

III

ARMED INSURRECTION

It was only after the Howrah Conspiracy case and their release from jail that a good number of revolutionaries began to think in terms of an armed insurrection. The first thing that had to be done was to place the programme of armed insurrection before all revolutionary groups and persuade them to accept it. The next was to establish unity amongst them and bring them under one leadership. Roy undertook the two tasks and accomplished them in a very successful manner. For this purpose he had to move all over Bengal and also visit many other parts of the country. He began to move in the costume of a Sanyasi to avoid the suspicion of the police. Roy visited places like Banaras, Allahabad, Agra and Mathura. The intimate knowledge of the country that he had gained through these wanderings and the contacts that he made proved very useful for the later's activities. Jatin Mukharjee was to be the leader of the united organization. The united organization was established with branches and contacts in Bengal and outside. It came to be known as the Jugantar Party.

Contacts were established with Indian revolutionary groups in Europe, the United States of America, Burma, Indonesia

and in places like Bangkok, Singapore and Hong-Kong. In the Western Hemisphere there were strong revolutionary groups in Vancouver in Canada and San Francisco in the U.S. The Sikhs settled in the two places were already engaged in revolutionary activity in the name of Ghadr. In 1911, Hardayal had established at the later place a journal called Ghadr and a centre called Jugantar Ashram. Sometime later Jatin Mukharjee sent one of his associates Satyen Sen to establish contact's with the Ghadr Party.¹ The Ghadr Party had already established many contacts in countries to the east of India through Sikhs, resident in various places.

Preparation for armed insurrection required funds. The task of raising them was entrusted to Naren. M. N. Roy later stated in his Memoirs " The job of finding money for initial expenditure, entrusted to me was soon done s according to plan."² Funds were raised through a number of political dacoities committed under Naren's supervision. One of them deserves special mention here Sameran Roy describes it as follows " on the 12th February 1915 Naren withtwo others looted the cash of Bird and company in broad day-light in Garden Reach

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1. Sameran, Roy. The Restless Brahmin, p. 59, Calcutta : Allied Publishers, 1970.
 2. M. N. Roy's Memoirs, p. 3, Calcutta : Allied Publishers, 1964.

at Calcutta, in the first dacoity of the series. This dacoity which has come to be known as the Garden Reach political Dacoity created a sensation at Calcutta. This was the first motor dacoity and the whole operation was completed within a few minutes at gun point without having to fire a shot."³ Dr. Jadugopal Mukherjee writes about the dacoity " The Garden Reach dacoity was an act of supreme courage and daring, and it was executed by the coolheaded brain of Naren Bhattacharya in a perfect manner. Not a shot was fired."⁴

Naren was arrested a day or two later for his part in the dacoity. Jatin Mukharjee was very much upset by Naren's arrest which he characterised as " My right arm has been broken". Naren was released on bail for Rs. 1,000/- with two securities on 22nd February 1915.⁵ It is stated further that the police Inspector Suresh Mukherjee, who arrested Naren was shot dead on February 28th on Jatin's order.

By this time, the international situation had become tense. Clouds of war had gathered on the horizon and there was a likelihood of a war breaking out between England and Germany.

3. Sameran, Roy. The Restless Brahmin, p. 6.

4. Ibid., Foreword.

5. Ibid., p. 67.

Revolutionaries had already received information from their friends abroad that in the event of a war Germany would be willing to help them. As stated in Political trouble in India, " For many years Indian revolutionaries have held the view, copied herhaps from their Irish supporters in New York, that England's difficulty would be India's opportunity, and as far back as 1910 Madame Cama is found describing Berlin as the capital of the country which is at present most hostile in spirit to England."⁶ No sooner the war broke, Germany took many steps to exploit the Indian situation and to cause trouble and embarrassment to England; because of the revolutionary activities in India and most importantly in Bengal.

