Ghan-shyamdas, Ramkrishendas, Walchand or a Padampat. If the nation wills it, and if the State has the imagination, no legal obstacles should be allowed to prevent or delay the awe-inspiring spectacle of the first *crorepathi* giving his all to India and launching a bloodless economic revolution which the rest of the world might very well copy at no distant date.

The first *Mahathyagi* will undoubtedly be followed by many others who will be inspired by his spectacular example.

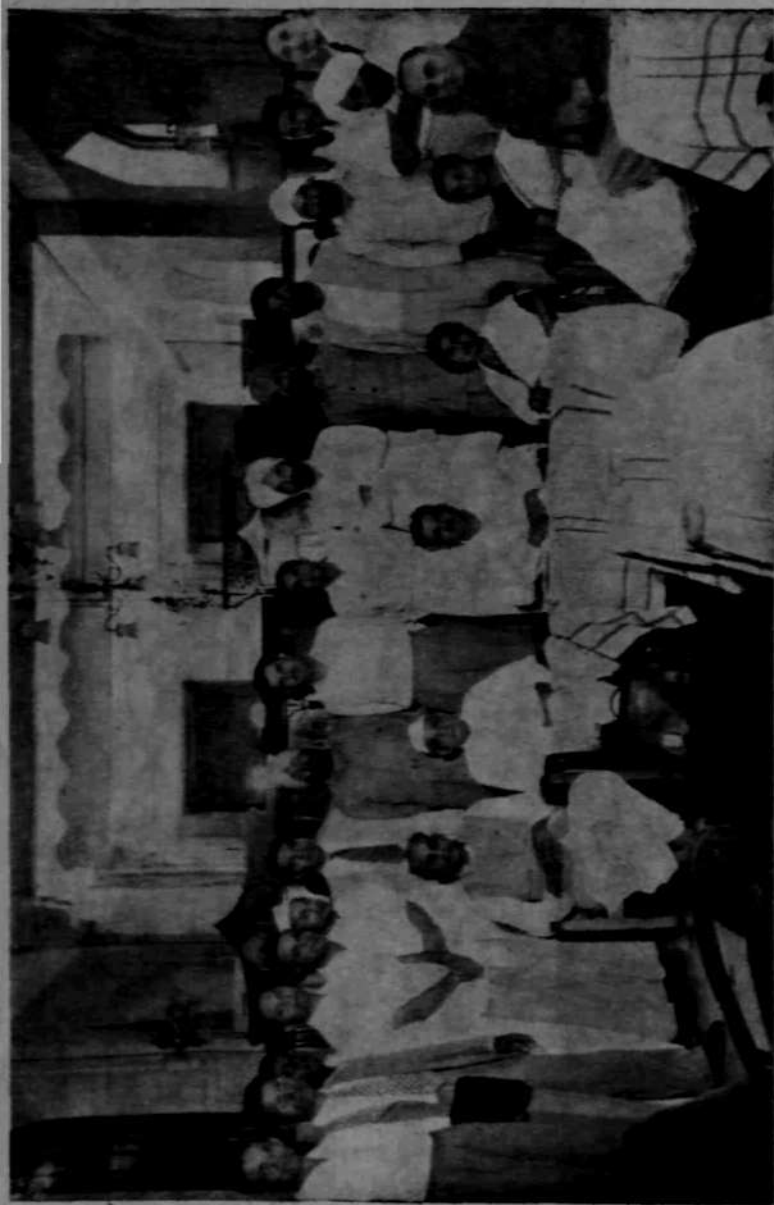
It would be positively stupid of India, in the year of grace 1951, to think of aping Moscow or London in solving her own economic problems. If Marx could evolve a plan and Lenin could put it into effect, surely Mr. Nehru could also strike out on his own and try the greatest experiment of all times. The materialistic West may not be able to implement its smallest plans without the help of the law, and the prison. But the spiritualistic India of the *Vedas*, the land of Krishna, Buddha, Vivekananda, Gandhi and Subhas, could easily rise to the greatest spiritual heights, provided her soul is again awakened by a man of vision, courage and faith.



Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Khān Abdul Gaffar Khan ("Frontier Gandhi"; and Sardar Vallabhbhai (extreme left) with Author next to him at the First Convention of INA on Indian soil (at Birla House, New Delhi, in May, 1946), four months after Red Fort Trials.



Shri B. G. Kher, Chief Minister of Bombay, inaugurated the Fourth INA Rally in November, 1949. Front Row: Major-General J. K. Bhonsle, Chief of Staff, INA (in mufti); Chief Minister; the Author (in INA civil uniform). Behind Chief Minister, wearing turban, Shri Zora Singh, Secretary, Supply Department, IIL HQ., Rangoon (1943-45).



Fourth INA Rally in India, held in Bombay on 10th, 11th and 12th November, 1949. Preliminary Conference of Delegates at Hotel Majestic. Seated from left : the Author, Major-General A. C. Chatterji, Major-General J. K. Bhonsle (Chairman), two girls of Ram of Jhansi Regiment, and Colonel Jagdev Singh (General Secretary). Standing : Hemraj Bhat, Colonel Gulwara Singh, Colonel P. K. Subhal of Red Fort Trid, Debnath Das and Colonel N. S. Gill.

If need be, Mr. Nehru must be prepared to throw up the Prime Ministership and all its restraints, and resume the leadership of the nation. For, India's independence is threatened from many sides. The potential dangers to this freedom are today named as Kashmir, and the Godse cult. The Socialists are in open revolt and are daily weakening the position and prestige of the Nehru Government. The Communists paid lip-sympathy to the Nehru regime for a few days; and now they have resumed their wonted role of instigators of violent class-war as the only method of emancipating the worker and the peasant.

I wish there were two Nehrus in India today, if it is absolutely necessary for one Nehru to continue to hold office in Delhi. The other Nehru is badly needed to go on a whirlwind campaign throughout the length and breadth of India, to tell the masses what he hopes to do for them, and what is far more important, how he hopes to do it. He must himself invoke and guide the cleansing whirlwind he has been recently speaking of.

The conviction is growing in the minds of many that the net is closing tighter round Nehru, and before long he may find himself helpless to do anything for the common men.

CHAPTER VIII

NETAJI IN FREE INDIA

NETAJI will have lived and died for India's Freedom in vain, if his achievements in East Asia did not have a meaning and a message for the present and future generations of his countrymen.

With dynamic energy he revitalised the civilian and military organisation of Indians in East Asia ; with clocklike precision, he put plan after plan into effect ; with unflinching loyalty he befriended the Japanese, Burmese and Thai Governments, through the ups and downs of a world war ; with rare magnetic charm, he hypnotised the three million Indians in East Asia into making voluntary sacrifices unprecedented in the world's history ; with indomitable courage, he faced catastrophic reverses on the battle-fronts, and turned defeats into victories ; with faith in India's ultimate destiny, which could not be shaken ever so little even in the darkest hours, he inspired even the cowardliest among men to face up to dangers and death with a smile on their lips ; with utter disregard of personal risks, he insisted on rushing to danger-points and seeing things for himself ; finally, he died with only one *mantra* (chant) on his lips, namely : "INDIA WILL BE FREE AND BEFORE LONG."

All his thoughts, words and actions in East Asia were motivated by two distinct objectives. They were, first, to win India's freedom ; secondly, to take all possible steps to maintain that freedom unaided by any other Power. The spiritual training he gave to the INA and to the civilians in East Asia was consistently marked by these two objectives ; he laid the foundations of a national character that could, in an emergency, defend India's freedom, and win a proud place for India in the councils of the nations.

I was frequently asked by some friends in the first months of our freedom : what do you think Netaji would have done, if he were in India today ? It would perhaps be presumptuous for anyone except Netaji himself, to answer that question. But still I am tempted to attempt an answer ; because for some reason or another, I feel I ought to answer ; I can only hope that I am true to Netaji's soul ; then, even if I make a mistake, I would be forgiven. One of the reasons why I feel bold enough to answer the question is the rare and proud privilege I had of being so near him from July, 1943 till August, 1945—two years crowded with fateful events.

If he had reached India in the autumn of 1945, at the end of World War II, the British would not have dared touch him ; and before he did anything else, he would have laid the bogey of partition. Of course, this might have meant bloodshed and even civil war, but he would rather have them than agree to partition ; this is no reflection on the leaders who agreed to partition, but only a reiteration of Netaji's unalterable stand. Communal strife and civil war . . . yes . . . but no partition and all the evils that have flowed and are still flowing from it, that is, no demoralisation of the armed forces, no pulling down of the economic structure, no Kashmir, no Hyderabad, no Junagadh, no rupees twenty-five-crore loan by the Nizam, no rupees fifty-five-crore gesture of appeasement to the unappeasable men of Pakistan, no problem of millions uprooted from their homes, no dispute over evacuee property or over canal waters, no trade deadlock over currency devaluation, nor the unceasing and unscrupulous worldwide campaign of slander against India under the flimsiest pretexts and, of course, no threat of war. Has the partition solved any problem ? I do not know ? But I do know that it has created problems and will continue to create problems to harass the National Government night and day all round the year.

So, Netaji would not have agreed to partition ; anything short of it, yes.

Then Lord Louis Mountbatten would *not* have been invited to continue as Governor-General. Why? For obvious reasons.

First, there would have been no need for him to play the role of mediator between Pakistan and the Indian Union;

secondly, his continued presence in the Viceroy's house would have detracted from India's status of complete independence; (accepting Dominion Status even temporarily would have been out of the question);

Colville and Nye would not have been invited to continue as Governors of Bombay and Madras respectively;

Auchinleck would have been packed off by the first available plane or boat;

the Indian Army would have easily been persuaded to welcome with open arms the reinstatement of the INA personnel in the country's armed forces; (of course, the INA itself would have been severely cautioned beforehand not to expect reinstatement or any other consideration as a reward for services; it would have been asked to be ready to serve the country again only if the nation and the Indian army wished it so).

What would Netaji himself have chosen to be in the new set up? I have no hesitation in saying that he would have insisted on Nehru heading the Administration, and would have pledged his own all-out support to the Nehru Administration; he would have joined the Administration, only if Nehru pressed him hard to do so, because there would be enough work for him to do in the country in training the masses in the heavy responsibilities of the citizenship of Free India.

Whether he was in the Cabinet or outside it, he would have radiated an amount of life and energy to pull the country through the early days of freedom.

He might have persuaded Gandhiji to become Free India's first Governor-General; that would have avoided the somewhat anomalous spectacle of the Premier and the

other Ministers having to run up to Birla House as often as they ran up to the Viceroy's House ; it was a tremendous strain on the nation's leaders, which few could imagine. Official consultations with Mountbatten and unofficial consultations with Mahatmaji interspersed with the thousand and one duties of a Free India Minister were much too much even for a man of Nehru's vitality, to say nothing of older men like Patel and Prasad.

If Gandhiji declined to occupy the Viceroy's House, then Netaji would have asked Gandhiji to give Nehru a blank cheque for a period of five years to run the Administration, consulting Gandhiji only on matters relating to Congress Organisation as distinct from the day to day administration of the country.

I have not the slightest doubt in my own mind that, if invited by Nehru, Netaji would have accepted the Defence Portfolio and set about the task of making India an A-1 nation physically and spiritually, and of giving India a first-rate Army, Navy and Air Force. These armed forces of Free India would have been fully capable of maintaining internal order and resisting external aggression. He would have left the impress of his own towering personality on the soldiers, sailors and airmen of Free India.

