

13. BRITISH ATTEMPTS TO KILL NETAJI.

(i)

Subhas was a product of Swadeshi nationalism in the turbulent years of violence. In his adolescence, he joined the revolutionaries who collected arms and manufactured bombs with a firm conviction that only military power could drive out the British from India.

During his college days, he became a victim of the racial prejudice of an English lecturer. When Subhas took a lead in protesting against insult to his Motherland, he was expelled from the college. This incident forced him to select the sole objective of his life—to drive out the British and make his country free.

In 1919, when General Dyer got 1600 unarmed, innocent Indians massacred at the Jallianwalla Bagh, Subhas became the first Indian to resign from the Indian Civil Service. He wrote to his brother Sarat—"I must either chuck this rotten service and dedicate myself whole-heartedly to the country's cause, or I must bid adieu to all my ideals and aspirations."

With this determination the die was cast. Subhas could never, never have any compromise with the British, and the British would never, never tolerate his existence. Shortly before his death, even Gandhiji had to admit in a public meeting—only with the exception of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, he was the most determined anti-British leader thrown up by the Congress movement. No doubt, Subhas has been miles ahead of any other Indian leader in his 'fire of fight' against the British.

(ii)

Being good politicians and experienced imperialists, the British dared not get Subhas Killed outright so long as

he was on Indian soil; though they could have invented some pretence or other to liquidate their deadliest enemy, had they decided that course. As a daringly reckless revolutionary, Subhas had afforded many a chance to the British rulers to shoot point blank at him. Had the British fallen into that easy temptation of killing their greatest enemy, they would have made Subhas such a martyr that the days of British rule would have been much more shortened in India than they eventually were. For Subhas, his life had no meaning, if it did not said in his 'political testament', a letter to the Governor of Bengal dated November 26th, 1940 :

"It is through suffering and sacrifice alone that a cause can flourish and prosper, and in every age and clime the eternal law prevails—the blood of the martyr is the seed of the church."

"...One individual may die for an idea—but that idea will, after his death, incarnate itself in a thousand lives... To my countrymen I say—Forget not that the greatest curse for a man is to remain a slave...Remember the eternal law—you must give life if you want to get it."

With this ultimatum to the British rulers, Subhas had announced from jail that unless released, he would starve himself to death. The British government would have been glad to let him die in jail, but they dared not. He was released after six days of his fast.

All his life Netaji swam against the tide having this conviction :

"If you wish to solve the fundamental problems of our national life you will have to look miles ahead of your contemporaries.....One who desires to swim with the tide of popular approbation on all occasions may become the hero of the hour—but he cannot live in history."

Our other leaders were for swimming with the tide, specially when the British were involved in war, and so,

they were far preferable to the British. For Subhas, the British saw to it, so far as they could, that he did not live in history.

(iii)

Many ingenious methods were adopted by the British to see to it that Netaji did not survive politically or even physically when he was fighting them from his Burma-Singapur bases.

We read in K. M. Munshi's account concerning Netaji in the book 'Advent of Independence' by A. K. Mazumdar : "As regards Netaji, he was staying with Nathalal Jhaveri in 1938 for several months on the plea that he was unwell. Two or three times he called me at the time. His object was to ascertain whether I could be of any use to him. He was not really ill, and there were stories current that he met people and even went out to see people in disguise. The Government of India knew my relations with Gandhiji and Sardar, and often saw to it that confidential information reached Gandhiji through me. On one such occasion, I was shown certain *secret service reports* that Netaji had contacted the German Consul in Calcutta and had come to some arrangement with him, which would enable Germany to rely upon him in case there was a war. I conveyed the information to Gandhiji, who naturally felt surprised."

Mazumdar writes in the same book—".....However, some coded message from consul to Germany was intercepted by the *British Secret* in 1938 and sent to the Government of India who managed to forward it to Gandhiji through Munshi. Netaji's *Secret activities* took Gandhiji entirely by surprise and he decided that he (Netaji) should not be re-elected President of the Congress. This led to his opposing Netaji's re-election and after the latter was re-elected, to withhold co-operation which forced him to resign."

This story proves how easy it was for the British intelligence to dupe, mislead and even poison the mind of Gandhiji regarding the character and political career of Subhas Babu. Plainly one can see the truth that, by adopting this technique the British got Subhas politically murdered from the hands of Gandhiji himself. If Subhas survived, he survived in spite of Gandhiji. It is clear, the British intelligence concocted this story to publicly degrade Subhas as a German secret agent. Records do not show that Gandhiji ever enquired directly from Subhas about the absurd charge levelled on him. Gandhiji must have got hypnotised to believe the British intelligence more than the characteristically transparent sincerity of Subhas so obvious and well known throughout India. In 1938, Subhas was already a man of enormous historical and social fascination, and his personality did not need a clearance certificate from the British intelligence.

Though the charge was malicious and without any foundation, it was used by Gandhiji and his associates to belittle Subhas, resulting in his leaving Congress and the country. The British imperialists had every reason to feel triumphant over a vanquished Subhas. We should not be surprised if some day it comes out that it were the same type of British intelligence records placed before Jawaharlal to poison his mind against Subhas to the extent that he did not allow any inquiry to be made on the Formosa islands after the alleged plane crash of Netaji.

On Formosa island there are still many nationalist Chinese intelligence men, who had worked the British intelligence during the war, and had clear instructions from them to arrange to get Netaji killed at any cost. The British had paid lavishly for bringing down the aeroplane at Taipei on October 23, 1944, in which Netaji was supposed to travel. But Netaji was not out of luck even on that occasion.