In India revolutionaries sought out German authorities and opened talks with them " Towards the end of 1913, Naren Bhattacharya began efforts to make contact with the Germans through the German Consulate General in Calcutta. Satish Chakravarty at the request of Naren, arranged this meeting with the German Consulate-General through D. Thibault, then Registrar of Calcutta University. Chakravarty told Thibault one day that some friends of his wanted to meet the German Consul - General to start business with Germany. On Satish Chakravarty's request

6. Campbell, Ker James. Political Trouble in India, p. 238, Calcutta : 1973.



Thibault arranged a meeting with the German Consul-General, not knowing who these friends were. Thereupon, Naren and Jatin Mukharjee met the German Consul General. Both had several meetings with the German Consul-General in Calcutta by the beginning of 1914, to discuss plans for armed insurrection and guerilla warfare against the British power in India as soon as the war broke out and emphasized the need for arms aid from Germany. Some of these meetings were attended by Atual Krishna Ghosh, another close associate of Jatin.⁷

The war between England and Germany began in August 1914. The revolutionaries then redoubled their efforts to take advantage of the situation. It was decided to organise an armed insurrection and Jatin Mukherjee was elected the supreme leader of the united party. Jatin Mukherjee was in those days staying outside Calcutta and working as a contractor. He was however, visiting Calcutta from time to time. Later it became insafe for him to go to Calcutta. Naren then arranged a safe place, for him to stay in the village Mohandia, not far off from Balasore and a commercial establishment called Universal Emporium was set up to provide a channel of communication. There were already two such establishments in Calcutta, one Harry and Sons at

7. Sameran, Roy. The Restless Brahmin, p. 60.

41 Clive Street and the other Sramajibi Samabaya at 90/2 Harrison Road. They proved very useful in the later's activities.

Preparation for the insurrection were going on in Calcutta, Accordingly centres were opened at Chakradharpur and Sambalapur " to paralyse the transport and communication system when necessary."⁸ Naren also pointed out that British forces in India would be depleted as a result of the war and that Indian troops would help the revolutionaries. In November 1914, Satyen Sen who was sent to California to contact the Ghadr Party returned to Calcutta. On the same ship were a number of returning Sikhs and Maharashtrian revolutionary named Vishnu Ganesh Pingle. This shows that the revolutionary activities had been spread nationwide. They had their own network, and arrangements. The leader of Sikhs, Kulltar Singh and Pingle were introduced to Naren and Jatin. They were put in touch with Rashbehary Bose who was incharge of revolutionary work in Punjab, Delhi and U.P. He was then living in Banaras. A few days later a meeting was held in Banaras to discuss the plan of the insurrection. The meeting was attended by Rashbehary Bose, Jatin Mukherjee, Naren Amrendranant Chattopadhaya and Atualkrishna Ghosh. The meeting decided Frebruary 21st, 1915 as the date of

8. Ibid., p. 63.

insurrection and put Jatin Mukherjee in charge of Bengal and Rashbehari Bose in charge of the Punjab and U.P. It was decided that Rashbehary would held up the Punjab Mail at Amritsar and that would be the signal for the uprising.⁹

It was decided to begin the insurrection on February 21. Later suspecting that the police had discovered the plot, they decided to begin it two days earlier, that is on February 19. The police came to know of the new dates as they had introduced a spy in the inner circle of the revolutionaries. As a result nothing happened except the arrest of a number of prominent revolutionaries involved in the plot. Rashbehary Bose escaped arrest and later went away to Japan. Pingle was not that fortunate. He was arrested after a few days in Meerut from the lines of the 12th Indian Cavalry still engaged in his work of propaganda amongst soliders and was sentenced to death. Kartar Singh who had met Naren and Jatin Mukharjee in Calcutta after his return from the United States was amongst those who were arrested and had to pay with his life for the uprising which did not materialise.