In fact, his presence in the Cabinet, in any capacity, would have been imperceptibly felt by all the other Ministers too. And of course, he would have been a pillar of strength to Panditji particularly in helping him shape Free India's foreign policy on well-defined lines. His valuable and varied experience of foreign affairs and his personal contacts with the Heads of States, foreign ministers and diplomats in Germany, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Japan, China, the Philipines, Thailand and Burma during the years 1941 to 1945, would have been available in an unstinted measure to Nehru in the conduct of India's External Affairs. It is more than possible, it is indeed probable that these two heads put together would have evolved a unique foreign policy for India.

Writing on another occasion and in another context I tried to indicate what kind of foreign policy Netaji himself would have pursued if he were alive today and what would have been his attitude towards America and Russia, especially because these two nations are seemingly poised for a war to settle their differences.

I make no apology for indicating at length the line of foreign policy which I believe would have met with Netaji's unqualified approval.

It is not easy for the average Indian to imagine the appalling task that faces Nehru in the field of external affairs alone. At this juncture, and for this reason, he is entitled to the support and sympathy of every Indian who wishes well of the country. Night and day, Nehru has to steer clear of diplomatic pitfalls; and the path of a Foreign Minister abounds in these pitfalls these days.

On the Home Front Netaji would have advocated a form of benevolent dictatorship as a temporary phase; he would certainly have been firm in maintaining law and order, impartially curbing all communal activities and suppressing all communal volunteers.

I have already indicated at considerable length what economic policy Netaji might have pursued.

I can only hope that I have not misinterpreted Netaji to my countrymen; if there are any obvious fallacies in what I have said in the name of Netaji, I wish to take all the blame on myself; it could only mean that I have failed to interpret Netaji correctly in spite of my best efforts to do so.

Today Free India faces three distinct perils.

1. World war between America and Russia.
2. War with Pakistan.
3. War with enemies within India—capitalists, industrialists, profiteers, blackmarketeers, vested interests, communists and rank communalists—all of them combined total only a fraction of the thirty-five crore population of Free India which is nearly one-fifth of the human race.

Before World War II came to an end, that is, as early as June 1945, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose forecast the inevitability of World War III within ten years—the belligerents to be led by America on the one side and Russia on the other.

He put forth the most cogent reasons why such a war was inevitable. With the vision of a seer he saw this World War III coming. He did not have enough time then and he did not live long enough to see India actually free, and to tell Free India what she should do in the event of a war between Russia and America ; knowing what the atom bomb did to Hiroshima and Nagasaki he pictured to himself the horrors of the coming World War III ; he fully realised that such a war might well mean the end of civilisation.

Though Netaji did not specifically say what Free India should do in the event of a war between Russia and America, he said enough from time to time on current affairs then to reveal his mind on certain fundamentals.

To him the Freedom of India was *not* an end in itself ; it was nothing more than a mere means.

He was out to take everybody's aid and he was out to use every available weapon in his war against the British ; but then, he was prepared to have even another one hundred and fifty years of slavery for India under the British, if the price of Freedom was a compromise of India's national honour, prestige, dignity, or complete independence.

He was prepared to reconcile himself even to India's physical extinction ; but he would *not* have it said of India that she was only a fairweather friend and that she was guilty of gross perfidy towards any other nation on earth.

This being so, it is not very difficult to guess what would have been Netaji's attitude towards America and Russia vis-a-vis the threatened war between these two countries.

His attitude would be that even to save her own skin or to save her independence, Free India should not join the winning side, merely because it was the winning side ; she

should not join any side ; but, if ever she must join a side, that would be the side of the truly just party. Free India must risk her freedom a thousand times in taking the right decision in times of world crises ; her own safety, or self-interest alone should not weigh with her ; otherwise, the newly-won freedom of the three hundred and fifty million people of India would be the worst curse added to the already existing curses of the modern world.

If the three hundred and fifty million people of partitioned Free India are to become a new world force for the good of humanity, they must set their face against all the known canons of power diplomacy of the imperialists, democratic or Communist brand, and pursue a unique policy whose motive would be wholly altruistic. The sanction behind such a policy will be the national morality nurtured and strengthened over the last thirty years by Mahatma Gandhi ; and the spirit of utter self-sacrifice and a determined effort to translate that morality into action, as demonstrated by Netaji on more than one occasion in his dealings with the Germans and the Japanese during his war of liberation from 1942 to 1945.

I am not deluding myself into the belief that it is an easy task for Free India to take up an uncompromising moral stand when America and Russia are poised for a final showdown which would decide the fate of world civilisation for centuries to come.

I do not for a moment minimise the appalling magnitude of the task ; but I say that the very magnitude compels India to fulfil the task ; India can have no other mission in this world ; she can have no other contribution to make to the sum total of ultimate human happiness. She will be wasting her gigantic man-power, if she were to use it in producing faster planes, more hideous-looking tanks, more destructive atom bombs, or more horrible invisible rays. The future belligerents have left India miles behind in these scientific fields.

Free India is not going to find safety or security in the size of her army, navy, or air force or in the fire-power of her modern weapons. Of course, she would have to have first-rate Defence Forces on land, in the air and at sea. But these would only be of secondary importance in defence either against America or against Russia, because, it is out of the question for India to outstrip either of these two world powers in the matter of armaments.

Free India's defence forces would be only of such proportions as the country could afford economically. Free India can never entertain expansionist ambitions ; so power-politics cannot dictate the size of her defence forces.

It would not pay free India, materially or spiritually, to be camp-follower of either Russia or America. It would be the solemn duty of India's statesmen to decide after the most careful deliberation, which of the two belligerents is inspired by *wholly altruistic* motives, and then if necessary range herself on the side of that belligerent ; if neither can be described as such, then India would remain neutral, *whatever* may be the price of that neutrality.

World leadership of a single nation, however good and just that nation may be, would be a constant menace to world peace.

Neither America nor Russia must aspire to world leadership ; they are most welcome to be leaders in a world partnership in which other nations also shall have their say on a footing of absolute equality.

Free India might as well devote all her energies to the spade work of world partnership ; in this noble mission of permanent peace to the world, the land of Buddha, Gandhi and Subhas may well expect the active co-operation of the land of Confucius and Sun Yat Sen and of the land of the Rising Sun.

All thoughts of world leadership will be wiped out and world partnership and world peace will become pleasant realities when, for a start, India, China and Japan join hands

and dedicate themselves to the sacred task of permanent world peace and progress *without any selfish motives*.

Such a development alone can stem the rot, and put an end to the present pathetic sight of the rest of the world looking on helplessly and in trepidation, with two giants growling at each other across the five continents of the world, and threatening to throw the world into the seething cauldron.

This is the only answer to the question: "What shall be the sheet anchor of the foreign policy of Free India?"

The National Government of Free India must first digest this policy, then inculcate it in the Ambassadors it sends abroad, and preach it to the three hundred and fifty million people of partitioned Free India, whose whole-hearted acceptance alone can implement the policy; otherwise it would remain the chimerical dream of a handful of visionaries in Delhi.

This is how Free India would face the peril of World War III and make a positive contribution to averting it.

Now, to turn to the peril of a war with Pakistan.

This is a much smaller peril compared with a world war, though it is not the less bothersome if it is thrust upon India.

Our men at Delhi should be above suspicion; they should carry out *their* part of whatever agreement is arrived at with Pakistan, undaunted by anything that is said or done across the border in violation of the spirit of the agreement.

Then Pakistan would be told to *abstain* from *provoking* a conflict; if Pakistan still persists in having a clash by merely raising the bogey of religion, then Free India would defend righteousness or perish in the attempt.

The National Government will have to make up its mind very clearly and firmly on this issue, and make it known to every man, woman and child in India; what Pakistan says or thinks or even does, need not be an obsession with our National or Provincial Governments or political parties; rather they ought to know what they themselves

should do ; that would suffice ; Free India must never do any sabre-rattling, in the absence of extreme and deliberate provocation ; then sabre-rattling on the other side may be safely ignored, reliance being placed wholly on the strength to defend righteousness.

This strength to defend the right will have to be generated without a moment's delay. It can only come from compulsory military training for all able-bodied men and women.

After developing this strength, Free India must stretch her hand of sincere friendship to Pakistan, and behave as an honourable friend.

Lastly, to turn to the internal peril—the cumulative effect of the anti-national activities of capitalists, industrialists, blackmarketeers, communists and extreme communalists.

Public opinion will have to be mobilised against these groups who are daily eating into the vitals of the nation.

With the exit of the British from India and the attainment of our Independence, we have abolished one of the institutions through which the British skilfully maintained their hold on the psychology of Indians, namely, the award of titles of honour to hundreds of Indians twice a year—on New Year's Day and on King's Birthday.

But we have not substituted these British Honours Lists with any awards of the Republic of India, though some typically Indian awards have been instituted for deeds of bravery on the battle-field.

Let us take the instances of leading nations of the world today. In Soviet Russia, in spite of the official economic equality of all men, it has been found necessary to award titles such as "Hero of the Soviet Union," "Hero of Labour," etc., to rouse the enthusiasm of the people and goad them to rivalry in service of the nation ; a worker in a Soviet Russian factory who gets the same wages and has the same standard of life as the man standing at the next machine, feels himself more important simply because he has been awarded the title of "Hero of Labour" and lionised and feted as such on all possible occasions. The title is

considered as a reward for better work and an incentive to healthy rivalry.

Communist China is also awarding such titles to her workers and others.

The United States of America, on the other hand, has set her face against any such titular distinctions between man and man; one of the main reasons may be the blanket national assurance that any citizen of the United States may aspire to go "from the log cabin to the White House," and no citizen of the United States can have a higher ambition than to occupy the White House one day as President of the United States of America. Another reason may be that titles are totally unsuited to the national temperament of Americans.

But one of the oldest democracies of the modern world, Britain, is still using the institution of titles to the best national advantage, except when titles are awarded for services to the party in power.

Knowing the psychology of his countrymen as he did, Netaji, if he were in India today, might have seriously considered the urgent need for the institution of titles of national honour to be awarded to Indians achieving distinctions in the fields of art, science and literature or rendering outstanding service to the nation in other fields.

The nation might therefore find it worthwhile to consider seriously in the near future a proposal to award titles of national honour to illustrious sons and daughters rendering outstanding national services or achieving distinctions in the fields of art, science and literature. We might as well have titles such as, for instance, *Vir* (hero), *Thyagi* (martyr), *Virthyagi* (hero-martyr), *Mahavir* (great hero), *Mahathyagi* (great martyr), and *Mahavirthyagi* (great hero-martyr). Mahatma Gandhi would be awarded the posthumous title and be Free India's first *Mahavirthyagi*; Netaji, similarly, would be the second; and, Lokmanya Tilak, the third.

As for the fields of art, science and literature, we might consider the titles of *Gnani* (man or woman of knowledge),

Mahagnani (great man or woman of knowledge), *Kalakār* (man or woman of art), *Maha Kalakār* (great man or woman of art); a great man or woman of knowledge as well as of art would be known as a *Mahapurush* or *Mahastree* (great man or great woman). Poet Tagore would be hailed a *Mahapurush*.

