

CHAPTER - IV

THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT  
IN NORTHERN BENGAL

In 1902 a revolutionary group named Anushilan Samiti was formed in Bengal of which Pramathanath Mitra, a barrister of Calcutta High Court was the president.<sup>1</sup> Other eminent personalities who came to be connected with the budding organisation were Aurobindo Ghosh, Sister Nivedita, Chittaranjan Das, Sarala Devi etc.<sup>2</sup> The Anushilan Samiti was an well-knit centralised organisation where a new entrant had to take a vow which forbade him to dissociate himself ever from the Samiti.<sup>3</sup> It was also obligatory to the member to conform to the rules framed by the leaders of the Samiti and speak the truth to the leaders at all events.<sup>4</sup> As the fresh recruit advanced through different stages of reliability and conformism he had to take different vows that took him into the inner coterie of the organisation.<sup>5</sup>

It is worthwhile to mention that the select circle in the leadership of the Samiti was very soon divided over some theoretical issues. Barin Ghosh, the younger brother of Aurobindo Ghosh and one of the ablest leaders of the Samiti in its early days contradicted the ways and opinions of Jatindranath Banerjee, another leader

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1. Chatterjee, S.K., 'Anushilan Samiti as a Revolutionary party : 1905-1913, (Article in) Freedom struggle and Anushilan Samiti (Ed. Bhattacharyya, B) p. 35, Calcutta, 1979; Mazumdar R.C. History of Modern Bengal (Part two) p. 90, Calcutta, 1981.
  2. Ibid, p. 90-91; Choudhurani Sarala Debi, Jibaner Jharapata, p. 135, Calcutta, 1975.
  3. Roy Suprakash, Bharater Jatiyatabadi Baiprabik Sangraha, p. 64 ff, Calcutta, 1983.
  4. Ibid.
  5. Ibid; Mazumdar, R.C., OP. Cit., p. 91.

of great revolutionary mettle.<sup>6</sup> Consequently Jatindranath Banerjee was expelled from the organisation. But his expulsion did not provide any permanent solution to the disputes.<sup>7\*</sup>

The faction within the Samiti of which Barin Ghosh was the mentor had earlier formed a club named Atmonnati Samiti.<sup>8</sup> As a matter of fact this group was increasingly swinging towards the cult of Bomb as well as violence since the members were no longer eager to limit their activities to physical culture. Pramathanath, the supreme leader of the Anushilan Samiti on the other hand, favoured a long-drawn process for revolutionary preparations without giving away much to press and public.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, a journalist of repute, successfully edited 'Sandhya', an evening Bengali daily with revolutionary overtone which became immensely popular with the revolutionaries.<sup>10</sup> Moved by the amazing success of the 'Sandhya' Barin Ghosh, Abinash Bhattacharyya, Bhupendranath Dutta etc., brought out a Bengali weekly named Jugantar<sup>11</sup> which instantly became a recognised organ of revolutionary propaganda. Subsequently, the group of revolutionary workers who differed with the path

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6. Chatterjee, S.K., OP. Cit., p. 35.

7. Ibid, p. 35; Acharyya, Rajendralal, Biplabi Bangla, p. 254, Calcutta, 1356 B.S.

8. Roy, S., Bharater Baiplabik Sangram Itihas, P-I, p. 155, Calcutta, 1980.

9. Ibid, p. 154-55.

10. Chatterjee, S.K., OP. Cit., p. 36.

11. Ibid.

\* The difference between Jatindranath Banerjee and Barin Ghosh had its origin in some personal quarrels (Vide Dutta, Kshirod Kumar, Biplabisrestha Jatindranath Bandyopadhyay, p. 11 ff., Calcutta).

prescribed by Pramathanath and were under the overwhelming influence of Barin Ghosh came to be known as the Jugantar group notwithstanding the fact that they had earlier established a club named 'Atmonnati Samiti',<sup>12</sup>

Eventually out of the conflict within the Samiti three large revolutionary groups emerged during the first decade of this century. These groups were the Anushilan Samiti itself, the Jugantar and the North Bengal group of the Jugantar which inspite of its affiliation with the Jugantar worked rather independently.<sup>13</sup>

Apart from these some other revolutionary groups were also formed. In this connexion mention may be made of Suhrid Samiti, Brati Samiti, Sadhana Samiti etc., Suhrid Samiti was formed in Mymensing under the leadership of Kedar Chakraborty, Brojen Ganguli etc. They obtained assistance from Brojendra Kishore Roychowdhury, a very rich landlord of the district and Sarala Debi Choudhurani, a member of the Tagore family of Jorasanko in Calcutta. Some members of the Suhrid Samiti seceded from the organisation and formed the Sadhana Samiti which worked in collaboration with the Jugantar group. The major faction of Suhrid Samiti acknowledged the leadership of P. Mitra and maintained close links with the Anushilan Samiti. Another revolutionary group namely the Brati Samiti was formed under the patronage of the leaders of the Dacca Branch of

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12. Ibid; Roy, S., OP. Cit., p. 156.