Though the uprising did not materialize it will be useful to take note of the serious preparations that were made. It give's an idea of the nationalist fervour which had spread

9. Ibid., p. 65.

and of the serious danger that it posed to the British regime in India. A short account is available in " Political Trouble in India." What follows is based on that account. The attempt of a rising on February 19 was preceded by two attempts in November 1914, one at Lahore and the other at Ferozepore. In both cases the attempt was to persuade the troops to mutiny and with their help seize the arsenal and the treasury. The attempt did not succeed. The failure of the Lahore rising of the 19th February led to the collapse of the main conspiracy.¹⁰

Things did not move as quickly in Bengal as they moved in the Punjab. In the first place, the Bengal revolutionaries did not get from Rashbehary Bose the agreed signal. In the next place, they were waiting for arms for which they had approached Germany. They knew that without arms they could not have the insurrection that they had planned. It was in March 1915 that they received the intimation that Germany was willing to send the arms. Along with the intimation came the suggestion to send a representative to Batavia to discuss the details. The revolutionaries were elated by the prospect of getting arms. They accepted the invitation to send a representative. The choice fell upon Naren and that proved to be a turning point in his political career.

10. Campbell, Ker James , Political Trouble in India, p. 337.

Naren left India for Java in April 1915 in search of arms. He did not get the arms that he was looking out for. He got instead a new identity and a new ideology. That happened at the end of his quest for arms.

Naren left as " C. Martin ". " He was ostensibly an agent of the Calcutta firm Harry and Sons."¹¹ The firm was established by the Bengal revolutionaries as a cover for their activities. Naren's close friend Hari Kumar Chakravarty was in charge of that firm. Naren's contact with the revolutionaries in India during his travels in search of arms was maintained through the firm.

Writing about his mission M.N. Roy stated later in his Memoirs on the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Indian revolutionaries in exile looked towards Germany as the land of hope, and rushed there full of great expectations. By the end of the year, the news reached us in India that the Indian Revolutionary Committee in Berlin had obtained from the German Government the promise of arms and money required to declare the war of independence. The news spread like wild fire to affect the Indian soldiers of the British army also. " Continuing he stated ", Then we were confronted with the problem of getting

11. Semeran, Roy. The Restless Brahmin., p. 71.

the promised arms into the country. Our transporting them all the way from Germany was out of the question. A messenger went to Berlin, with the proposal that the Germans should deliver the arms to us in a neutral country nearest to India. We choose the Dutch East Indies, and before the end of 1914, I left for Java - my first trip out of the country."¹²

What happened in Batavia after Naren reached the place is reported as follows by the Sedition Committee in its Report. " On his arrival at Batavia " Martin " was introduced by the German Consul to Theodor Helfferich, who stated that a cargo of arms and ammunition was on its way to Karachi to assist the Indians in a revolution. " Martin " then urged that the ship should be diverted to Bengal. This was eventually agreed to after reference to the German Consul-General in Shanghai. " Martin " then returned to make arrangements to receive the cargo of the Maverick, as the ship was called, at Rai Mangal in the Sundarbans. The cargo was said to consist of 30,000 rifles with 400 rounds of ammunition each and 2 lakhs of rupees. Meanwhile " Martin " had telegraphed to Harry and Sons in Calcutta, a bogus firm kept by a well-known revolutionary, that " business was helpful. In June Harry and Sons wired to " Martin " for money and then began a series of remittances from Helffenrich in

12. Roy's Memoirs, p. 3.

Batavia to Harry and Sons in Calcutta between June and August, which aggregated Rs. 43,000/- of which the revolutionaries received Rs. 33,000/- before the authorities discovered what was going on."¹³

Naren returned to India in the middle of June. The plans that were made to receive the Maverick's cargo and put it to best use can be related best in the words of the Report of the Sedition Committee. The revolutionaries who made the plan were Jatindranath Mukherjee, Jadugopal Mukherjee, Bholanath Chatterje, Atualchandra Ghosh and Naren. The Report states :

" They decided to divide the arms into three parts, to be sent respectively to :

- 1) Hatia, for the Eastern Bengal district to be worked by the members of the Barisal party.
- 2) Calcutta.
- 3) Balasore.