The question may be asked : But, who is to award these titles impartially and with due restraint ? This must not be left to the Executive of the Administration of the day. A small but supreme body to be known as the National Tribunal and composed of the President of India, the Chief Justice of India, the Prime Minister of India and the Chief Justices of the High Courts in the States must meet once a year and scrutinise a list to be placed before it by the Government of India. The Government will have drawn up the list on the basis of recommendations of its own Departments, the State Governments, and less than a handful of public bodies engaged in pursuit of art, science or literature.

The awards would be given only once a year or at longer intervals; and the yearly list of titles would not contain more than a dozen names in all. In other words, hardly more than one person would be awarded the same title.

These titles would be really coveted distinctions of national honour and national recognition, and carry varying money grants with them. The money grants would be sufficient, in the case of those without independent means, to live respectably and without looking to anyone else for a decent existence.

EPILOGUE

SIX years have rolled by since Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose fought and nearly won the epic war for India's Independence. He hastened our freedom by at least ten years, when the British quit India four years ago.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose is no more in our midst in flesh and blood ; not for him the heat and dust of contemporary politics and controversy. But he has left behind him a rare tradition of patriotic fervour and indomitable courage.

Stone buildings and bronze statues alone cannot adequately perpetuate his memory. Nevertheless, they are also needed to remind the present and future generations of Indians to live up to the glorious traditions created by Netaji. Therefore, the house in Rangoon from which he directed the Second War of India's Independence must be bought for the nation without delay ; the demolished Memorial to the Shaheeds (martyrs) of the INA must be rebuilt on the foreshore in Singapore ; and a life-size statue of Netaji must be erected near the Red Fort in Delhi as soon as this is possible. The sacred task of bringing Netaji's ashes from Tokyo with due solemnity has to be taken in hand in earnest by the Government of our country soon after the General Elections.

An appeal must be made in the name of the Government of India to all ex-INA personnel in and out of India and to all other Indians, as well as to the Governments and nationals of Germany, Italy, Japan, China, Philippines, Indo-China, Indonesia, Malaya, Thailand and Burma to donate to the Indian nation documents, pictures, mementos, souvenirs and relics of Netaji, with the ultimate idea of depositing them in a National Museum in Delhi.

A nucleus can easily be formed almost immediately if some public-spirited Indian would come forward to take

over for the nation, some very valuable material from Vithalbhai Jhaveri who laboured hard and organised an INA exhibition and brought out a publication entitled *Freedom's Battle*. Financially Vithalbhai was hit very hard indeed; he did not mind it then, and he does not mind it now; nevertheless, he must be compensated to a reasonable extent and the precious material that he collected on Netaji's historic fight for our freedom must be taken over from him. From time to time, I had asked him to have patience and continue to act as honorary trustee of this national treasure. He promised to do so, and he has kept his promise at tremendous sacrifice.

Even when all this is done, we shall have done nothing more than having a few visible symbols of Netaji's four years of toil outside India for her liberation.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose is already passing into legend in India; it is good to have a legend of Subhas in a country like ours; nothing else is capable of stirring us, as a nation of thirty-five crores of people, into seeing visions, effacing ourselves, feeling proud of our heritage, and acting in unity with courage in our hearts and faith in ourselves and our destiny. At all times it is difficult to live up to a legend; and the Subhas legend is Himalayan—the Peak of Mount Everest—something almost unattainable; at the same time, something that beckons you on through Eternity to heroic and more heroic effort; even at its worst, any effort would mean some gain to the country; it would be an unceasing effort that has no thought of mere success or failure, but is content with the act itself regardless of the outcome.

The Legend will spread to the millions of homes in the farthest corners of India, and every house, whether the rich man's mansion or the poor man's hut, will enshrine his memory, and every man, woman and child, irrespective of caste or creed, will try to emulate the immortal life of mortal Subhas.

If this comes to pass, as undoubtedly it must, what more could any Indian wish ?

And, if this book of mine contributes even a drop to the ocean of that Immortal Legend, then it is not in vain that I have tried to be :

UNTO HIM A WITNESS

APPENDIX I

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE was born on Saturday, the 23rd January, 1897. He was the sixth son and ninth child of his parents. His father, Mr. Janakinath Bose, was a leading lawyer in Cuttack, Orissa. His mother Prabhavati belonged to the family of the Dutts of Hatkhola, a northern quarter of Calcutta. Theirs was not a rich family but a well-to-do middle class one.

At the age of five, Subhas joined a Missionary School in Cuttack, called the P. E. School, primarily meant for European and Anglo-Indian boys and girls. He studied in that school for six years from 1902 to 1909. In 1909, he joined the Ravenshaw Collegiate School. He appeared for the Matriculation examination in March, 1913 and came out second in the whole University.

It was during this period that Subhas Chandra Bose developed a taste for religious devotion and as he approached the end of his school career his religious impulse began to grow in intensity. The teachings of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Vivekananda fired his imagination and he resolved to dedicate his life to the great cause of humanity.

This decision was taken after great mental conflict. Subhas himself once described this struggle as a battle royal.

In 1913, he joined the Presidency College, Calcutta, but even the College atmosphere could not change his religious outlook and spiritual urge. So in the summer vacation of 1914, he quietly left on a pilgrimage with another friend. He borrowed some money from a class friend who was getting a scholarship and repaid him later from his own. He visited some well-known places of pilgrimage in Upper India. After an exciting experience he turned up one fine morning dejected and disappointed at not finding the *Guru* (Teacher) he had wanted so much. However, his religious pursuits did give him an insight into the conditions of Indian village life, its social injustices, dire poverty and other anomalies. In addition it prepared him well for the ordeals he had to go through as the result of his embracing an entirely different career later.

Life in the college and in a cosmopolitan city like Calcutta afforded more opportunities for Subhas to see the highhandedness of the British towards Indians and the humiliations they were subjected to, and gradually his religious urge found a new outlet in political activities.

While he was proceeding with his studies for the degree examination, he had an unpleasant experience. An English professor of the College manhandled one of his class-mates and as the representative of his class Subhas had to take up this matter with the Principal. The professor was asked to apologise but he refused to do so. A strike was organised. On the second day of the strike pressure was brought to bear on the professor and he called for the students' representatives and settled the dispute amicably with them, a formula honourable to both parties having been devised in the meantime. A month later a similar incident happened, the same professor being the author. This time it was a different story. The students did not resort to any constitutional methods but took the law into their own hands and beat the professor black and blue. This created a great commotion and the Government was about to close the college.

The Principal fell out with the Government and was suspended but before power could slip out of his hands he called for those students who were in his black list, including Subhas. Though he was not one of the assailants the Principal's wrath fell on Subhas and he vented his spleen on him. He told Subhas that he was the most troublesome boy in the college and suspended him. The Governing Body of the University confirmed this order and Subhas was expelled from the College. His appeal to the University for permission to study in some other college was not granted. This was the turning point in his career.

Subhas then went to Cuttack and lived there for a year as a rusticated student. A year later he returned to Calcutta to try his luck with the University authorities once again. He was informed that the University authorities would probably be amenable, but that he would have to find a college to continue his studies. He approached the Scottish Church College and explained the whole position to the Principal who was impressed very much and agreed to admit him provided the Principal of the Presidency College had no objection. This was somehow arranged and he took to his studies again with zeal and devotion. At the B.A. examination in 1919 he got first class honours in Philosophy but was placed second in order of merit. The same year his father asked him whether he was willing to go to

England and study for the I.C.S. He was given twenty-four hours to make up his mind. He finally agreed to go. Subsequently at Cambridge and in the I.C.S. examination he had a very satisfactory record, in fact he came out fourth in the 1920 July Civil Service Examination.

He had another great problem to face, that is, whether to join the Civil Service and aid the British authorities in subjugating his own people and then lead a comfortable life or to cast away such a lucrative job and court suffering and sacrifice.

The non-co-operation movement initiated by Mahatma Gandhi stirred the Indian people all over the world. Subhas could not resist the call of the Congress to lawyers to quit the courts, to title-holders to relinquish their titles, to students to leave their colleges and to Government servants to resign their posts. After protracted correspondence with his elder brother, Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose, he resigned from the I.C.S. in May, 1921, against the wish of his friends and family members, and hurried back to India to take his place in the struggle.

As soon as he reached Bombay he met Mahatma Gandhi who directed him to report to Mr. C. R. Das. Subhas was not very much impressed by Gandhiji's arguments in the first interview he had with the Mahatma. Of course he had high respect and regard for Gandhiji.

However, as soon as Subhas reached Calcutta he met Mr. C. R. Das with whom he had already started correspondence while in England. Mr. Das left an indelible impression on Subhas and he followed him implicitly. "It was a life of service and suffering that Subhas chalked out for himself, but it was in accordance with the views and convictions of Mr. C. R. Das who himself could not agree with Gandhiji on the main points of the Mahatma's programme."

Since then Subhas had a very stormy career as a political leader and the British treated him all the worse for it, as he belonged to the leftist group. He was imprisoned many times, taken even to the Mandalay jail in Burma. Jail life and harsh treatment practically wrecked his health but his indomitable courage and devotion to duty enabled him to survive all the ordeals.

When the "Swaraj Party" started the daily *Forward*, Subhas was its editor. In 1924, at the age of 27, he was made the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation. He was President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and likewise President of the All-India Trade Union Congress.

The Fifty-first Session of the Indian National Congress met under highly trying circumstances at Vithal Nagar, Haripura, in February, 1938, and Subhas was elected President, the youngest to be the President of the Congress then.

He introduced many schemes during his Presidentship, notably National Planning, etc. He felt that his term of office—one year—was not enough to work out his programme and decided to contest the election for the Presidentship in 1939, against the practice of the Congress. Subhas, however, won the election against the nominee of Mahatma Gandhi.

This time, due to ill-health, Subhas was not able to take part in the Presidential procession that had been arranged with a chariot drawn by fifty-two elephants along the road leading to the Congress Nagar in Tripura, in Mahakosal. Instead it was conducted with the photo of the President.

Throughout the session of the Tripura Congress, Subhas remained ill and could not attend the open session. He was carried on a stretcher for the All-India Congress Committee meeting and Subjects Committee meetings.

Subhas's election to the Presidentship for the second time was very much disapproved by Gandhiji. This created a sort of friction in the Congress High Command and Subhas was compelled to resign his Presidentship. Immediately afterwards he formed his own party called the "Forward Bloc."

Matters reached a crisis. For organising a country-wide protest against a certain resolution of the A.I.C.C. Subhas was debarred from holding any office in the Congress organisation for three years.

In 1939, the second World War broke out and the British arrested most of the Congress leaders. Subhas was arrested at his Calcutta residence under the Defence of India Rules in July, 1940. In December, 1940, he went on hunger strike in prison as a protest against his continued detention, and threatened to fast unto death if he was not released. The authorities ordered his release but kept a very strict vigil on his house to watch his movements. Nevertheless he escaped from his homeland in January, 1941 and was next heard of in Berlin in March. After organising an Indian National Army in Germany, he travelled for three months in a submarine from Germany and reached Japan in June 1943 and Singapore in July 1943 to lead the Indian Independence Movement in East Asia. The rest of the story of his epic fight for India's freedom has been narrated in the records of the historic INA trial at the Red Fort in November-December 1945 and in a number of books and pamphlets published in India since 1945.