(iv)

Netaji himself was quite clear from his side about the cause he was fighting for and the dangers to his life it involved. He never believed in revolvers, bombs or secretive methods to reach his goal, about which the British intelligence had secretly complained to Gandhiji through Munshi. In one of his speeches in South-East Asia, Netaji said about his youth :

"We were thinking what to do, what new method should be adopted. Youngmen were doing their bit with bombs and revolvers. We got into touch with these young revolutionaries. I knew their strength. They were real revolutionaries of high spirit. But their strength and ascrifice were not enough to achieve complete independence for our Motherland."

Already in 1927, in a letter to his brother from Insein jail, he had written..."I am not a shopkeeper and I do not bargain. The slippery path of diplomacy I abhor as unsuited to my constitution. I have taken my stand on a principle and there the matter rests. I do not attach such importance to my bodily life that I should strive to save it by a process of haggling..."

"Our cause is the cause of freedom and truth : as sure as day follows night, that cause will ultimately prevail. Our bodies may fail and perish : but with faith undiminished and will unconquerable, triumph will be ours. It is however for Providence to ordain who of us should live to witness the consumation of all our efforts and labours, and as for myself, I am content to live my life and leave the rest to destiny."

His noble ideals show, Netaji was planets apart from secretive methods of which the British intelligence had accused him. Gandhiji did a great injustice to Subhas in believing those mean charges and turning all out against him.

(v)

The real objective of British intelligence in bringing false charges of being secret German agent against Subhas was to eliminate his influence on Indian public, specially when Britain was getting involved in a world war.

At the 'Anti-Compromise conference' at Ramgarh in March 1940, Subhas Babu called for an immediate all-India struggle with no rest or break, nor any sidetracking as happened in 1932, until the goal of independence was reached. But in May 1940, after the fall of France, Jawaharlal wrote to Rajendra Babu : "I think it would be wrong for us at this particular moment when Britain is in peril, to take advantage of her distress and rush at her throat." Nehru repeated the same sentiment in a public speech at Lucknow.

Replying to Nehru publicly, Subhas said to a Forward Block conference in June 1940 :

"Let us cease talking of saving Britain with the Empire's help or with India's help. India must in this grave crisis think of herself first....It is for the Indian people to make an immediate demand for the transference of power to them through a provisional National Government."

After this statement, British rulers brought a charge of 'sedition' against Subhas, and he was locked up in prison on July 2nd., from where he wrote—"Government are determined to hold me in prison by brute force. I say in reply... 'Release me or I shall refuse to live—and it is for me to decide whether I choose to live or to die'."

The British in India were determined not to allow Subhas to live. At the same time, they afraid, if he became a martyr, that would mean a speedy end to their Indian Empire.

Consequently, having resisted forcible feeding, Subhas was released from jail and kept under heavy guard in his Elgin Road home at Calcutta. From there, in the early hours of January 17th., Subhas slipped away. On January

26th. 1941, the day fixed for his trial for Sedition, Ananda Bazar Patrika and the Hindustan Standard were the first to report that, Subhas was not be found.

The British hangmen were unable to follow him. Eight weeks later, on March 28th. 1941, Subhas turned up in Berlin to be 'crowned' as Netaji for driving out the British from India, of course with military power.

14. NETAJI AT WAR AGAINST BRITAIN

(i)

Early 1947, when I myself landed in Berlin, the uppermost picture in my mind was that of Subhas Babu, as I had seen him in mid thirties there. As in a newsreel, the selections were thoughtfully made on the canvas of my mind. Those days already he had imprinted on us—"the price of liberty is suffering and sacrifice...India can well afford to bring a blood sacrifice for her liberation. 350 million miserable lives are waiting for deliverance."

Reaching the corner of Kurfuerstendamm and Uhlandstrasse, I found, the small Indian run restaurant was bombed out, where Subhas had declared—"Britain is our traditional enemy. We will fight her, immaterial whether any other power supports us or not." The same day he had asked Hitler—"When are you going to strike at Britain, so that we also might simultaneously take up arms against them." Eversince, Subhas had ranked in the mind of the Germans as a politician of higher stature than any other Indian including Gandhi and Nehru.

First thing on reaching Berlin I did was to come in contact with my former German class mates in the University. Luckily, some had come in very close contact with Netaji during the war; one or two had served him as his secretaries, Rudi was one of them. I took him in my jeep as my driver and drove around Germany to investigate first hand, what had actually happened to Netaji and his co-fighters, specially after the German and Japanese surrenders.

(ii)

In many European cities, specially in Berlin, Rome and Vienna, I found traces of Netaji and a very lively interest

about his whereabouts. None of his close acquaintances I came across attached any value to the concocted plane disaster and his death report at Taipei. More genuinely trustworthy were taken the accounts of European nationals having been taken as war prisoners in Russia, and then returning to their respective homes. Those rare individuals who had been banished to Siberian prisoner of war camps like Yakutsk had the most interesting accounts to narrate. Bit by bit I collected those details and pinpointed on a large map in my Berlin house. This way I could ascertain with reasonable accuracy, the drifting lives of Indian prisoners of war in Russia, who were then last reported still alive in the Far East.

Gradually, a picture of Netaji's European and Far-Eastern Odysseys emerged which was absolutely different from what the Indo-British intelligence reports had thought advisable to disclose publicly in India. The British reports invariably indicated that Netaji served Hitler's interests by organising the Indian Legion and placing them at the disposal of the German army to function as their fifth columnists. What had made the British furious was their information that Netaji and his associates drew their salary also from the Germans.