They considered that they were numerically strong enough to deal with the troops in Bengal, but they feared reinforcements from outside. With this idea in view they decided to hold up the three main railways into Bengal by blowing up the principal bridges. Jatindra was to deal with Madras Railway from Balasore, Bholanath Chatterji, was sent to Chakradharpur to take charge of the Bengal-Nagpur Railway, while Satish

13. Sedition Committees Report p. 121. Calcutta : New Age Publishers, 1973. (Sedition Committee 1918 Report.)

Chakrabarti was to go to Ajay and to blow up the bridge on the East Indian Railway. Naren, Choudhari and Phonindra were told off to go to Hatia, where a force was to collect, first to obtain control of the Eastern Bengal districts, and then to march on to Calcutta. The Calcutta party, under Naren Bhattacharji and Bipin Ganguli, were first to take possession of all the arms and arsenals around Calcutta, then to take Fort William and afterwards to sack the town of Calcutta. The German officers arriving in the Maverick were to stay in Eastern Bengal and raise and train armies.

In the mean time, the work of taking delivery of the cargo of the Maverick was apparently arranged by Jadu Gopal Mukharji. The Maverick would arrive at night and would be recognised by a series of lamps hung horizontally. It was hoped that the first distribution of arms would take place by the first of July 1915.

" There was no doubt that some men, under instructions from Autal Ghosh actually went down by boat to the neighbourhood of Rai Mangal to help in the unloading of the Maverick. They seemed to have stayed there about ten days but by the end of June the Maverick had not arrived, nor had any message been received from Batavia to explain the delay.¹⁴

 14. Ibid., p. 122.

A short account of Maverick which was to carry German arms to India and why it failed to carry out its mission is given here. " The S. S. Maverick was an old tank steamer of Standard oil company, which had been purchased by a German firm, F. Jebson and Co., of San Francisco. She sailed about the 22nd of April 1915 from San Pedro in California without cargo. She had a crew of 25 officers and men and five so called Persians, who signed as waiters. They were all Indians and had been shipped by von Brincker of the German Consulate at San Francisco and Ramchandra, the successor of Hardayal on the Ghadr. One of them Hari Singh a Punjabi, had quantities of Ghadr literature in trunks, The Maverick went first to San Jose del cabo in Lower California and obtained clearance for Anjer in Java. They then sailed for the Island of Socorro, 600 miles west of Mexico, to meet a schooner called the Annie Larsen which had a cargo of arms and ammunition purchased by a German in New York named Tauscher and shipped at san Diego on the Annie Larsen. The master of the Maverick had been instructed to store the rifles in one of the empty oil tanks and flood them with oil and stow the ammunition in another tank, and in case of urgent necessity to sink the ship. The Annie Larsen never effected a meeting with the Maverick and after some weeks the Maverick sailed for Java via Honolulu. In Java she was searched by the Dutch authorities

and found to be empty. The Annie Larsen eventually about the end of June 1915 arrived at Hequiam in Washington territory where her cargo was seized by the United States authorities. It was claimed by Count Bernsdorf, the German Ambassador at Washington, as belonging to Germany, but the claim was disallowed by the American Government."¹⁵

According to police report, on his return journey Naren landed at Nigapatam on June 14. The next day he went to Madras where he tried to cash a bank draft made out in the name of C.A. Martin or bearer. It could not be cashed as the bank had not received the necessary intimation Later it was cashed in Calcutta by Amarendranath Chatterji. On the same day he sent a telegram to Jadugopal Mukherjee saying; " Arrived here starting to night for Balasore expect to meet some one there. " He went there obviously to meet Jatin Mukherjee. He stayed one night in Dak Bunglow at Balasore.¹⁶ There after he met Mukharjee. At the meeting; plans were made for the receipt of the cargo that was arriving by S. S. Maverick.

15. Ibid., p. 123.

16. Campbell, Ker James, Political Trouble in India, pp. 253, 254.

S. S. Maverick and the cargo did not, however arrive. The revolutionaries, who had been sent to Raimangal to await the ships arrival and take charge of the cargo, returned to Calcutta after waiting for twenty days. Naren and his colleagues were terribly disappointed. But they could do nothing. In the meanwhile on July 3, one person came from Bangkok with a message and some money. He was Kumudnath Mukherji who was practicing as a lawyer in Bangkok. Bholanath Chatterji had met him there in 1912 and had passed on his name as a Sympathiser to the Ghadr Party. It was that party which sent him with the message and the money. " While K. N. Mukherjee was in Calcutta, he was introduced by Bholanath Chatterji to a " Leader " whose name was withheld. This man asked Mukherji to go to Batavia on his way back to Bangkok and deliver to a German named. He lfferich a message explaining the wants of the Indian party in the way of rifles and trained German help. K. N. Mukherji left India via Madras on 24th July 1915. " Later it was discovered that the man whom Mukharji met in Calcutta was Naren." ¹⁷