APPENDIX II

PROCLAMATION OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF AZAD HIND

The following is the Proclamation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, read in English by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, at a meeting of representative Indians from all over East Asia, held at the Cathay Cinema Theatre in Singapore on 21st October, 1943 :—

After their first defeat at the hands of the British in 1757 in Bengal, the Indian people fought an uninterrupted series of hard and bitter battles over a stretch of one hundred years. The history of this period teems with examples of unparalleled heroism and self-sacrifice. And, in the pages of that history, the names of Siraj-ud-doula and Mohanlal of Bengal, Haider Ali, Tippu Sultan and Vellu Tampi of South India, Appa Sahib Bhonsle and Peshwa Baji Rao of Maharashtra, the Begums of Oudh, Sardar Shyam Singh Atariwala of Punjab and last, but not least, Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, Tantia Topi, Maharaj Kunwar Singh of Dumraon and Nana Sahib—among others—the names of all these warriors are for ever engraved in letters of gold. Unfortunately for us, our forefathers did not at first realise that the British constituted a grave threat to the whole of India and they did not therefore put up a united front against the enemy. Ultimately, when the Indian people were roused to the reality of the situation, they made a concerted move—and under the flag of Bahadur Shah, in 1857, they fought their last war as free men. In spite of a series of brilliant victories in the early stages of this war, ill-luck and faulty leadership gradually brought about their final collapse and subjugation. Nevertheless, such heroes as the Rani of Jhansi, Tantia Topi, Kunwar Singh and Nana Sahib live like eternal stars in the nation's memory to inspire us to greater deeds of sacrifice and valour.

Forcefully disarmed by the British after 1857 and subjected to terror and brutality, the Indian people lay prostrate for a while—but with the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885, there came a new awakening. From 1885 till the end of the last World War, the Indian people, in their endeavour to recover their lost liberty, tried all possible methods—namely, agitation and propaganda, boycott of British goods, terrorism

and sabotage—and finally, armed revolution. But all these efforts failed for a time. Ultimately, in 1920, when the Indian people, haunted by a sense of failure, were groping for a new method, Mahatma Gandhi came forward with the new weapon of non-co-operation and civil disobedience.

For two decades thereafter the Indian people went through a phase of intense patriotic activity. The message of freedom was carried to every Indian home. Through personal example, people were taught to suffer, to sacrifice and to die in the cause of freedom. From the centre to the remotest villages, the people were knit together into one political organisation. Thus, the Indian people not only recovered their political consciousness, but became a political entity once again. They could now speak with one voice and strive with one will for one common goal. From 1937 to 1939, through the work of the Congress Ministries in eight provinces, they gave proof of their readiness and their capacity to administer their own affairs.

Thus on the eve of the present World War, the stage was set for the final struggle for India's liberation. During the course of this war, Germany, with the help of her Allies, has dealt shattering blows to our enemy in Europe—while Nippon with the help of her Allies has inflicted a knockout blow to our enemy in East Asia. Favoured by a most happy combination of circumstances, the Indian people today have a wonderful opportunity for achieving their national emancipation.

For the first time in recent history, Indians abroad have also been politically roused and united in one organisation. They are not only thinking and feeling in tune with their countrymen at home, but are also marching in step with them, along the path to Freedom. In East Asia, in particular, over two million Indians are now organised as one solid phalanx, inspired by the slogan of "Total Mobilisation." And in front of them stand the serried ranks of India's Army of Liberation, with the slogan "Onward to Delhi" on their lips.

Having goaded Indians to desperation by its hypocrisy and having driven them to starvation and death by plunder and loot, British rule in India has forfeited the goodwill of the Indian people altogether and is now living a precarious existence. It needs but a flame to destroy the last vestige of that unhappy rule. To light that flame is the task of India's Army of Liberation. Assured of the enthusiastic support of the civil population at home and also of a large section of British Indian Army and backed by gallant and invincible allies abroad, but relying in the first instance on its own strength, India's Army of Liberation is confident of fulfilling its historic role.

Now that the dawn of freedom is at hand, it is the duty of the Indian people to set up a Provisional Government of their own, and launch the last struggle under the banner of that Government. But with all the Indian leaders in prison and the people at home totally disarmed, it is not possible to set up a Provisional Government within India or to launch an armed struggle under the aegis of that Government. It is, therefore, the duty of the Indian Independence League in East Asia, supported by all patriotic Indians at home and abroad, to undertake this task—the task of setting up a Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India) and of conducting the last fight for freedom, with the help of the Army of Liberation (that is, the Azad Hind Fauj or the Indian National Army) organised by the League.

Having been constituted as the Provisional Government of Azad Hind by the Indian Independence League in East Asia, we enter upon our duties with a full sense of the responsibility that has devolved on us. We pray that Providence may bless our work and our struggle for the emancipation of our motherland. And we hereby pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades in arms to the cause of her freedom, of her welfare, and her exaltation among the nations of the world.

It will be the task of the Provisional Government to launch and to conduct the struggle that will bring about the expulsion of the British and of their allies from the soil of India. It will then be the task of the Provisional Government to bring about the establishment of a permanent National Government of Azad Hind constituted in accordance with the will of the Indian people and enjoying their confidence. After the British and their allies are overthrown and until a Permanent National Government of Azad Hind is set up on Indian soil, the Provisional Government will administer the affairs of the country in trust for the Indian people.

The Provisional Government is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Indian. It guarantees religious liberty, as well as equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens. It declares its firm resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally and transcending all the differences cunningly fostered by an alien government in the past.

In the name of God, in the name of bygone generations who have welded the Indian people into one nation and in the name of the dead heroes who have bequeathed to us a tradition of heroism and self-sacrifice—we call upon the Indian people to

rally round our banner and to strike for India's freedom. We call upon them to launch the final struggle against the British and all their allies in India and to prosecute that struggle with valour and perseverance and with full faith in final victory—until the enemy is expelled from Indian soil and the Indian people are once again a Free Nation.

Signed on behalf of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind.

SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE (*Head of the State, Prime Minister and Minister for War and Foreign Affairs*);

CAPT. MRS. LAKSHMI (*Women's Organisation*);

S. A. AYER (*Publicity and Propaganda*);

LT.-COL. A. C. CHATTERJI (*Finance*);

LT.-COL. AZIZ AHMED, LT.-COL. N. S. BHAGAT, LT.-COL. J. K.

BHONSLE, LT.-COL. GULZARA SINGH, LT.-COL. M. Z. KIANI,

LT.-COL. A. D. LOGANADAN, LT.-COL. EHSAN QADIR, LT.-COL.

SHAH NAWAZ (*Representatives of the Armed Forces*);

A. M. SAHAY, *Secretary (with Ministerial Rank)*;

RASH BEHARI BOSE (*Supreme Adviser*);

KARIM GANI, DEBNATH DAS, D. M. KHAN, A. YELLAPPA, J.

THIVY, SARDAR ISHAR SINGH (*Advisers*);

A. N. SARKAR (*Legal Adviser*).

SINGAPORE, Oct. 21, 1943.

Oath taken by Netaji on the occasion of the Proclamation of the establishment of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind:

"In the name of God, I take this sacred oath that to liberate India and the thirty-eight crores of my countrymen, I, Subhas Chandra Bose, will continue the sacred war of freedom till the last breath of my life.

"I shall remain always a servant of India and to look after the welfare of thirty-eight crores of Indian brothers and sisters shall be for me my highest duty.

"Even after winning freedom, I will always be prepared to shed even the last drop of my blood for the preservation of India's Freedom."

Oath taken by the Ministers of the Provisional Government on the occasion of the Proclamation:

"In the name of God, I take this holy oath that to liberate India and the thirty-eight crores of my countrymen I..... will be absolutely faithful to my Leader Subhas Chandra Bose and shall be always prepared to sacrifice my life and all I have for fulfilling this pledge."

APPENDIX III

RADIO APPEAL

Netaji's Broadcast address to Mahatma Gandhi over the Rangoon Radio on 6th July, 1944:

MAHATMAJI,

Now that your health has somewhat improved, and you are able to attend to public business to some extent, I am taking the liberty of addressing a few words to you with a view to acquainting you with the plans and the activities of patriotic Indians outside India.

Before I do so I would like to inform you of the feelings of deep anxiety which Indians throughout the World had for several days after your sudden release from custody on grounds of ill-health. After the sad demise of Shrimati Kasturbaiji in British custody it was but natural for your countrymen to be alarmed over the state of your health. It has, however, pleased Providence to restore you to comparative health, so that three hundred and eighty-eight millions of your countrymen may still have the benefit of your guidance and advice.

I should like to say something about the attitude of your countrymen outside India towards yourself. What I shall say in this connection is the bare truth and nothing but the truth.

There are Indians outside India, as also at home, who are convinced that Indian Independence will be won only through the historic method of struggle. These men and women honestly feel that the British Government will never surrender to persuasion or moral pressure or non-violent resistance. Nevertheless, for Indians outside India, differences in method are like domestic differences.

Ever since you sponsored the Independence Resolution at the Lahore Congress in December, 1929, all members of the Indian National Congress have had one common goal before them. For Indians outside India, you are the creator of the present awakening in our country. In all their propaganda before the world, they give you that position and the respect due to that position. For in the world-public, we Indian nationalists are all one—having but one goal, one desire and one endeavour in life. In all the countries free from British influence that I have visited since I left India in 1941, you are held in the

highest esteem, as no other Indian political leader has been, during the last century.

Each nation has its own internal politics and its own attitude towards political problems. But that cannot affect a Nation's appreciation of a man who has served his people so well and has bravely fought a first-class modern power all his life. In fact, your worth and your achievements are appreciated a thousand times more in those countries that are opposed to the British Empire than in those countries that pretend to be the friends of Freedom and Democracy. The high esteem in which you are held by patriotic Indians outside India and by foreign friends of India's freedom, was increased a hundredfold when you bravely sponsored the "Quit India" Resolution in August, 1942.

From my experience of the British Government while I was inside India—from the secret information that I have gathered about Britain's policy while outside India—and from what I have seen regarding Britain's aims and intentions throughout the world, I am honestly convinced that the British Government will never recognise India's demand for Independence. Britain's one effort today is to exploit India to the fullest degree, in her endeavour to win this war. During the course of this war, Britain has lost one part of her territory to her enemies and another part to her friends. Even if the Allies could somehow win the war, it will be United States of America, and not Britain that will be top dog in future and it will mean that Britain will become a protege of the U.S.A.

In such a situation the British will try to make good their present losses by exploiting India more ruthlessly than ever before. In order to do that, plans have been already hatched in London for crushing the nationalist movement in India once for all. It is because I know of these plans from secret but reliable sources that I feel it my duty to bring it to your notice.

It would be a fatal mistake on our part to make a distinction between the British Government and the British people. No doubt there is a small group of idealists in Britain—as in the U.S.A. who would like to see India free.

These idealists who are treated by their own people as cranks form a microscopic minority. So far as India is concerned, for all practical purposes the British Government and the British people mean one and the same thing.

Regarding the war aims of the U.S.A. I may say that the ruling clique at Washington is now dreaming of world domination. This ruling clique and its intellectual exponents talk openly of

the "American Century," that is, that in the present century the U.S.A. will dominate the world. In this ruling clique there are extremists who go so far as to call Britain the forty-ninth State of the U.S.A.

There is no Indian, whether at home or abroad, who would not be happy if India's freedom could be won through the method that you have advocated all your life and without shedding human blood. But things being what they are I am convinced that if we do desire freedom we must be prepared to wade through blood.