13. Ibid, p. 158; Mukherjee, Jadugopal, Biplabi Jibaner Smiti, p. 199, Calcutta, 1363 B.S.

the Anushilan Samiti.<sup>14</sup> The members of these secret societies were profoundly influenced by the ideas of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee who in his novels delineated some patriotic characters and of Swami Vivekananda, the great Hindu monk with patriotic leanings.<sup>15</sup>

We should not fail to note that the partition of Bengal in 1905 and the Swadeshi Movement that followed changed the political environment of Bengal. The conflicts between the moderates and the extremists within the Indian National Congress, the widespread agitation against the partition and the policy of repression adopted by the British Government contributed to the steady rise of revolutionary politics in Bengal.<sup>16</sup>

During this period the revolutionary groups made recruitments even in the far-flung sub-regions of Bengal. Thus there were recruits from distant Northern Bengal districts like Jalpaiguri,<sup>17</sup> Malda,<sup>18</sup> Coochbehar,<sup>19</sup> Dinajpur<sup>20</sup> etc. The mufassil recruits took part in all sorts of overt activities programmed by their respective secret organisations.

Two mufassil recruits of the Jugantar, namely, Prafulla Chaki of Rangpur and Khudiram Bose of Midnapore were entrusted with the task of assassinating Kingsford, the District Judge of Musaffarpur

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14. Choudhurani Sarala Debi, OP. Cit., p. 138 ff; Roy Suprakash, OP. Cit., p. 156.

15. Laushey, David M., Bengal Terrorism and Marxist left, p. 2-3, Calcutta, 1975; Mukhopadhyay Jadugopal, OP. Cit., p. 196.

16. Roy, S., OP. Cit., p. 212 ff.

17. Dey, Barun et al., West Bengal District Gazetteers, Jalpaiguri, p. 64, Calcutta, 1981.

18. Sengupta, J.C., West Bengal District Gazetteers, Malda, p. 61, Calcutta, 1969.

19. Roy, S., OP. Cit., p. 159.

20. Ibid, p. 157.

who had earlier served as the Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta and incurred the displeasure of the nationalists during the Swadeshi days. However, on April 30, 1908 at Musaffarpur, Prafulla and Khudiram hurled bomb on a horse-drawn carriage which resembled that of kingsford but actually carried two European women both of whom were killed in the attack.<sup>21</sup>

On the following day, determined to escape arrest by the police Prafulla committed suicide<sup>22</sup> Khudiram was however arrested by the police on the same day. Eventually he was sentenced to death after a historic trial<sup>23</sup>.

Immediately after the Masaffarpur incident the police raided the Calcutta Head Quarters of the Jugantar Samiti at Maniktala and seized several bombs, dynamites, revolvers and other weapons along with numerous letters and various other documents pertaining to the activities of the revolutionaries. The police raided various other shelters of the radicals and arrested leaders like Barin Ghosh, Upendranath Bandopadhyay, Hemchandra Das, Abinash Bhattacharyya, Hrishikesh Kanjilal, Ullaskar Datta, Sailendranath Basu, Satyendranath Basu, Kanailal Dutta etc. Aurobindo Ghosh was also arrested. Very soon was started the Alibore Conspiracy Case.<sup>24</sup>

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21. Ibid, p. 221-22.