Rudi drove me one day to the former German Chancellery, which had been Hitler's office till the last moment of his death. The building was very badly damaged by bomb and Russian artillery fire. While we were inspecting what was known as Hitler-bunker, the bomb proof shelter in the Chancellery, one of Rudi's colleagues in the former German Foreign office approached us. That man gave me quite a large number of documents and photostat copies of the postwar Indian national's record maintained by the Indian Military Mission there. Those papers left no doubt in my mind that the British Intelligence had deliberately falsified Netaji's war-time record, and behaved as their

worst enemy so far as Indian war prisoners in Russian hands were concerned. I had to study them thoroughly to come to the correct conclusions.

(iii)

On 28th. March 1941, when Netaji had landed in Berlin, his task in obtaining a tripartite declaration in favour of Indian independence was the most difficult one he had ever imagined it to be. It was due to the fact that, in the secret Hitler-Stalin protocol of 1940, India had been regarded as part of the Russian sphere of aspirations when Britain collapsed. Netaji had to wait until Germany invaded Russia on June 22nd. 1941. And even then Hitler did not agree to Netaji's proposals for a long time.

Netaji met Hitler on May 29th. 1942, in his field headquarters. Hitler took Netaji to a wall map and pointed out at the immense distances to India from Germany, and explained—"See the realities—an ill-equipped British army of a few thousand is able to control millions of unarmed Indian revolutionaries. This position will not change until an external power knocked at India's door. Germany is not in a position to do it yet."

This was the greatest disappointment of life for Netaji. It caused him enormous mental stress of which Frau Schenkl, his secretary since 1934 is the best living witness.

Then Netaji planned to shift his activities to the Far East at an invitation from Japan. The Japanese had cabled their agreement to Netaji's tripartite declaration in favour of Indian independence.

Netaji had an indomitable mind and spirit. My January 1942, his Free India centre was already functioning and the Azad Hind Radio station broadcasting already since December 1941. His war cry was—Jai-Hind.

The fall of Singapur was a great encouragement to Netaji. He proposed now to raise an Indian Legion of three

battalions and a company of irregulars. In the beginning of March 1942, within less than a year of his arrival in Germany. Netaji declared war against Britain.

This success of Netaji brought the British fury against Netaji. He became the greatest target of slander by them. They went to the extent of charging him of playing Hitler's game and functioning as his stooge on payment of money.

Netaji came out with the forceful declaration—"My whole life is one long, persistent, uncompromising struggle against British imperialism, and is the best guarantee of my concern is with India and India's freedom. when my task is the best guarantee of my bonafides. I am no axis apologist. my concern is with India and India's freedom. When my task is done I shall return home."

✓ To the Legioners he said—"We shall take freedom by the strength of our arms. Freedom is never given. It is taken."

✓ This Indian legion was to go to wars only in or near India and was trained to be used against the British Indian troops. Netaji rightly called this force an Army of Free India, and with emotion gave to each man a flower.

✓ Netaji's organisations were treated at par with foreign diplomatic missions. Whatever money was spent on maintaining his army and organisations, Netaji explicitly regarded it as a loan which was to be repaid to Germany when India was free.

This arrangement proved a sense of great self-respect in Netaji and his organisations. The British accusations in this respect had their origin in Jealousy for his success. If it was dignified for General De Gaulle to have the seat of the French Provisional Government in London and to take money from the British for the maintenance of his army and organisation, for Netaji had too it equally dignified to have that type of support from the Germans. But De Gaulle returned to France as a victor, and Netaji had to continue

his fight. This difference in results should not be allowed to belittle the historic achievements of Netaji. Rather Netaji's great Freedom and humane movement besides his brilliant leadership makes De Gaulle's routine work look quite insignificant.

Netaji had assured his men—"Your names will be written in golden letters in the history of Free India; every martyr in this holy war will have a monument there. I shall lead the army when we march to India together."

(iv)

As a real strategist, Netaji saw that Singapur, Rangoon and Calcutta were the keys to British dominion over India. Singapur and Rangoon had fallen in Japanese hands. Netaji planned to enter Calcutta at the head of his Army of Free India.

Nothing else had been more thoroughly menacing to the very foundation of British colonialist structure since the time of Robert clive. Gone were the days of the allegiance to slavery and fear of the British prowess which kept the Indian Sepoyees submissive to British army officers. Netaji heralded the advent of the dawn of Freedom over the skies of Asia.

With the start of 1943, uppermost in Netaji's mind was—"The problem is how to take charge of our country. When the Englishmen are about to leave there is no point in begging independence or getting it as a present from other nations because such an "independence can not last long..."

To take full advantage of the extraordinarily favourable military situation in the Asiatic theatres of war, Netaji left kiel in a German submarine on February 8th. 1943. Sweeping wide into the Atlantic he sailed down passing the cape of Good hope to a meeting place 400 miles S. S. W. of Madagaskar. There on April 28th. he was transferred to the

Japanese submarine I-29, which took him across the Indian ocean. He landed at Sabang on the northern tip of Sumatra, and reached Tokyo after a journey of eighteen weeks, on June 13th, 1943. Without waiting a moment Netaji went into immediate military action. Within six weeks he had a clear grasp of the main problems.

But even at that moment utmost importance he thought of rendering all possible help to Bengal, where disastrous famine raised during the summer of 1943. Immediately in August itself Netaji made all possible arrangements to ship to Calcutta a 100,000 tons of rice as a gift from the Indian League, of which he had taken the overall command. His offer was most callous and cruelly ignored by the British, which resulted in the death of millions in Bengal, Netaji's own province. The British took revenge on the people of Bengal for their sympathies with Netaji to whom they could not harm in spite of the best weapons of warfare in their hands.