When inspite of messages sent through a variety of channels there was no response, it was decided to send Naren again to Batavia to make fresh arrangements. Before Naren left,

17. Ibid., p. 256.

the police raided Harry and Sons on August 7, as it was found that a number of suspicious communications from Batavia had gone to that address. They arrested at that place Harikumar Chakravarty his brother Makhanalal Chakravarty and Shayam Sunder Bose. Two important revolutionaries, Amarendranath Chattopadhyaya and Jadugopal Mukherjee, however escaped arrest.¹⁸ These searches and arrests seriously disorganised the work of the revolutionaries.

It was decided to send Naren in order to discuss fresh plans with the Germans which included arrangement for overland transport of arms. Roy describes it as follows in his Memoirs :

" The attempt to smuggle arms in ships having failed, I went abroad for the second time with the alternative plan of bringing arms over land from China. They were to be smuggled through the north eastern frontiers, where the Abors had risen in revolt only recently. While I left to get arms abroad, a group of our comrades, led by the cleverest among us, was to proceed to the northeastern frontiers, to incite the Abors and the neighbouring tribes to rise again in revolt; this time to be helped with arms and other resources from outside."¹⁹ Jadugopal Mukherjee and a few others went to the north-east according to the plan.

18. Ibid., p. 251.

19. Roy's Memoirs. p. 4.

On his second visit Naren was accompanied by Phanindranth Chakravarti, a close associate from Chingripoto and an old pupil of Jatin Mukharjee. The two started together from Calcutta towards the end of August. They stopped for a day at Cuttack where they changed into European clothes. Naren had already his psuedo name C.A. Martin, Chakravarti was given the name W.A. Payne. Martin and Payne sailed together from Madras after a few days. Proceeding by Penang and Deli (Sumatra) they arrived at Batavia and next day they went to Helfferich's house and met one of the Helfferich's and the German Consul.²⁰

After Naren's departure, a disaster befell his party resulting in the heroic death of his leader Jatindranath Mukherji. Papers found in the search of Harry and Sons on August 7, led the police to believe that Universal Emporium of Balasore was a branch of Harry and Sons. It was searched on Sept. 4, and it led the police to the directing centre of the revolutionary movement. The ostensible business of Universal Emporium was the repair of bicycles and the sale of gramophones and records. "Saileswar Bose who was in charge of the Emporium was not able to explain some of the papers which were found in his shop, nor to disclose the source of the capital which enabled him to start this concern." His contact with C.A. Martin alias Naren

20. Campbell, Ker James, Political Trouble in India, p. 257.

was established. That made the police more suspicious and they pursued the enquiry more vigorously. Then in the police attack that followed, one Bengali was killed. The dead man proved to be Jotindranath Mukherji, the important leader, of the Jugantar Party. What happened at Balasore was a grave disaster for the Jugantar Party. Jatin Mukherji's fight against the police is enshrined in the annals of the revolutionary movement of Bengal as the battle of Balasore. The battle resulting in the death of the Commander in-Chief was a great handicap for the movement.

In the meanwhile Naren was busy in his search of arms. On this occasion the Germans were less co-operative. The German Consul complained that the Indians lacked organisation and that they were not able to keep secrets. Naren had three or four meetings with the Consul but found that he was making no progress. " The Germans had no men to send and were unwilling to risk a ship."²¹

Another attempt that was made is described as follows in the Memoirs : " I made yet another attempt to bring help by overseas from Indonesia. The plan was to use the German ships interned in a port at the northern tip of Sumatra, to storm