22. Mazumdar, R.C., OP. Cit., p. 102, Calcutta, 1981.

23. Ibid, p. 102-03.

24. Roy, S., Bharater Jatiyatabadi Bainlabik Sangram, p. 124, Calcutta, 1983.

Curiously enough the youngest person arrested in this connexion was Krishnajiban Sanyal<sup>25</sup> of Malda which testifies the fact that the Jugantar had made recruitments in the district where the Anushilan Samiti had also established its branch.<sup>26</sup>

We have already referred to the establishment of revolutionary organisation at Jalpaiguri. In 1910 a youngman from Jalpaiguri namely Birendra Duttgupta made a daring attempt on the life of Shamsul Alam, a Deputy Superintendent of Police who had very enthusiastically dealt with the Alipore conspiracy case.<sup>27</sup> Alam was attending the Calcutta High Court where Justice Harrington was hearing the reference of Alipore Bomb Case appeal. In the evening on January 24, 1910 while on his way back from the court room Alam was shot at and killed instantaneously. Birendra was arrested in the same evening. Eventually he was sentenced to death.<sup>28</sup>

During the period that followed numerous dacoities were committed and several persons were either injured or killed by the revolutionaries of Bengal.<sup>29</sup> Police repression too was ceaseless. But the activities of the terrorists could not be contained. In Northern Bengal also overt activities of the revolutionaries caused sensation.

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25. Mukherjee, J., OP. Cit., p. 327.

26. Sengupta, J.C., OP. Cit., p. 61.

27. The Amritabasar Patrika. January 25, 1910; Mazumdar, R.C., OP. Cit., p. 116.

28. The Amritabasar Patrika, January 25, 1910; Ghosh, K.C., Jagaran O Bisphoran (Vol-II) p. 348 ff, Calcutta, 1380 P.S.

29. Ibid, p. 351 ff.

At Malda on January 28, 1916 attempt was made on the life of Nabin Chandra Bose, the Headmaster of Malda Zilla School. While returning from his friend's house in the evening Nabinchandra was stabbed near the circuit House of English Bazar not far from his school and expired on the spot.<sup>30</sup>

Nabinchandra Bose, the revolutionaries thought, had tipped off the police from time to time about the political activities of his students.<sup>31</sup> Farlier during his tenure as a teacher of Jamalpur School he became very much unpopular with the people. He was also one of the approvers<sup>32</sup> of Dacca Conspiracy Case\* which had led to the arrest and imprisonment of several revolutionaries in 1910 for alleged attempts at waging war against the Government.<sup>33</sup>

After the assassination the police became very active. The District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police conducted search operations. The house of Mahendranath Das was raided by police. But they did not find anything incriminating there. Nevertheless they seized some books and other papers.<sup>34</sup>

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30. The Bengali, February 1, 1916; Ghosh, K.C., OP. Cit., p. 444-45.

31. Ghosh, K.C., OP. Cit., p. 444, Calcutta, 1380 B.S.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid, p. 353.

34. The Bengali, February 1, 1916.

\* After a series of dacoities were committed in and around the town of Dacca by the revolutionaries especially the Dacca Anushilan Samiti, the Government initiated the Dacca conspiracy case in 1910 which led to the imprisonment of Pulin Chandra Das, Anutosh Dasgupta, Jyotirmoy Roy etc. (Vide Ghosh, K.C., OP. Cit., p. 352 ff).

Subsequently, Mahendranath Das, the accused, was sentenced to life imprisonment.<sup>35</sup> An appeal petition to the High court of Calcutta was set aside and Das was sent to Andaman. In his memoirs Das states that during the trial which continued for six months his family incurred an expenditure of Rs. 33,500/-. The Raja of Chanchal, Saratchandra Roychowdhury, the biggest landlord of the district of Malda, sanctioned a loan of Rs. 32,000/- to the Das family which remained unpaid for several years.<sup>36</sup> The Raja's sympathy with Das family adds a new dimension to the character of the movement.

Shibaram Chakraborty whose role as a student leader during the Non-Co-operation Movement has been mentioned in the relevant chapter states in his memoirs that Chittaranjan Das had recognised the financial contribution of the Raja of Chanchal to the Congress Fund. In the same work Shibaram also states that Benoy Kumar Sarkar had informed Chittaranjan of the Raja's secret contributions to the revolutionaries.<sup>37</sup> The financial contribution provided by the Raja of Chanchal, Sarat Chandra Roychowdhury to the revolutionaries of Northern Bengal may be compared with that of Brojendrakishore Roychowdhury, the landlord of Mymensing to the members of the revolutionary groups particularly those of the Suhrid Samiti which originated in the district of Mymensing. Our conjecture that many members of the landed aristocracy in Northern Bengal sympathised with the revolutionary movement is further strengthened by the fact

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35. Home (Special) Dept. Confidential papers, 147/1916, Govt. of Bengal.