If circumstances had made it possible for us to organise an armed struggle inside India through our own efforts and resources that would have been the best course for us. But Mahatmaji, you know Indian conditions perhaps better than anybody else. So far as I am concerned, after twenty years' experience of public service in India, I came to the conclusion that it was impossible to organise an armed resistance in the country without some help from outside—help from our countrymen abroad, as well as from some foreign power or powers.

Prior to the outbreak of the present war, it was exceedingly difficult to get help from a foreign power, or even from Indians abroad. But the outbreak of the present war threw open the possibility of obtaining aid—both political and military—from the enemies of the British Empire. Before I could expect any help from them however I had first to find out what their attitude was towards India's demand for freedom. British propagandists, for a number of years, had been telling the world that the Axis Powers were the enemies of freedom and therefore, of India's freedom. Was that a fact? I asked myself. Consequently, I had to leave India in order to find out the truth myself and as to whether the Axis Powers would be prepared to give us help and assistance in our fight for freedom.

Before I finally made up my mind to leave home and homeland, I had to decide whether it was right for me to take help from abroad. I had previously studied the history of revolutions all over the world, in order to discover the methods which had enabled other nations to obtain freedom. But I had not found a single instance in which an enslaved people had won freedom without foreign help of some sort. In 1940 I read my history once again, and once again, I came to the conclusion that history did not furnish a single instance where freedom had been won without help of some sort from abroad. As for the moral question whether it was right to take help, I told myself that in public, as in private life, one can always take help as a loan

and repay that loan later on. Moreover, if a powerful Empire like the British Empire, could go round the world with the begging bowl what objection could there be to an enslaved disarmed people like ourselves taking help as a loan from abroad.

I can assure you, Mahatmaji, that before I finally decided to set out on a hazardous mission, I spent days, weeks and months in carefully considering the pros and cons of the case. After having served my people so long to the best of my ability, I could have no desire to be a traitor, or to give anyone a justification for calling me a traitor.

It was the easiest thing for me to remain at home and go on working as I had worked so long. It was also an easy thing for me to remain in an Indian prison while the War lasted. Personally, I had nothing to lose by doing so. Thanks to the generosity and to the affection of my countrymen, I had obtained the highest honour which it was possible for any public worker in India to achieve. I had also built up a party consisting of staunch and loyal colleagues who had implicit confidence in me.

By going abroad on a perilous quest, I was risking—not only my life and my whole future career—but what was more, the future of my party. If I had the slightest hope that without action from abroad we could win freedom, I would never have left India during a crisis. If I had any hope that within our life time we would get another chance—another golden opportunity for winning freedom, as during the present war, I doubt if I would have set out from home. But I was convinced of two things: firstly that such a golden opportunity would not come within another century—and secondly, that without action from abroad we would not be able to win freedom, merely through our own efforts at home. That is why I resolved to take the plunge.

Providence has been kind to me. In spite of manifold difficulties, all my plans have succeeded so far. After I got out of India, my first endeavour was to organise my countrymen, wherever I had happened to meet them. I am glad to say that everywhere I found them to be wide awake and anxious to do everything possible for winning freedom for India. I then approached the Governments that were at war with our enemy, in order to find out what their attitude was towards India. I found out that contrary to what British propaganda had been telling us for a number of years—the Axis Powers were now openly the friends of India's freedom. I also discovered that they were prepared to give such help as we desired, and as was within their own power.

I know the propaganda that our enemy has been carrying on against me. But I am sure that my countrymen, who know me so well will never be taken in. One who has stood for national self-respect and honour all his life and has suffered considerably in vindicating it, would be the last person in this world to give in to any other foreign power. Moreover, I have nothing to gain personally at the hands of a foreign power. Having received the highest honour possible for an Indian at the hands of my own countrymen, what is there for me to receive from a foreign power. Only that man can be a puppet who has either no sense of honour and self-respect or desires to build up a position for himself through the influence of others.

Not even my worst enemy can dare to say that I am capable of selling national honour and self-respect. And not even my worst enemy can dare to assert that I was a nobody in my own country and that I needed foreign help to secure a position for myself. In leaving India, I had to risk everything that I had including my life. But I had to take that risk because only by doing so could I help the achievement of India's freedom.

There remains but one question for me to answer with regard to the Axis Powers. Can it be possible that I have been deceived by them?

I believe it will be universally admitted that the cleverest and the most cunning politicians are to be found amongst Britishers. One who has worked with and fought British politicians all his life, cannot be deceived by any other politicians in the world. If British politicians have failed to coax or coerce me no other politician can succeed in doing so. And if the British Government, at whose hands I have suffered long imprisonment, persecution and physical assault, has been unable to demoralise me, no other power can hope to do so.

Moreover as you personally are aware, I have been a close student of international affairs. I have had personal contacts with international figures before the outbreak of this war. I am therefore no novice who could be duped by a shrewd and cunning politician. Last but not least, before forming an opinion about the attitude of the Axis Powers I established close personal contact with important leaders and personalities in the Axis countries who are responsible for their national affairs.

Consequently, I make bold to say that my countrymen can have the fullest confidence in my judgment of the international affairs. My countrymen abroad will testify to the fact that since I left India, I have never done anything which could compromise in the least, either the honour or the self-respect or the

interests of my country. On the contrary, whatever I have done has been for the benefit of my nation, for enhancing India's prestige before the world and for advancing the cause of India's freedom.

Mahatmaji, since the beginning of the War in East Asia our enemies have been carrying on a raging and tearing campaign against Japan. I shall, therefore, say something about Japan—particularly because at the present moment I am working in the closest co-operation with the Government, Army and people of Japan.

There was a time when Japan had an alliance with our enemy. I did not come to Japan so long as there was an Anglo-Japanese alliance. I did not come to Japan, so long as normal diplomatic relations obtained between the two countries. It was only after Japan took what I consider to be the most momentous step in her history—namely, declaration of war on Britain and America—that I decided to visit Japan of my own free will.

Like so many of my countrymen I had read anti-Japanese propaganda material for a number of years. Like so many of my countrymen, I did not understand why Japan went to war with China in 1937. And like so many of my countrymen, my sympathies in 1937 and 1938 were with Chungking. You may remember that as President of the Congress, I was responsible for sending out a medical mission to Chungking in December, 1938. But what I realised after my visit to Japan and what many people at home do not yet realise, is that since the outbreak of the war in East Asia, Japan's attitude towards the world in general, and towards Asiatic nations in particular has been completely revolutionised.

It is a change that has overtaken not merely the Government, but also the people of Japan. A new consciousness—what I may best describe as an Asiatic consciousness—has seized the souls of the people of Japan. That change explains Japan's present attitude towards the Philippines, Burma, and India. That is what explains Japan's new policy in China.

After my visit to Japan and after establishing close contact with the present day leaders of that country I was fully satisfied that Japan's present policy towards Asia was no bluff but was rooted in sincerity.

This is not the first instance in history when an entire nation has been seized with a new consciousness. We have seen instances of it before in France during the French revolution and in Russia during the Bolshevik revolution. After my second

visit to Japan in November, 1943, I visited the Philippines, and met Filipino leaders there and saw things for myself. I have also been in Burma for a fairly long time and I have been able to see things with my own eyes, after the declaration of independence. And I have been to China to find out if Japan's new policy was real or if it was a fake. The latest agreement between Japan and the National Government of China has given the Chinese people practically all that they had been demanding. Japan, under that agreement, has even agreed to withdraw her troops from China on the termination of hostilities.

What then is Chungking-China fighting for? Can one believe that Britain and America are helping Chungking-China out of purely altruistic motives? Will not Britain and America demand their pound of flesh in return for the help that they are now giving to Chungking to make her continue the fight against Japan? I clearly see that Chungking is being mortgaged to Britain and America because of past hatred and antagonism towards Japan.

So long as Japan did not initiate her present policy towards China, there might have been some justification or excuse for the Chinese to seek British and American aid for fighting Japan. But now that an entirely new chapter in Sino-Japanese relations has begun, there is not the slightest excuse for Chungking to continue her meaningless struggle against Japan. That is not good for the Chinese people; it is certainly not good for Asia.

In April, 1942, you said that if you were free to do so you would work for an understanding between China and Japan. That was an utterance of rare statesmanship. It is India's slavery that is at the bottom responsible for the chaos in China. It is because of the British hold over India that Anglo-Americans could bluff Chungking into hoping that sufficient help could be brought to Chungking to enable Chungking to continue the war against Japan. You were absolutely right in thinking, Mahatmaji, that a free India would work for peace between Japan and China. I go so far as to say that the freedom of India will automatically bring about an honourable understanding between Chungking and Japan, by opening the eyes of Chungking to the folly that she is now committing.

Since I came to East Asia and visited China, I have been able to study the Chinese question more deeply. I find that there is a dictatorship ruling in Chungking. I have no objection personally to dictatorship, if it is for a righteous cause. But the dictatorship that rules at Chungking is clearly under foreign American influence. Unfortunately, the Anglo-Americans have

been able to deceive the ruling clique at Chungking into thinking that if Japan could be somehow defeated, then China would become the dominant power in Asia. The fact, however, is that if Japan were defeated by any chance, then China would certainly pass under American influence and control. That would be a tragedy for China and for the whole of Asia.

It is through this false hope of becoming the dominant power in Asia, if Japan could be somehow defeated, that the ruling clique at Chungking has entered into an unholy alliance with the ruling clique at White House and at Whitehall. I know something of the propagandist activities of the Chungking Government in India and of its efforts to play upon the emotions of the Indian people and win their sympathy. But I can honestly say that Chungking which has been mortgaged to Wall Street and Lombard Street, does not deserve the sympathy of the Indian people any longer especially after Japan has initiated her new policy towards China.

Mahatmaji, you know better than anybody else how deeply suspicious the Indian people are of mere promises. I would be the last man to be influenced by Japan if her declarations of policy had been mere promises. But I have seen with my own eyes how in the midst of a world war Japan has put through revolutionary changes in countries like the Philippines, Burma and National China. Japan is true to her word and her actions are in full conformity with her declarations.

Coming to India, I must say that Japan has proved her sincerity by her deeds. There was a time when people used to say that Japan had selfish intentions regarding India. If she had them, why should she recognise the Provisional Government of Free India? Why should she decide to hand over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the Provisional Government of Free India? Why should there now be an Indian Chief Commissioner of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands stationed at Port Blair? Last but not least, why should Japan unconditionally help the Indian people in East Asia in their struggle for their Independence?

There are Indians all over East Asia and they have every opportunity of seeing Japan at close quarters. Why should three million Indians distributed all over East Asia adopt a policy of the closest co-operation with Japan if they had not been convinced of her *bona fides* and of her sincerity? You can coerce one man or coax him into doing what you want him to do. But no one can coerce three million Indians distributed all over East Asia.

If Indians in East Asia had taken help from Japan without putting forward their own efforts and without making the maximum sacrifice, they would have been guilty of wrong-doing. But, as an Indian, I am happy and proud to be able to say that my countrymen in East Asia are putting forward the maximum efforts to mobilise men, money and materials for the struggle for India's freedom.

I have had experience at home in collecting funds and materials and in recruiting men for national service for a period of twenty years. In the light of this experience, I can properly assess the worth and value of the sacrifice that our countrymen in East Asia are now making. Their effort is magnificent. It is because they are putting forward a magnificent effort themselves and are prepared to make the maximum sacrifice that I see no objection to taking help from Japan for such necessary articles as arms, ammunition, etc., that we ourselves cannot produce.