Not wasting a moment in sentimental frustration, Netaji diverted his whole attention to military matters. As a very far sighted military leader he declared—"Any liberation of India secured through Japanese sacrifices is worse than slavery." Insisting that it was the national honour of India to make the maximum contribution of blood and other sacrifices, he assigned the I. N. A. to form the very spearhead in the coming military offensives on the Imphal front. In a speech in Malaya on 5th Sept. 1943, he visualised—
 "...the very appearance of the I. N. A. on the Indian frontier will be a clarion call to the people and to the Indian Army."

Netaji moved so fast that already in October 21st, 1943, he was able to inaugurate his Provisional government with the portfolios of the Head of State, Prime Minister and Minister of War and Foreign Affairs for himself. With the common greeting and war cry of Jai Hind, the Congress

tricolour became the national flag and "Jana Gana..." composed by Gurudeva Rabindranath the National Anthem.

The Provisional Indian Government was immediately recognised by the Axis and their sympathisers. Under Netaji's government all Indian resources in the Far East, men and money were mobilised. From the Japanese Netaji demanded and got the Andaman and Nicobar Islands—the only Indian territory held by the Japanese. Further assurances too he secured that as the Japanese marched into India the occupied regions would be put under his control.

To mark their new status, the Provisional Indian Government renamed their territories as Shahid (Martyr) and Swaraj islands respectively. Netaji himself landed at Port Blair, the capital of Andamans on December 29th, 1943. Choked with emotions he visited the cellular jail there where quite a number of his most dear and near friends were locked up, tortured and had lost their lives. History justified him as a true liberator of his people with the right to say—"...India shall be free and before long. And a Free India will throw open the prison gates so that her worthy sons may step out of the darkness of the prison cells into the light of freedom, joy and self-fulfilment."

Now there were two basic historic assignments to Netaji and his Armed Forces—to fight for India's Mainland's liberation, and then to stand as the defence force of Free India.

Netaji's every move, every word became the expression in action of what he had declared in Tokyo on arrival from Berlin—"...For India, there is no other path but...uncompromising struggle against British Imperialism. Even if it were possible for other nations to think of compromising with England, for the Indian people at least it is out of the question. Compromising with Britain means to compromise

with slavery and we are determined not to compromise with slavery any more."

Thus, the real significance of Netaji at war against Britain has far, far more historic importance than all the other military action of the Far East during the second world war put together. His deeds turned the wheels of India's destiny from dungeon like slavery to the bright sunshine of independence, and changed the face of the whole of Asia.

15. NETAJI ON BERLIN-DAIREN RED ROAD

(i)

Netaji's firm aim, which he expressed also during the last stages of the war in his Bangkok speech of May 21st, 1945, remained throughout—"...The fundamental principle of our foreign policy has been and will be—Britain's enemy is India's friend."

This was, indeed, an appeal to Moscow. When he had left India in January 1941, Netaji's original objective was to reach Russia. Even in Kabul he tried to contact the Russian Ambassador, but did not succeed, for the Soviet Embassies are always under guard and very secretive. Once, when he stopped the Soviet envoy's car in the street, Netaji was not able to explain the matter due to the language difficulties. In spite of several other efforts he made, he failed to draw Russian attention.

Better luck he had with the Italians and the Germans. They sent him a passport to Kabul in the name of Orlando Massota and a courier to fetch him. In company of that messenger Netaji set out for the Russian frontier. They had to pass through the Soviet territories without pause. There was no opportunity for Netaji there for appealing to Russia and applying for political asylum.

On reaching Germany, Netaji had often considerable disappointments. Hitler did not agree to the declaration in favour of Indian independence. The Nazi invasion of Russia made matters worse. But Colonel Yamamoto, the Japanese military Attache had become a good friend of Netaji. Even then he was not able to get a clearance for Netaji for a trip to Japan via Turkey and Russia, which he himself undertook in November 1942. There was no way left open to Netaji to come in contact with the Russians to reach the Sovietland.

Facing those heavy odds, Netaji accepted the leadership of Indians on the European continent with the hope that, even then, something might be redeemed. As a close devotee of Bhagvad Gita, which a miniature edition he always carried in his pocket, Netaji resolved in Berlin—"I am content to do my duty and leave the rest to Destiny."

(ii)

While arguing with Hitler for the declaration in favour of Indian Independence, Netaji came in very close contact with Mr. Nambiar in Berlin. Nambiar was in Berlin and Central Europe from 1924, and during the war too he remained in Berlin. When Netaji was leaving for the Far East he appointed Nambiar his deputy in Europe and passed on to him his policy and instructions regarding the Free India Centre. After the German surrender, Nambiar was arrested on 8.6. 1942 by an organisation which styled itself—"Indian Security Unit." Later on, after Nehru's joining the Delhi Government, the I.S.U. was dissolved and the task of attending the Indian prisoners in Germany was taken over by the "Indian Military Mission" in Berlin.

Certain documents of the I. M. M. which came to my hand in Berlin in 1947, threw enough light on the policy of the then Indian Government regarding the Indian prisoners of war in Germany. In this respect, Nambiar's case can be taken as an example, which will ultimately bring into light the real difficulties one has to face to come to the truth even about Netaji.

Nambiar was quite intimately known to Jawaharlal, who had appointed him the chief of the information Bureau in Berlin from its very start. This I. I. B. was also financed by the Congress when Jawaharlal became its President for the first time at the end of 1929. At the end of the hostilities in Europe, Jawaharlal took great deal of personal interest in

getting Nambiar released from the British intelligence hands in Germany. Still, it proved to be quite a formidable job, due to the purely British outlook and loyalty of the External Affairs Ministry though handled by Jawaharlal himself. It is amazing in this particular instance that, even those Indian officers who handled Government jobs immediately under Nehru and a greater sense of loyalty towards British interests than for the Indian. Therefore, it is not surprising that, even when Netaji affairs are handled by that same apparatus in Delhi, invariably their decisions serve the British imperialistic standpoint at the cost of the nationalistic Indian.