21. Ibid., p. 258.

the Andaman Islands and free, and arm the prisoners there, and land the army of liberation on the Orissa coast. The ships were armoured, as many big German vessels were ready for the war time use. They also carried several guns each. The crew was composed of naval ratings. They had to escape from the internment camp, seize the ships and sail. The skeleton crew left on board each ship could have the steam up. Several hundred rifles and other small arms with an adequate quantity of ammunition could be acquired through Chinese smugglers who would get them on board the ships. The plan failed because the Germans would not play such a serious game. At the last moment, the money for the purchase of arms was not forthcoming and the German Consul General mysteriously disappeared on the day when he was to issue orders for the execution of the plan." ²²

One more effort that Naren made was of a more ambitious character. It brought him in contact with Sun Yat-San and other leaders of the Chinese revolution and also made him travel all over China. Engaged in that effort, Naren found himself in British custody for one night in the Chinese city of Tientsin. The sense of justice of the British Consul General and his own resourcefulness rescued him out of that predicament. ²³

22. Roy's Memoirs., p.p. 4, 5.

23. Ibid., p.p. 9, 10 & 11.

Towards end of 1915 there was a revolt in two Chinese provinces Yunan and Szechuan, bordering on Bhutan and India. The revolt was against Yuan Shi-Kai's plan to restore monarchy. The rebels had plenty of arms. Naren's suggestion was that the Chinese rebels should pass on some of those arms to Indian revolutionaries across the border. Sun Yet-San liked the idea and asked Naren to get five million dollars from the German Ambassador for the purchase of those arms. If the money was available Sun Yet-Sen would send his emissary to Yunan and then Naren was to proceed there to take over the "precious cargo". Years later, Roy wrote in his Memoirs : "The grandiose plan made a strong appeal to my spirit of adventure. At last perhaps in a few months, the dream of appearing on the frontiers of India with enough arms to raise an army might be fulfilled."²⁴

The plan fell through because at the last moment the Germans were not ready to spend the large amount which it required. That angered and embittered Naren. In his Memoirs

Roy wrote later that the Germans "had never meant to give us any considerable help" and that the whole German plan of giving arms to Indian revolutionaries "was a hoax, a veritable swindle." It is difficult to accept this judgement for it cannot

24. Ibid., p. 7.

be denied that during those couple of years the Germans did attempt to send some arms to India both through the Bengal revolutionaries as well as through Ghadr party. But the quantities were bound to be too small for a vast country like India. And moreover, the country was not prepared for a revolution. The revolutionaries were too few in number and they had little contact with the large masses of the people. Naren later realized that it is not difficult to get arms, but that they are useless without determined men who knew how to use them. Naren's active search for arms ended at this stage.

Naren had by this time heard the sad news of the death in battle, of his leader and Commander-in-Chief, Jatin Mukherjee and the arrest and long term imprisonment and of going into hiding of a number of his colleagues in the revolutionary movement. That movement had disintegrated in the intervening months and Naren felt no urge to go back to India. " Jatin's heroic death had absolved me from the moral obligation to obey his orders " wrote Roy later in his Memoirs. The order referred to is described as follows : " Before leaving India for the second time I personally escorted Jatin to hiding place where he later on fought and died in reply to the thoughtless pledge of a romantic youth I will not again return without arms " the

affection of the older man appealed : ' come back soon with or without arms. The appeal was an order for me."²⁵

Years later Roy wrote an article paying his tribute to Jatin Mukherjee. According to him Jatin was a " good man ". He believed himself to be a Karmyogi and recommended the ideal to all of us. Detached from the unnecessary mystic preoccupation, Karmayogi means a humanist. He who believes that self-realization can be attained through human action, must logically also believe in man's creativeness - that man is the maker of his destiny. That is also the essence of Humanism. Jatin was a Humanist - perhaps the first in Modern India. To recognize him as such will be the most befitting homage to his memory."²⁶ When Roy wrote the article he had already grown into a humanist, after passing through the intermediate stage of a Communist. This is how Roy always felt that armed insurrection would bring an end to the colonial regime. He always struggled hard to see the day. He spared no efforts, and was always on various visits, to procure arms from Germany; but his mission was not realised because of lack of Indian support.

25. Ibid., p. 35.

26. Roy M. N., Men I met p.p. 2,3 & 4. Bombay : Lalvani Publishing House, 1968.

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