Mahatmaji, I should now like to say something about the Provisional Government that we have set up here. The Provisional Government of Azad Hind (or Free India) has been recognised by Japan, Germany and seven other friendly powers and this has given Indians a new status and a new prestige in the eyes of the whole world. The Provisional Government has, as its one objective, the liberation of India from the British yoke, through an armed struggle. Once our enemies are expelled from India and order is established, the mission of the Provisional Government will be over. It will then be for the Indian people themselves to determine the form of Government that they choose and also to decide as to who should take charge of that Government.

I can assure you, Mahatmaji, that I and all those who are working with me, regard themselves as the servants of the Indian people. The only reward that we desire for our efforts for our suffering and for our sacrifice is the freedom of our motherland. There are many among us who would like to retire from the political field once India is free. The remainder will be content to take up any position in Free India, however humble it may be. The spirit that animates all of us today is that it is more honourable to be even a sweeper in Free India than to have the highest position under British rule. We all know that there are hundreds of thousands of able men and women at home to whom India's destiny could be entrusted once freedom is achieved.

How much help we shall need from Japan till the last Britisher is expelled from the soil of India, will depend on the amount of co-operation that we shall receive from inside India.

Japan herself does not desire to thrust her assistance upon us. Japan would be happy if the Indian people could liberate themselves through their own exertions. It is we who have asked for assistance from Japan after declaring war on Britain and America, because our enemy has been seeking help from other powers. However, I have every hope that the help we shall receive from our countrymen at home will be so great that we shall need the minimum help from Japan.

Nobody would be more happy than ourselves if by any chance our countrymen at home should succeed in liberating themselves through their own efforts or if by any chance the British Government accepts your "Quit India" Resolution and gives effect to it. We are, however, proceeding on the assumption that neither of the above is possible and that an armed struggle is inevitable.

Mahatmaji, there is one other matter to which I shall refer before I close and that is about the ultimate outcome of this war. I know very well the kind of propaganda that our enemies have been carrying on in order to create the impression that they are confident of victory. But I hope that my countrymen will not be duped thereby and will not think of compromising with Britain on the issue of independence under the mistaken notion that the Anglo-Americans will win the war.

Having travelled round the world under war-time conditions with my eyes open, having seen the internal weakness of the enemy on the Indo-Burma frontier and inside India and having taken stock of our own strength and resources I am absolutely confident of our final victory.

I am not so foolish as to minimise in the least the strength of the enemy. I know that we have a long and hard struggle in front of us. I am aware that on the soil of India Britain will fight bravely and fight hard in a desperate attempt to save her empire. But I know also that however long and hard the struggle may be it can have but one outcome—namely, our victory.

India's last war of independence has begun. Troops of the Azad Hind Fauj are now fighting bravely on the soil of India and in spite of all difficulty and hardship they are pushing forward, slowly but steadily. This armed struggle will go on until the last Britisher is thrown out of India and until our Tricolour National Flag proudly floats over the Viceroy's House in New Delhi.

Father of our nation! In this holy war for India's liberation we ask for your blessings and good wishes. *Jai Hind.*

APPENDIX IV

ORDER OF THE DAY

(24TH APRIL, 1945)

On the eve of his departure from Burma on 24th April, 1945, Netaji issued the following Special Order of the Day to the officers and men of the Azad Hind Fauj :—

BRAVE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE AZAD HIND FAUJ!

It is with a very heavy heart that I am leaving Burma—the scene of the many heroic battles that you have fought since February, 1944, and are still fighting. In Imphal and Burma, we have suffered a reverse in the first round in our fight for independence. But it is only the first round. We have many more rounds to fight for independence. I am a born optimist and I shall not admit defeat under any circumstances. Your brave deeds in the battles against the enemy on the plains of Imphal, the hills and jungles of Arakan, and the oil-field area and other localities in Burma will live in the history of our struggle for independence for all time.

COMRADES : At this critical hour, I have only one word of command to give you, and that is, that if you have to go down temporarily, then go down fighting with the National Tricolour held aloft ; go down as heroes ; go down upholding the highest code of honour and discipline. The future generations of Indians, who will be born, not as slaves but as free men because of your colossal sacrifice, will bless your names and proudly proclaim to the world that you, their forebears, fought and suffered reverses in the battle in Manipur, Assam, and Burma, but through temporary failure you paved the way to ultimate success and glory.

My unshakable faith in India's liberation remains unaltered. I am leaving in your safe hands our national tricolour our national honour and the best traditions of Indian warriors. I have no doubt whatsoever that you, the vanguard of India's Army of Liberation, will sacrifice everything, even life itself, to uphold India's National Honour, so that your comrades who will continue the fight elsewhere may have before them your shining example to inspire them at all times.

If I had my own way, I would have preferred to stay with you in adversity and share with you the sorrow of temporary defeat. But on the advice of my Ministers and high ranking officers I have to leave Burma in order to continue the struggle for emancipation. Knowing my countrymen in East Asia and inside India I can assure you that they will continue the fight under all circumstances and that all your suffering and sacrifices will not be in vain. So far as I am concerned, I shall steadfastly adhere to the pledge that I took on the 21st of October, 1943, to do all in my power to serve the interests of thirty-eight crores of my countrymen and fight for their liberation. I appeal to you in conclusion, to cherish the same optimism as myself and to believe, like myself, that the darkest hour always precedes the dawn. India shall be free—and before long.

May God bless you! *Inquilab Zindabad, Azad Hind Zindabad. Jai Hind.*

(SD.) SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE,
Supreme Commander, Azad Hind Fauj.

APPENDIX V

MESSAGE TO INDIANS AND BURMESE FRIENDS

(24TH APRIL, 1945)

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose gave the following message to his Indian and Burmese Friends in Burma on the same day (24th April, 1945):

BROTHERS AND SISTERS ! I am leaving Burma with a very heavy heart. We have lost the first round of our fight for independence. But we have lost only the first round. There are many more rounds to fight. In spite of our losing the first round, I see no reason for losing heart.

You, my countrymen in Burma, have done your duty to your motherland in a way that evoked the admiration of the world. You have given liberally of your men, money and materials. You set the first example of total mobilisation. But the odds against us were overwhelming, and we have temporarily lost the battle in Burma.

The spirit of selfless sacrifice that you have shown, particularly since I shifted my Headquarters to Burma, is something that I shall never forget, so long as I live.

I have the fullest confidence that that spirit can never be crushed. For the sake of India's freedom, I beseech you to keep up that spirit, I beseech you to hold your heads erect, and wait for that Blessed Day when once again you will have an opportunity of waging the war for India's independence.

When the history of India's last war of independence comes to be written, Indians in Burma will have an honoured place in that history.

I do not leave Burma of my own free will. I would have preferred to stay on here and share with you the sorrow of temporary defeat. But on the pressing advice of my Ministers and high-ranking officers, I have to leave Burma in order to continue the struggle for India's liberation. Being a born optimist, my unshakable faith in India's early emancipation remains unimpaired and I appeal to you to cherish the same optimism.

I have always said that the darkest hour precedes the dawn. We are now passing through the darkest hour ; therefore, the dawn is not far off.

INDIA SHALL BE FREE.

I cannot conclude this message without publicly acknowledging once again my heartfelt gratitude to the Government and people of Burma for all the help that I have received at their hands in carrying on this struggle. The day will come when Free India will repay that debt of gratitude in a generous manner.

APPENDIX VI

SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY ON THE EVE OF DEPARTURE FROM MALAYA

The following Special Order of the Day was issued by Netaji to officers and men of the Azad Hind Fauj on the eve of his departure from Malaya.

TO OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE AZAD HIND FAUJ :

COMRADES : In our struggle for the independence of our motherland we have now been overwhelmed by an undreamt of crisis. You may perhaps feel that you have failed in your mission to liberate India. But let me tell you that this failure is only of a temporary nature. No setback and no defeat can undo your positive achievements of the past. Many of you have participated in the fight along the Indo-Burma frontier and inside India and have gone through hardship and suffering of every sort. Many of your comrades have laid down their lives on the battle-field and have become the immortal heroes of Azad Hind. The glorious sacrifice can never go in vain.

Comrades, in the dark hour I call upon you to conduct yourselves with the discipline, dignity and strength befitting a truly Revolutionary Army. You have already given proofs of your valour and self-sacrifice on the field of battle. It is now your duty to demonstrate your undying optimism and unshakable will-power in the hour of temporary defeat. Knowing you as I do, I have not the slightest doubt that even in this dire adversity you will hold your heads erect and face the future with unending hope and confidence.

Comrades, I feel that in this critical hour, thirty-eight crores of our countrymen at home are looking at us, the Members of India's Army of Liberation. Therefore, remain true to India and do not for a moment waver in your faith in India's destiny. The roads to Delhi are many and Delhi still remains our goal. The sacrifices of your immortal comrades and of yourselves will certainly achieve their fulfilment. There is no power on earth that can keep India enslaved. India shall be free and before long. *Jai Hind.*

(SD.) SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE,

17th August, 1945.

Supreme Commander, Azad Hind Fauj.

APPENDIX VII

MESSAGE TO INDIANS IN EAST ASIA

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose addressed the following special message to Indians in Malaya, Thailand, Indo-China, Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Philippines, Japan and other parts of East Asia.

SISTERS AND BROTHERS :

A glorious chapter in the history of India's struggle for freedom has just come to a close and, in that chapter, the sons and daughters of India in East Asia will have an undying place.

You set a shining example of patriotism and self-sacrifice by pouring out men, money and materials into the struggle for India's independence. I shall never forget the spontaneity and enthusiasm with which you responded to my call for "total mobilisation." You sent an unending stream of your sons and daughters to the camps to be trained as soldiers of the Azad Hind Fauj and of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. Money and materials you poured lavishly into the war chest of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. In short, you did your duty as true sons and daughters of India. I regret more than you do, that your sufferings and sacrifices have not borne immediate fruit. But they have not gone in vain because they have ensured the emancipation of our Motherland and will serve as an undying inspiration to Indians all over the world. Posterity will bless your name, and will talk with pride about your offerings at the altar of India's freedom and about your positive achievements as well.

In this unprecedented crisis in our history, I have only one word to say. Do not be depressed at our temporary failure. Be of good cheer and keep up your spirits. Above all, never for a moment falter in your faith in India's destiny. There is no power on earth that can keep India enslaved. India shall be free and before long. *Jai Hind.*

SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE,

By Order, J. A. THIVY, *Secretary,*

Provisional Government of Azad Hind.

17th August, 1945.

APPENDIX VIII

WORKING COMMITTEE RESOLUTIONS

The following is the text of the resolution passed by the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress on the INA personnel in Burma and Malaya:

[Extract from "The Hindustan Times," (New Delhi), Monday, 10th December, 1945].

"The Working Committee have noted with grave disquiet the reports of the treatment of Indians by the authorities in Burma and Malaya. Many have been arrested and interned or put in prison and no proper opportunities for defence have been given. Even information about them is lacking, and absence of news is causing anxiety to their friends and relations in India. Owing to the deterioration in the economic conditions of these countries and the scarcity of food and the invalidation of the currency the civil population is suffering from want and distress.