Amongst the photostats of the Indian Military Mission files in Berlin with me, we have a letter of Nambiar's to Jawaharlal dated 2nd. September 1946, in which he explains—"...Life in the circumstances is rather depressing and I have to start again all afresh. I should like to move out first for considerations of health and occupation to Switzerland."

Nambiar had rather put it very mildly when he said—"life in the circumstances is rather depressing."

In another photostat of a note by one Major Warren of the I. M. M., we read—"...Nambiar was not at all happy and requested that arrangements be made for his re-interment at Herford Juvenile jail, where he had spent much time whilst under interrogation. He stated that he could not possibly attempt to rebuild his life, under the conditions imposed upon him."

When such was the British intelligence and I.M.M. treatment to a renowned Indian close friend of Jawaharlal, how the other Indian prisoners of war in Germany would have fared, can be easily imagined. Even so late as 1947, quite a number of Indians under I.M.M. control had publicly complained that third degree methods were employed by British intelligence and I.M.M. personnel during interrogations for the simple 'crime' of the Indians

having worked for Netaji and his Free India Centre, during the war.

Another photostat copy has the subject marked 'repatriation' and is signed by a colonel in the Indian Military Mission. This colonel, I was told in Berlin, was an Indian. When Nambiar applied for some recommendation from the I.M.M. for food and coal rations, the Colonel replied to him — "Any recommendation from the Mission could only state official facts of your past connections with the Free India Centre and your employment during the war on a salary from the Germans." It shows the British anger on Indians who fought for the freedom of their country.

Anyway, Nambiar was lucky in getting Nehru intervene on his behalf. In the files of the I. M. M. is a letter from one under Secretary to the Government of India regarding Nambiar, which says—"I am directed to request you kindly to approach the Swiss authorities on behalf of the Government of India and to use your best endeavours to obtain from them permission for Mr. Nambiar to go to Switzerland. It may be pointed out that his earlier record was consistently anti-Nazi both in Germany itself and in Prague and Paris."

In spite of such clear instructions at the instigation of Nehru himself, Nehru's one of the highest ranking representatives in Europe, who also an Indian, put new obstacles in getting Nambiar released from his British internment in Germany. This particular case proved that, as a rule Nehru's own officers showed greater loyalty towards the British than to the cause of India, by following their policy of harassing Indians who had associated themselves with Netaji and his noble task of achieving India's independence.

(iii)

Of course, much water has flown into the Ganga since the first years of our independence. In course of time, the British too have turned mild in their revengeful spirit

towards Netaji Subhas Chandr Bose. Regretably enough, there is no evidence of such a change on the part of the Indian official bureaucracy.

(iv)

The truth is, as I was able to find out in Berlin, Netaji and his Indian national associates in Europe had genuinely anti-Nazi leanings, which the then British intelligence, and today's Delhi External affairs officers have been unable to appreciate. Already in 1936, when Netaji had asked Hitler when he was going to strike Britain, the reply he had received was that the Germans had no thought of this, on the other hand they hoped for a compromise with the British. For Netaji on other alternative was left but to take Russia alone as Britain's enemy and therefore, India's friend.

When the second world war began, there was no Indian Revolutionary Society in Berlin, but there was one in Moscow, attached to the Russian apparatus of the Semi-secret organisation comintern. Berlin Indians like Nambiar were in very close touch with the Indians in the Russian comintern. Netaji had also this comintern link in mind, when before leaving for Dairen, he had instructed Nambiar to enquire if the Russians would accept Indian political refugees.

In his own case too, he had persistently demanded from the Japanese that they put him in direct touch with the Russians. After Imphal as he covered the weary marches from Rangoon into Siam, Netaji invariably discussed eventual sanctuary in Russia also for himself. The fight for India's independence was to continue from Russia. But the Japanese could not oblige Netaji officially.

While he was in Tokyo in November 1944, Netaji had secretly come in touch with some Indians who were linked up with the comintern branch of the Russia there. Until the Japanese surrender, the Comintern had gained a big

prominence in the affairs of that country. For Netaji this proved to be a good wind fall.

So far as sounding the local Russian representatives was concerned, Netaji was on safe side. But the relationship of those nets with their Moscow headquarters itself had gone through a terrific change. The dissolution of the Comintern was officially announced on paper due to Anglo-American pressure on Stalin, but, in actual action, a standing "Liquidation commission" was formed under the presidium of the very internationally famous comintern leaders. These currents and cross currents in Russian affairs had set the outside link of the secret foreign sections of the Russian communist party in chaos.

Since there was no other alternative left for Netaji but to fly to Dairen at any cost, he took the risk knowingly that when the Russians occupied that Manchurian port, he was sure to fall into Russian hands. They would be Russians and not the British was a great satisfaction to Netaji.

Finally, when the Berlin followers of Netaji fell into Russian hands, and were put in prisons like Yakutsk in Siberia some echoes of Netaji from the Far East began to strike into the Soviet Sector of East Berlin.

16 NETAJI'S ECHO FROM YAKUTSK

(i)

In the early hours of February 26th, 1945, Netaji stood at the foot of Mount Popa in Burma. Every now and then there was a flash of gunfire or the blaze of a bomb on the north-western horizon. The sky seemed full of enemy planes whose pilots were briefed—"Look for Bose—the notorious I. N. A. head, Japanese puppet and traitor. Kill him."

Considering it a very insignificant danger, Netaji scorned—"England has not made a bomb that can kill me." And still, he was in retreat and his military position worse than ever before.