36. Jibani Sangraha (Autobiography of Mahendranath Das) manuscript, p. 60 ff; Ghosh, K.C., OP. Cit., p. 444.

37. Chakraborty Shibaram, Iswar Prithibi Bhalobasa, p. 181, Calcutta, 1974.

that Mahendranath Das himself belonged to the rich Zamindar family of Alal in the district of Malda.

It is worthwhile to make a brief survey of the organisational structure and the programmes of the revolutionary groups in Northern Bengal. As regards Jalpaiguri, Pireswar Gangopadhyay, a lawyer of Jalpaiguri court is referred to as the first revolutionary organiser who gradually enlisted workers like Kishorimohun Moulik, Akshoy Kumar Moulik, Makhan Lal Phowmik, Rameshohandra Chakraborty etc.<sup>38</sup> The early revolutionaries involved themselves with the Swadeshi Movement.<sup>39</sup>

In this period physical culture became very popular with the younger generation. The clubs of the town took great interest in organising sports. Sword fencing, races lathi wielding etc. were the popular sports.<sup>40</sup> In course of time many youngmen were associated with the secret societies. Prominent among them were Panchanan Niyogi, Satish Ghosh, Annada Biswas, Sitanath Pramanik, Mahendra Sarkar, Durgadas Chakraborty, Kedar Dutta, Chunilal Roy, Kanu Chakraborty, Jnanendra Mitra, Deben Ghosh, Khagendranath Dasgupta, Jiban Roy, Upen Roy, Sachin Masumdar, Sudhansu Sarkar etc.<sup>41</sup> Sasadhar Kar, a prominent Congress leader of the subsequent period came from Rangpur and joined the youth group. For a long

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38. Sanyal, M., 'Swadhinata Andolane Jalpaiguri' (Article in) Jalpaiguri District Centenary Souvenir, p. 322.

39. Ibid, p. 323.

40. The Amritabasar Patrika, August 6, 1906.

41. Sanyal Mukulesh, OP. Cit., p. 323.

time his tireless effort kept the organisation afloat.<sup>42</sup>

Among the routine activities of the revolutionaries was rifle snatching as well as collection of arms. Rifles were stolen from the Mogalkata police outpost and an ammunition shop located at Sadagar putti.<sup>43</sup> The brave efforts of Birendra Dutta Gupta of whom we have mentioned earlier and Durgacharan Sanyal,<sup>44</sup> the ageing pleader of Jalpaiguri who was sentenced to four years imprisonment for alleged manhandling of two European officials at Hill station in Dinajpur in 1907 encouraged the younger generation not a little.

Some of the Jalpaiguri activists had a long and chequered career. Sasadhar Kar was arrested at Rangpur for alleged involvement with the assassination of Mandakumar Basu, the Additional Superintendent of Police, Rangpur.<sup>45</sup> Kar was however, released within a short period that enabled him to work for his organisation both at Rangpur and Jalpaiguri.<sup>46</sup> Another prominent youngman of the Pre-war period was Biren Dasgupta who was intimately associated with the Swadeshi Movement that followed the partition of Bengal.<sup>47</sup> Dasgupta was one of the organisers of the National School at Jalpaiguri.<sup>48</sup> He was an active worker of revolutionary organisation.<sup>49</sup>

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42. Ibid, p. 324.

43. De, B. et al., W.B. District Gazetters, Jalpaiguri, p. 64.

44. Ibid; Sanyal, M., OP. Cit., p. 322.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Dasgupta, B.N., 'The National Schools of Benoy Kumar Sarkar' (Article in) Economic and Social Ideas of Benoy Sarkar (Dass, B. ed.), p. 210 ff; Calcutta, 1940.

48. Ibid.

49. Mukherjee, J., OP. Cit., p. 29.

In 1911 Dasgupta left for the USA to receive higher education in electrical engineering and joined the Purdue University.<sup>50</sup> He was advised to learn techniques of modern warfare by the revolutionary leaders.<sup>51</sup> His absence however, affected the growth of revolutionary organisation at Jalpaiguri.<sup>52</sup> There was a marked decline in the activities of the revolutionaries in the second decade of the century. Many activists joined the Non-Co-operation Movement of the early twenties.<sup>53</sup>

The terrorist movement was revitalised during the mid-twenties. Physical culture was once again made a viable medium of revolutionary organisation at Jalpaiguri. Many more workers joined the efforts at this stage. Most active of them were Suresh Dey, Sarat Das, Dindayal Sarkar, Ramesh Masumdar, Sailen Niyogi, Tejesh Ghosh etc.<sup>54</sup> The revolutionaries of Jalpaiguri continued their activities in the thirties also. Workers of other districts also came to Jalpaiguri to assist them.