"The considerable Indian population there suffers even more than others, for they receive no help or protection from the Government of India, and are almost in the position of being stateless individuals and groups, for whom no one assumes responsibility. While the Government of India is taking no adequate steps to help these Indians abroad, it is giving no facilities to representatives of Defence and Relief Committees and public men to visit Burma and Malaya to give the help that their countrymen so urgently need."

PANDIT NEHRU DEPUTED

"The Working Committee appoint Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to proceed to Burma and Malaya on their behalf, to enquire into the condition of Indians there and to arrange for their defence and other help.

"The Working Committee also call upon Indians in Burma and Malaya to organise defence and relief committees in both countries in order to help themselves and all their countrymen in the hour of their distress. These committees should contact the Central defence and Relief Committees in India and work in co-operation with them."

INA RELIEF COMMITTEE

The following is the text of the Resolution on INA Enquiry and Relief Committees :

" In view of the many problems other than those of legal defence arising in connection with the personnel of the Azad Hind Fauj, it is resolved to form a committee separate from the INA Defence Committee, which has already been constituted, in order to gather information and give relief where needed to this personnel. This committee will be called the INA Enquiry and Relief Committee and will consist of the undermentioned persons. The committee will also arrange to gather full information about the dependents of those who died in the service of the INA. The method of organising relief should be, except for urgent and immediate purposes, to provide productive work."

COMMITTEE'S PERSONNEL

The following shall be the members of the INA Enquiry and Relief Committee :

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, *Chairman*, Jawaharlal Nehru, J. B. Kripalani, Sarat Chandra Bose, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, M. Daud Ghaznavi, Sri Prakasa (*Secretary*), Raghunandan Saran, Khurshed Naoroji, Rao Saheb Patwardhan, Sardar Partap Singh, and a representative of the Bombay INA Committee, with power to add to their number.

The Treasurer of the All-India Congress Committee shall be in charge of the defence and inquiry and relief works.

APPENDIX IX

EXTRACTS FROM THE RED FORT TRIAL EVIDENCE

Below are extracts from the Official Report of the author's evidence during examination by Counsel for the Defence (Bhulabhai Desai) and cross-examination by Counsel for the prosecution (Sir N. P. Engineer) in the trial of Shah Nawaz, Sahgal and Dhillon at the Red Fort on 11th December, 1945. Well-known facts related in the body of this book, though part of the evidence, have been omitted from these extracts with a view to avoiding repetition and economising in space.

The Court is re-opened.

The accused are brought before the Court.

D.W. 6.

Mr. S. A. Ayer, duly affirmed, is examined by the Counsel for the defence (in English).

In December 1940 I was in Bangkok. I remained there until the Japanese declared war. On the 10th of December I left Bangkok and tried to get back to India *via* Burma. I did not succeed in doing so because the frontier had been closed two days before I reached there. I was in Bangkok in June 1942. In the middle of June 1942 what was called a conference of Indians from all over East Asia was held in Bangkok. The following countries were included :—

Thailand (Siam), Burma, Malaya, Singapore, Indo-China, Java, Sumatra, Philippines, Shanghai, and Japan. The rough estimate of the number of Indians in these countries was somewhere from about two and a half millions to about three millions. I attended the conference as an observer. There was no other organisation in existence at the time of the Bangkok conference connected with Indians. In July 1942 I joined the headquarters of the Indian Independence League in East Asia which was established in Bangkok. The primary object of the Indian Independence League as far as I understood at the time was to win the independence of India. The headquarters of

the Indian Independence League at this time was in Bangkok. I was appointed to take charge of the Publicity Department of the headquarters of the Indian Independence League in East Asia. I was in Bangkok doing that duty till the end of February 1943. I left Bangkok for Singapore at the end of February and reached Singapore on the 3rd of March. In Singapore I met Sri Rash Behari Bose who was the President of the Indian Independence League and he told me that he had decided to shift the headquarters of the Indian Independence League from Bangkok to Singapore as early as possible. Arrangements were taken in hand and the shifting had started by sometime in April 1943. As the man in charge of publicity I had to help in arranging the shifting of the Publicity Department from Bangkok to Singapore by sending necessary instructions to my men in Bangkok to wind up the department there and come down to Singapore. I continued to function.

I knew Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose earlier. There were branches of the Indian Independence League in all the countries which I have mentioned earlier, namely, Burma, Siam, Malaya including Singapore, Indo-China, Java, Sumatra, Philippines, Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Japan. It was the Indian Independence League. It had a regular membership in all these countries. It is rather difficult to give anything like accurate figures of the membership, but it would not be incorrect to say that about three-quarters of a million belonged to the League. It is only an approximate figure. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose arrived in Singapore on the 2nd of July 1943. On the 4th of July 1943 a conference of delegates representing Indians all over East Asia was held in Singapore. At that conference Sri Rash Behari Bose formally handed the presidentship of the Indian Independence League in East Asia to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. I was present at the conference. The conference was attended by delegates representing Indian Independence League branches all over East Asia. When Sri Rash Behari Bose told the delegates and the audience that he had brought them a present from Tokyo, namely, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and that he was handing over the presidentship of the Indian Independence League to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, there was an outburst of frenzied cheering. He was accepted by the delegates. In the course of his address to the delegates Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose made a rather important announcement, namely, that he intended to establish a provisional government of Free India as early as possible. That was received with very enthusiastic cheering from all parts of the House. It was publicly discussed freely.

On the 21st of October 1943 another conference of delegates representing Indian Independence Leagues in East Asia was held in Singapore. I was also present at that conference. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, after the General Secretary had read out a report of the progress of the Indian Independence League's branches throughout East Asia, announced the establishment of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, and this announcement was received by the delegates and by all present in the hall with a tremendous outburst of applause and cheering. After announcing the names of the members of this Government Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose himself took the oath of allegiance to India. After that the other members of the Government took their oath of allegiance to India and to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The entire proceedings were punctuated with outbursts of cheering and shouting of "Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose ki jai," and "Arzi Hukumat-e-Azad Hind ki jai."

After the establishment of the Provisional Government, the Provisional Government declared war on Britain and America. My office in the Provisional Government was as Minister of Publicity and Propaganda. The Provisional Government used the machinery of the Indian Independence League as its own executive.

The formation of the Provisional Government was welcomed by Indians in Malaya as giving the Indian Independence movement a different status in the eyes of the world and with the Indian National Army the Indians in Malaya felt that apart from the fight for India's independence they had an absolute feeling of security. The Provisional Government through the League provided for education on national lines to Indians, and relief, medical and otherwise, was provided for by the Government through the machinery of the League. The Government gave directions to the Indian National Army to give protection to Indian nationals wherever and whenever it might be needed, particularly against any lawless elements anywhere.

As a matter of course, the Indian Independence League branches in Malaya set about getting the signatures of the members of the Indian Independence League to an oath of allegiance to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind.

The Provisional Government collected donations from Indians throughout East Asia. They were collected by the headquarters of the Indian Independence League in East Asia, namely in Singapore for a start. In Burma the Provisional Government opened a National Bank of Azad Hind. The funds of the Provisional Government were banked with this bank.

These donations were in cash as well as in kind. By kind I mean that it generally included clothing material and very often food-stuffs, metal-ware and anything that could be of use to the Indian National Army.

The National Bank of Azad Hind was established in Rangoon in April 1944. I know a man called Dina Nath. He was one of the Directors of the Bank. I was the Chairman of the Bank.

Subhas Chandra Bose took over the command of the Indian National Army when he assumed the Presidentship of the Indian Independence League and later on he became the Supreme Commander of the Azad Hind Fauj. In a general way I as Minister of Information knew of the way in which recruitment was going on for the Indian National Army. The recruitment was absolutely voluntary. We had always surplus volunteers whom we could not train or arm.

There was a school for training civil administrators. It was established in Singapore. It was established within a few months of Subhas Bose's arrival in Singapore. It was established about two or three months after his arrival.

The relations between the Japanese Government and Azad Hind Government were as between two allies having dealings on a footing of equality.

I have personal knowledge at least of two or three instances in which the Azad Hind Government maintained its complete independence.

The Azad Hind Government in Malaya and Burma took care of social welfare through the Indian Independence League branches in the matter of education, medical and other relief and relief of air raid victims.

There were four broadcasting stations attached to the Azad Hind Government. As Minister of Publicity and Propaganda I was responsible for the functioning of these stations. There was no outside control.

There were civilian volunteers in very large numbers for the INA from Malaya and comparatively smaller numbers from Burma and proportionate numbers from other parts of East Asia.

The Government had donations of grain from merchants.

The Indians in Malaya and then in Burma agreed to donate a certain percentage of their property to the Provisional Government. This proportion varied. The persons who were charged with collecting funds called the Indian merchants and other moneyed people and discussed ways and means of collecting funds and it was with their consent and at their suggestion that some such percentage was fixed, and they all voluntarily contri-

buted the money. The percentage differed from place to place—I think it was slightly higher in Burma. In Malaya the board of management was functioning in the League headquarters and they were busy arranging collection of these funds; and in Burma the Netaji Fund Committee, composed of prominent Indians of Burma, was formed and they took charge of the collections.

I am not aware of the details of the raising of the Indian National Army. My sources of information about the Indian National Army were from duly authorised quarters of the supreme command of the Indian National Army. Any material that was meant for publication was sent to me. I know that the army was raised voluntarily, from a number of speeches which Subhas Chandra Bose made, concerning the raising of the army, and addressing the army itself. As far as I know, no compulsion was used at all.

I was aware of the activities of the INA as far as it was necessary for the purpose of publicity and propaganda. The Japanese recognised the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. The recognition was publicly announced by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose himself. The Gazette of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind published the official declaration.

The Indian Independence League had various departments and the Provisional Government got its policy executed through the staff and the other machinery of the Indian Independence League. The Indian Independence League had various departments which were in the charge of Secretaries—there were Secretaries of Departments—and whatever policy was laid down by the Provisional Government was put into actual execution by the Secretary with his staff in the League. From time to time instructions were sent from the headquarters of the Provisional Government to the Secretaries of the Indian Independence League branches. By policy I mean any decision taken by the Provisional Government, which was immediately communicated to the Secretaries of the Departments concerned by the Minister and they put it into execution. In my own department, apart from the ministry of Publicity and Propaganda, there was the press publicity and propaganda department of the Indian Independence League which was in the charge of a Secretary, and whatever we decided about propaganda—for instance, for starting a new broadcast or newspaper—was communicated to the Secretary of the League, and he took the necessary measures to carry out that decision. As an instance, in Burma when we decided to have an additional broadcast on the short-wave Radio,

I communicated the decision of the Ministry to the Secretary of the Propaganda Department and he arranged for the additional broadcast session.

The broadcasts were not controlled by the Japanese. Officers of the INA were not made to broadcast, but they voluntarily offered to broadcast. I deny that INA officers were made to broadcast on plans laid down by the Japanese.

The offer to send rice to Bengal was made through the Radio to the people of India for information and to the British authorities in India, so that they could consider the offer. This broadcast was, I believe, made either in July or August 1943. The offer was made by broadcast from Singapore. The rice was to be sent from any Port in Burma, I believe. I could not tell you whether it was said on the Radio that the rice was to be sent from any Port in Burma, but I remember that it could be sent from any Port in Burma if the British authorities in India could vouchsafe safe conduct. The people of Burma were not starving for want of rice.