Ten months earlier in April-July, 1944, he stood with his army facing the Imphal planes. With every justification he called India's radio net-work—"Anti-India Radio" and despised the British propaganda against him. In an ultimatum to the British he assured his countrymen—"Let the British now accept the 'Quit India' resolution and give effect to it and I guarantee that not single Japanese soldier will set foot on Indian soil." In view of such sincerity, it was the dirtiest British intelligence propaganda 'bomb' which has poisoned the Indian public mind against Netaji ever since. We cannot say with surety that Netaji's historic personality has not been affected by that poisonous propaganda, and there by, his refuge in Russia made most miserable.

The battle for Imphal goes in the military history of Asia as the Waterloo of the British Empire. This fact has not struck our historians yet. Our ignorance on this point is largely responsible for not paying the tributes due to Netaji and worrying about his fate. Not the British gunpowder bomb but their poisonous intelligence bomb has certainly hit Netaji very badly.

For Netaji personally, the experiences at foot of Mount Popa forced him to set out on a mission to Russia however hazardous.

(ii)

While I myself was desperately trying to revisit Russia to enquire about the fate of some of our countrymen, I knew intimately, I contacted some Red Army officers in Berlin with whom I had taken army training in the Russian Tundras. They took personal risk and recommended my case to the Soviet Consul for granting me a visa to visit the Soviet Union. But as long as Stalin and Beria ruled Russia, the question of my visiting Russia looked impossible.

Failing to cross into proper Soviet territories, I toured their newly acquired east-European empire extensively. During one of such trips, I visited Warsaw, where the Soviet Marshal Rokossovsky was set up as the military ruler of Poland. In his personal staff was an officer I had known since my Leningrad days before the war. Being a true simple hearted Russian, he hated the Communist torture to foreign nationals who were forced to seek asylum in Russia.

With the help of that Staff officer Paylov, I was able to renew my acquaintance with the Russian officers formerly connected with the Indian section of the Comintern in Moscow. Those officers provided me with a good deal of information about the fate of the Indian prisoners of war connected with Netaji's Free India Centre and the I. N. A. Quite a number of those men were forced under Russian pressure to accept the job of working as their spies if and when released and allowed to return to India. Some were sent to the newly started Cominform military school for Asiatic cadre at Leipzig in East Germany. The Indian trainees at Leipzig were to take command of Telangana type of insurrections in India.

Returning to India and getting elected to the first Parliament of India, I exposed the Russian inspired Comintern anti-Indian subversive activities. There was a big uproar. The Indian Communist Party, a branch of the Russian Cominform brought a case of privileges against me, in which I was exonerated.

My accounts rightly, of course, were published in some Russian magazines as well in a twisted form. Those Russians who had known me personally appreciated the Anti-Stalin-Beria job I had done. Since then, whenever I was able to contact them in my several trips to Soviet occupied areas of Eastern Europe, they provided new materials to me completely unknown to the outside world. Amongst such material was the Soviet secret police torture to those Indian Prisoner of War of Netaji's camp who had refused to work as getting trained for the Anti-Indian jobs or to promise to work as Soviet spies if returned to India.

(iii)

In autumn 1954, I had taken my former Professor—Acharya Narendra Deva to the Eastern section of Berlin to show him around. Stalin and Beria were gone, and my Russian friends felt a good deal relieved.

While going around the Soviet House of Culture in Unter den Linden, I met my old friend Boris. We had been good friends since my military training days in Russia in 1934. Both of us were admirers and pupils of great Indian revolutionaries like Biren Chattopadhyaya and Abani Mukherji, we frequently met in Leningrad. Boris had learnt Museum work under Chatto and had come to the Soviet House of Culture in Berlin to organise the display of some of Moscow's Tretyakov Gallery paintings. He extended an invitation to me to come to his Weissensee flat for an evening chat—"You can meet also Goga there?"

"What?" I asked alarmed. Goga was the son of Abani Mukherjee from his Russian wife named Fitingoff. They had also a daughter called Maya. I enquired about her.

"You will know about her and many other Indians you must not have imagined to be on the Russian soil."

There were about half a dozen guests present when I arrived at Boris's flat. The table was very well laden with the Russian Samovar, plenty of 'zakuski' and a few bottles of truly Russian Vodka. Besides Goga, who was an Indo-Russian, others were pure Russians, all employees of the Cominform, the successor to the old Comintern.

Goga came to the door to greet me with a question—"How could you forget the assignment of my father given to you?"

Quite vividly flashed the face of his father—Abani Babu in my mind. In one of the pre war years while I was taking leave of him in Moscow with tears in his eyes he had said—"Please, please, do your best to get us back home to India."

So long as the British ruled India there was no question of Indian revolutionaries having once sought asylum in Russia returning to India. But in post-independence period also the position had remained the same. Occasionally, when some questions were asked in Delhi Parliament, some sweet sentiments were expressed by the Ministers. When it came to taking concrete action for the repatriation of our revolutionaries, the same old British policy of letting the question shelved, was adopted.

Feeling ashamed I enquired about his father. Goga startled me with his reply—"Being a man of pure scholarly world, my father survived all the Stalin purges until the end of the patriotic war. Then, with the beginning of the fifties, a few foreign Comintern functionaries who had been banished to Siberia during the war years were allowed to return to Moscow. Some of them related that in the

Siberian prison of Yakutsk they had come across a very high ranking Indian leader who had unfortunately collaborated with our enemies both the Germans and the Japanese. My father was quick enough to guess that the Indian must have been none other than Subhas Chandra Bose. He rushed a letter to Stalin intervening for the release of Subhas Babu from prison."

"That must have made Stalin more furious on your father?" Boris interrupted our talk.

"Exactly that is what happened. Father pleaded by saying that Subhas Babu was an honest patriot. There could be no justification for calling him a German or a Japanese collaborator. His action in Berlin and Tokyo were guided by his belief that Indian nationalism must have outside help, first and foremost Russian. He requested Stalin to do justice to Subhas Babu. Such a request from father was interpreted by Stalin as the logic of a Fascist. The very next day father had posted that letter, he was arrested by the N. K. V. D. He has not come back to us since."

"Sad." Said Boris—"Professor Mukherji took Subhas Babu's side, and for that he too must have been sent to Yakutsk prison."

"Are you sure that Subhas Babu was in Yakutsk prison?" I asked Goga.

"Yes. Uncle Mazut, the head of the Indian section of Comintern in your time was also sent to Yakutsk as a Trotskyite. After the death of Stalin he has been rehabilitated. He also says that in the central prison of Yakutsk Subhas Babu was locked up in cell No. 45 and my father in 57."

"How was Mazut sure that he was really Subhas Babu?"

"Why? You know well Mazut had been several times to India in pre war days and had seen Subhas Babu fre-

quently in Calcutta and even talked to him on the question of dock workers union."

"In which year Mazut had seen Subhas Babu at Yakutsk?"

"1950-51."

"Have you any information about him after that?"

"None."

"Only after the death of Stalin and shooting of Beria, have we begun to build some hopes of our father returning to us. When he comes back, surely, he will tell us the latest about Subhas Babu."

(iv)

Our party in the Soviet sector lasted till dawn. Boris drove me to Friedrichstrasse S Bahn from where I caught the train for the West Berlin hotel where I had left Acharya Narendra Devji. When I related to him about my talk with Goga regarding Subhas Babu, he was much excited.

On return to India, I submitted to Jawaharlalji a personal note about the extraordinary co-incidence of meeting Goga and his story about Netaji.

Since I did not get any reply from Jawaharlalji, I took it, he did not like to take any action or even to reopen Netaji's case.

But I remained intrigued. The very next year, in 1955, I succeed in flying from Berlin to Moscow to continue my investigations further.

17. NETAJI'S JAI-HIND ON THE HIMALAYAN FRONT

(i)

Throughout the British domination India had no battle-cry until Netaji came out with "Jai-Hind". He gave to his country-men, for the first time, an ideal of all out sacrifice in the battlefield for the Motherland, and inspired the Indian soldier with the noblest objective in life.

What proved to be a direct hit to the British Empire was the total obliteration of the slavish loyalty of an Indian towards the British King Emperor. To achieve this task was a super-human task, and this was the greatest contribution of Netaji in the battles of independence of our country. He had full justification for his proud claim before sixty thousand people in pouring rain at Singapur on July 9th. 1943 :

"There is no nationalist leader in India who can claim to possess the many-sided experience that I have been able to acquire."

While reviewing the I. N. A. parade Netaji gave the Command : "...Follow me...I shall lead you to Victory and Freedom."

With his brilliant leadership Netaji dazzled both the military and the civilian personnel. At his disposal there were only two million Indians in East Asia to whom the slogan of 'a total mobilisation for a total war.' His target was three hundred thousand soldiers and thirty million Singapur dollars (less than 4½ crore Rupees). But the target was : "We have a grim fight ahead of us—for the enemy is forceful, unscrupulous and ruthless. In this final march to freedom you will have to force hunger, thirst, privation, forced marches and death. Only when you pass this test will freedom be yours."

For a military historian it is interesting to compare Netaji's leadership in the battle of Imphal and that of Jawaharlal at Towang in autumn 1962. To the Indian merchants of Malaya Netaji made it clear—"...There is no private property when a country is in a state of war...If you think that your wealth and possessions are your own you are living in delusion...your lives and your properties do not now belong to you, they belong to India and India alone...If you do not choose to come forward voluntarily, then we are not going to remain slaves on that account... Everyone who refuses to help our cause is—our enemy."

Under Jawaharlal's leadership, the most shocking discovery of the Himalayan war was the fact that the Indian soldier was lamentably ill-equipped even after fifteen years of independence and an army budget of several hundred crores yearly. From the very first days of the fighting, officially sponsored organisations were set up to beg and collect food, clothing, socks and shoes for the fighting personnel. It was an unheard of and a shocking spectacle. An army which has to go begging for the daily necessities of its soldiers loses all its self-respect and pride—the two most essential ingredients of keeping the standard of their morale high.

Even after one year since the death of Jawaharlal, when our country is faced with the most menacing military threat from the combined forces of China and Pakistan, the basic shortcomings of a good military leadership of the type of Netaji still lamentably lacking. The only other day some Indian merchants had the cheek to sermonise India's Home Minister at his face that it was their money which had kept the Congress alive and brought freedom to India. An objective observer is just reminded of the war contributions the same merchants made to the British to keep India enslaved. Certainly, their monetary contribution to the ruling British was far, far greater than the petty

aims given to the Congress leaders. The amount contributed specifically for the cause of India's Freedom by the Indian merchants has been, if at all, quite negligible.

At such a stage when the life and Freedom of the country is at stake, what Netaji told the Indian merchants of eastern Asia at the eve of the Imphal battle must become the slogan today for us: "There is no private property when a country is in a state of war. Everything belongs to India and India alone."

Another factor in the leadership of battles are the two military advantages of initiative and surprise. Jawaharlal never attached any importance to these deciding factors in Towang battle, whereas Netaji never allowed to let these weapons go out of his hand throughout his Imphal campaign.