APPENDIX X

RESOLUTIONS AT THE INA RALLY

(NOVEMBER, 1949)

RESOLUTIONS

We, the delegates representing all the Organisations of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind established by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at Shonan-to (Singapore) on the 21st of October, 1943, having assembled in Bombay for the Fourth Rally of the INA on the 10th, 11th and 12th of November, 1949, and having taken stock of all developments in India and outside since the historic INA Trials at the Red Fort, Delhi,

RESOLVE

1. That the Azad Hind Fauj (INA) consisting of the Ministers of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, Independence League in East Asia, Free India League in Europe, all ranks of the army in East Asia and Europe, all ranks of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, all members of the Azad Hind Dal and various other auxiliary organisations functioning under the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, shall continue as a properly organised and disciplined non-political live organisation under the leadership established by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, for the achievement of the objects enumerated below :—

OBJECTS

(a) To work for the social and economic welfare and well-being of our people and be prepared to defend the freedom and honour of our country if occasion arises.

(b) To organise proper publicity in India and abroad to keep the memory of Netaji and Azad Hind Fauj alive and to propagate the teachings of Netaji to the masses in the country.

(c) To press the Government of India to accept their sacred obligation to the families and dependents of those who laid down their lives in the War of Liberation fought under Netaji's leadership on the battlefields of Imphal, Europe and elsewhere and those working behind the lines to enable the Azad Hind Fauj to wage its relentless war against the armed might of Britain for India's Freedom; and those wounded and disabled during these campaigns.

(d) To press the Government of India to formulate concrete schemes for the urgent rehabilitation of the INA personnel numbering over fifteen thousand who are even today, after the lapse of more than four years since the end of the war, stranded in India without any adequate means of honourable livelihood.

(e) To press the Government of India to provide opportunity to all ranks of the INA to serve Free India by re-absorbing them in their proper ranks in the armed forces of India, and to pay them their just dues.

2. That for the achievement of these abovementioned objects, this Convention vests full powers in Major-General J. K. Bhonsle, Chief of Staff, Indian National Army, and Minister, Provisional Government of Azad Hind, to take all measures he considers advisable and necessary and that, in this matter, all ranks of the Azad Hind Fauj shall carry out all his instructions or any instructions issued by Officers authorised by him to do so.

3. That until the Government of India assumes full responsibility for the relief of the families of Shaheeds (Martyrs), and for the relief of the wounded and disabled, and until the full achievement of the other objects mentioned above, a Fund to be known as the INA Trust be established with the entire funds lying at present with the Chairman, All India INA Enquiry & Relief Committee and all the Offices of the Committee, the income from INA Films, from gramophone records and from publications, and all properties belonging to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and the INA in India and abroad, and with the Chief of Staff of the INA as the Chief Trustee and with four other Trustees to be nominated by the Chief Trustee; the Trustees shall have powers to invest the funds of the Trust as they deem to be in the interest of the INA Trust, and to administer and disburse the funds of the Trust for the following purposes :—

- (a) Maintenance of the Azad Hind Fauj Organisation;
- (b) Granting Pensions and other aids to the families of Shaheeds and disabled;
- (c) The rehabilitation of the INA personnel.

4. That the INA organisation shall, as in the past, continue to function as a non-political body, though it has permitted individual members of the INA to participate in the political activities of the country purely in their individual capacity, and it is incumbent on such individuals to refrain from using the name of the INA in the pursuit of their activities.

5. That the Government of India be requested to have a suitable life-size statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose erected

and placed on a high pedestal, opposite the main gate of the Red Fort and at Calcutta and Bombay.

6. That a Committee be formed for raising funds for putting up a suitable memorial for the Shaheeds of the INA. The Committee will select a suitable place inside the Red Fort, Delhi, preferably in the open ground in front of Dewan-e-Am and also at Singapore in place of the Memorial erected by Netaji and blasted by British Indian troops under the orders of Admiral Mountbatten.

7. This Convention places on record once again its very deep sense of gratitude to the Indian National Congress and other political and non-political bodies in the country which rallied to the cause of the INA and to the people of India, who, as a whole, championed our cause with unprecedented enthusiasm and generosity at a time when the alien rulers still in power in our country decided to arraign and condemn the Indian National Army for waging war for India's liberation.

8. This Convention expresses its sense of gratitude to the Government of the Indian Union and particularly to the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister for the keen interest they have taken in the welfare of the INA and for all they have done to help the INA.

It also expresses its deep sense of gratitude to the Government of Bombay, who have helped generously to ameliorate the condition of the INA personnel in this Province and to all other Provincial Governments who have absorbed INA personnel in their services and expresses the hope that they will continue to give this help in an increasing manner ;

This Convention also tenders its most sincere thanks to all those unofficial and business organisations who have given employment to INA personnel.

JAI HIND

APPENDIX XI

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRIME MINISTER

(14TH APRIL, 1951)

Memorandum submitted to Honourable The Prime Minister by the INA Advisory Committee on the occasion of the Joint Meeting of the All India INA Enquiry and Relief Committee and the INA Advisory Committee at the Secretariat on 14th April, 1951.

About fifteen thousand officers and men of the Indian National Army reached India from various parts of East Asia by the first quarter of the year 1946. Their arrears of pay from the date of the fall of Singapore (February 1942) was declared forfeited by the then British Government of India, and they were discharged from the Indian Army.

Since then, in the last five years, about seven thousand of these officers and men have managed to find some employment or the other and are eking out an existence.

The remaining eight thousand officers and men are destitute and in a pitiable plight. Their condition is growing desperate day by day. And the condition of the families of those who lost their lives and of those disabled can be better imagined than described.

The efforts of INA officers and men themselves to help their unemployed, destitute comrades have proved totally inadequate because of the magnitude of the task. No other agency except the State itself can solve this pressing problem.

After viewing the whole question of the rehabilitation of the INA from all angles and against the background of the events of the last five years and of the present situation in India, the INA Advisory Committee has arrived at the deliberate conclusion that a serious effort must be made without further delay to solve this problem on the following lines :—

The ideal step, at any time, would be to reinstate in the Indian Army all fit personnel of the INA in the ranks they would have held if they had not been discharged by the British Government of India in 1946 as a penalty for fighting the British. Those found unfit for such reinstatement could be found alternative employment by the Government of India or the State Governments.

If this step is still considered impracticable, then as a symbolical gesture five thousand *jawans* may be reinstated, thus

obviating any structural difficulties that might perhaps follow the reinstatement of senior and junior officers. Those remaining unemployed then might be found suitable occupation elsewhere by the Central and State Governments.

In any event, steps may be taken with the least avoidable delay to cancel all orders taken under Ordinance XXXVI of 1943 and General Headquarters, Welfare General's Branch, New Delhi, letter No. 126837/Res. 4.1 dated the 30th April, 1946, forfeiting the emoluments accrued to the credit of officers and men from the date of fall of Singapore till the date of their discharge from the Indian Army. This step would not involve any dependence on the British Exchequer, as it would only mean the release of amounts already standing to the credit of the officers and men which had been declared forfeit. This step, if taken forthwith, would go a long way in alleviating the acute distress among thousands of the rank and file of the INA.

If neither wholesale reinstatement nor even the reinstatement of five thousand *jawans* is considered practicable at present or in the near future, then the INA Advisory Committee would suggest exploration of possibilities of employment in the following departments of the Governments of India or States :—

Border Police, Armed Police, Ordinary Police, Intelligence, Home Guards, Customs, Excise.

To ensure that the absorption of INA personnel in one or the other of the abovementioned Departments is actually carried out, Government may consider the advisability of fixing a percentage of vacancies as reserved for the INA. It would also be necessary to issue an express directive to the appointing authorities to waive certain conditions relating to age, etc. Previous service in the Indian Army and/or in the INA should count for purposes of promotion, pension, etc., in the case of army personnel as well as civilians employed in Government Departments.

Facilities in the form of loans, etc., may be given to such of the INA personnel as wish to engage in small scale industries or trade.

Donations to INA funds may be exempted from liability to payment of income-tax.

The INA Advisory Committee trusts that the foregoing suggestions provide a reasonable and practical basis of discussion and knowing, as it does, the sympathetic interest that Honourable the Prime Minister has consistently evinced in the welfare of the INA, the Committee hopes that these suggestions would be found acceptable to him and to his Government.

APPENDIX XII

REPORT OF THE INA SYMPATHISERS' MEETING

Ministers of the Government of India including Mr. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Mr. N. V. Gadgil, Mr. Chintaman Deshmukh, Mr. Hare Krishna Mehtab and Mr. R. R. Diwarkar, members of the Diplomatic Corps, the Speaker of the Indian Parliament, Acharya J. B. Kripalani and other members of Parliament, were among the sixty guests present at a dinner party given at the Constitution Club on Monday, 16th April, 1951 by Dr. Punjabrao Deshmukh, Mr. H. V. Kamath and Mr. Sonavane (M.P.'s) to meet Major-General J. K. Bhonsle, Chairman, and members of the INA Advisory Committee who have been in Delhi to attend a joint meeting with the All India INA Enquiry and Relief Committee called by Shri Jawaharlal Nehru.

Felicitating the chief guests of the evening, Dr. Deshmukh paid a tribute to the patriotic services of the INA.

In reply, Major-General Bhonsle said the INA took no special credit for what little it did, because if any other group of Indians had been in East Asia at that time, they too would have done no less. It was the dynamic leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose that welded the twenty-five lakhs of Indians in that part of the world and inspired them to give their all for the freedom of their motherland. General Bhonsle pointed out that the INA problem had been hanging fire for the last five years, and he and his colleagues felt that half the battle had been won when they prevailed upon the Prime Minister to accept the Chairmanship of the INA Relief Committee. The remaining half of the battle could be won with the sympathy and support of those present at the gathering and the Press and the public. He emphasized that the condition of the INA rank and file was extremely pitiable.

APPENDIX XIII

NETAJI'S MARRIAGE

The Chairman and members of the INA Advisory Committee have issued the following statement :—

Recently various versions regarding Netaji's marriage have appeared in the Press of India. We had, so far, deliberately refrained from saying anything publicly on the subject because we considered it an entirely personal affair and any public reference to it indelicate. Since, however, a controversy has arisen over this matter, we consider it our duty to place what we know before the country. In 1942, whilst in Germany, Netaji married Frau Schenkl, who had been his close collaborator and co-worker in Europe for many years. A daughter was born of this marriage and she is today about eight years old. Both the mother and daughter are at present living in Vienna.

For us it is a matter of pride that Netaji chose for his life's partner a person of strong and lovable personality who, for years, had made the cause of Indian Freedom her own and who had been a continuous source of strength and inspiration to Netaji. We know that when Netaji undertook his perilous journey from Germany to the Far East to lead the Indians living in South East Asia in their fight for freedom, only a year after her marriage and with about two months old child in her arms, Netaji's wife bade him farewell in the true tradition of the bride of Indian warriors of yore. And for that we give her all honour.

We take this opportunity of conveying our greetings and regards to Netaji's wife and daughter and wish them to know that they have a permanent place in our hearts and that we look forward to the day when we would be able to welcome them in our midst.

NEW DELHI, 15th April, 1951.

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ERRATA

Page 122 second line : read "18th November" for "18th September"

Page 142 last line : read "me" for "one"

Page 244 line 23 : read "Jai Hind" for "Jaid Hind"

Page 336 line 10 : read "Fraulein" for "Frau"

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