For his breakthrough in the Imphal planes Netaji confidently adopted the technique of skilful deployment. His radio-stations even during the most desperate moments of the I.N.A. offensive broadcasted as relaying British official bulletins—"...The I.N.A. troops are advancing up the Kaladan and have occupied Paletwa. Tiddim, Tongzang, Palam and Fort white have fallen into the enemy hands. Our 17th. Division is in full retreat. The road Imphal-silchar has been cut. The situation is serious but not critical."

On the other hand, whatever exaggerations of her armed might the Chinese chose to release to the outside world, in order to lower the Indian morale, were taken by India to be true. When China, for instance, said that eight divisions were deployed on the Tibetan plateau, Indian newspapers repeated it as a fact. A little later on the eve of the big Towang offensive, when China declared she had fifteen to twenty divisions on the Indo-Tibetan border, the story was repeated by the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru the very next day.

Without going much in detail an objective student of military affairs has to note the absolute justification for Netaji's claim—"There is no national leader in India who can claim to possess the many-sided experience that I have been able to acquire."

A proper study of Netaji's leadership can be put to great use by our leaders today in defeating the Chicom forces threatening menacingly the life and liberty of our country on the Himalayan front.

(ii)

In fairness to the British, it must be accepted that, they were forced by their own self-interest to strengthen Jawaharlal and discredit Subhas. K.M. Munshi has recorded a summary of His interview with Lord Linlithgow, dated 12th January 1940. :

Munshi : I feel the under-currents amongst our ordinary Congressmen, and I wonder how long Gandhiji will be able to keep them in leash. For the moment he is exercising a strong restraining hand.

Linlithgow : Yes, he has become powerful. But do you sincerely think that he will be able to carry Jawaharlal ?

M... : Jawaharlal is a great idealist and is therefore an idol of the masses. But the inspiration, organisation, and technique are all Gandhiji's and Jawaharlal will not part company with Gandhiji.

L... : I think it was a mistake to have left office. Perhaps there were reasons on your side which I can not appreciate.

M... : Yes, we could not have continued long in office and helped you in the war unless we had obtained a share in the centre which could justify our being there. Otherwise it would have been a thankless

job. For instance, Subhas would have made our task very difficult.

L... : You think Subhas formidable. I do not think so.

M... : Not in that sense, but if we had been in power he would have got himself arrested only in order to make our position difficult. Now things are better from every point of view and things should be done early.

L... : I hope to make a move soon.

The British did make a move soon. They arrested Subhas in July, 1940, charging him of sedition. Use of that brute force made Subhas more uncompromising against the British than any other Indian leader. ✓✓

Soon, Subhas took advantage of the war situation to secure India's freedom by attacking the British on the Imphal front. For achieving success in his objective, he had to master the technique of leadership under war conditions. All other Indian leaders had followed the path of compromise with the British. Consequently, they had no occasion to have the schooling of a soldier like Netaji. This weakness exposes today the greatest shortcoming in present Indian leadership when a war has been forced on India by the Chinese Communists.

Being a far-sighted dedicated man, Netaji himself led his soldiers in worst military debacles, and his passionate sincerity inspired devotion and love in all his followers. Our leaders in power today shall have to learn the technique of Netaji to make the Indian army a first class modern army of superb morale, and to make their officers fit to form the General Staff, superior to that of Chinese Communists. But to fulfill this assignment they will have to inspire their troops by coming forward to command like Netaji : "Follow me ! Over the Himalayas ! I shall lead you to victory."

(iii)

Though militarily unsuccessful Netaji's Imphal campaign proved the reality that Britain would not succeed any further in keeping India under subjugation with the misdirected loyalty of Indian soldiers in the interest of the British King Emperor. The last British Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, Field Marshal Auchinleck had also to admit.

"There is no excuse for the regular officers who went over (to the I.N.A.), beyond the fact that the early stages of 'Indianisation' from its inception to the beginning of the late war were badly mismanaged by the British Government of India, and this prepared the ground for disloyalty when the opportunity came.

"...The policy of segregation of Indian officers into separate units, the differential treatment in respect of pay and terms of service as compared with the British officer, and the prejudice and lack of manners of some—by no means all—British officers and their wives, all went to produce a very deep and bitter feeling of racial discrimination in the minds of the most intelligent and progressive of the Indian officers who were naturally Nationalists, keen to see India standing on her own legs and not to be ruled from whitehall for ever."

At the time of independence specially during the Hyderabad and Kashmir campaigns, those Nationalist Indian officers showed a very good account of themselves in protecting their Motherland. British officers who had commanded them till then had mostly sided with Pakistan and the Indian officers had to use their independent judgment also about the leadership over the men they commanded. In this respect the basic principles of Netaji's type of leadership had to be followed to serve the interests of their own country first and foremost, to keep the army discipline clean and effective further onwards. The British

charge against the I.N.A. that ruined the discipline of the Indian army proved completely wrong. On the other hand, the Armed forces of Independent India became most dependable at critical times when they were assigned to protect their Motherland. For this new enthusiasm of our Armed Forces we have to thank Netaji once again.

Since our independence it has become more and more reasonably clear that India will not have to fight against the British army any more. On the other hand they have rushed military help to us when the Chicom attacked us in Autumn 1962. This ready response of the British are one more genuine proof of the fact that they are independence is not endangered by the Chinese or any other forces.

In such a situation, we have valid reasons to expect that the British anti-Netaji attitude has become a matter of past and forgotten history. Chivalry and sportsmanship have been amongst the noble ideals of the British people. Guided by those noble principles of man, it is sure, the British will give us every assistance and put their secret service reports at our disposal, once we take the initiative in finding out the real truth about Netaji and his historic contribution to the art of leadership of a country at war.

When a war is being forced upon us on the Himalayan Front, we must follow Netaji's battle-cry Jai Hind, and achieve the glorious victory in the history of our country."