In 1932 police seized revolvers and cartridges from the possession of two youngmen.<sup>55</sup> They were Prankrishna Chakraborty alias Sureshchandra Das of Rudrakar village in Faridpur district and Nirmal Chakraborty of Jalpaiguri. Both of them were arrested

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50. Dasgupta, B.N., OP. Cit., p. 211.

51. Mukherjee, J., OP. Cit., p. 29.

52. Sanyal, M., OP. Cit., p. 324.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid, p. 326.

55. Bangabani, November 15, 1932.

at Jalpaiguri railway station. Nirmal was carrying a suitcase in which the arms were found. The police soon after arrested a student of a local school named Ajit Basu for alleged connexion with the revolutionaries. Prankrishna and Nirmal were sentenced to 7 years and 3 years rigorous imprisonment respectively. Prankrishna escaped from police custody at the time of their transfer from Jalpaiguri by the Down North Bengal express.<sup>56</sup>

Police oppression was intensified during the period that followed. Many youngmen were rounded up by the police. Sachin Bose, Tarak Bose and Sankar Sanyal of Jalpaiguri were among them.<sup>57</sup> The police did not even spare respected citizens of the town.

On April 1, 1933 the Jalpaiguri Police raided the houses of Kaviraj Rajani Sen, Srinath Fore a lawyer and a Congressman of repute, Nagen Dass, Upen Karmakar, a lawyer, Surendra Gope, Sasibhusar Sikdar, Surendra Basu, Girish Maitra, Panchanan Dutta, Dhiren Kushari and Madhusudan Dasgupta. Many more youngmen like Khagen Das, Shiben Karmakar, Surendra Gope, Atul Dutta, Ravi Das, Bhabesh Maitra and Pabitra Basu etc. were rounded up by the police.<sup>58</sup>

Other districts of Northern Bengal also experienced similar police atrocities. Armed with the ordinance No. 1 of 1930 which aimed at foiling subversive activities, the police carried on search operations, arrests and coercion.

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56. Ibid.

57. Sanyal, M., *OP. Cit.*, p. 328-29.

58. *Bangabani*, April 3, 1933.

On September 17, 1932 a youngman named Dharanidhar Sarkar was arrested at Malda while pasting up a leaflet entitled Swadhin Bharat on the wall of an empty house. The house of Dharanidhar was searched by police and a book titled Riplabbadi was recovered. The leaflet and the book were considered to be 'highly revolutionary'. Consequently J.W. Talukdar, the District Magistrate of Malda sentenced the accused to rigorous imprisonment for eighteen months under section 124 A of the I.P.C. and to six month's rigorous imprisonment under section 18 of the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act.<sup>59</sup>

In Dinajpur the authorities ordered Sunil Chatterjee and Amulya Dasgupta to quit the district within 24 hours<sup>60</sup> while in Malda the house of Kaliranjana Das was searched but nothing incriminating was found.<sup>61</sup> Kaliranjana, a student of the A.C. Institution of Englishbazar was however arrested and transferred to Rajshahi jail.<sup>62</sup> Hangsagopal Agarwala, a known figure in the revolutionary circles was arrested from old Malda, his native town on December 8, 1932. Another student of the A.C. Institution, namely Nanigopal Singha was also arrested and transferred to Rajshahi jail. Nanigopal was allegedly involved with the Luke assault case.<sup>63</sup> It may not be out of place to briefly narrate the case since it caused tremendous sensation in Northern Bengal.

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59. Political dept (Political Branch), confidential file 921/32, Govt. of Bengal, 1932.

60. Ibid, December 4, 1932.

61. Ibid, December 10, 1932.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid, December 11, 1932.

C.A.W. Luke was the Superintendent of Rajshahi Jail who was shot at by two revolutionaries on November 18, 1932.<sup>64</sup> He sustained serious injuries. Following this incident several arrests were made in Rajshahi and the adjoining districts.

At Balurghat also the secret revolutionaries were quite active. On May 6, 1935, the local police raided the house of Gosthabehari Sarkar and two of his comrades. Two revolvers and a few cartridges were recovered. Gosthabehari was sentenced to 4 years rigorous imprisonment while his comrades received 6 months each.<sup>65</sup> The revolutionary organisers at Balurghat started with programmes identical with those of other sub-regions of Bengal. In the first decade of the century physical culture was popularised among the youth. Dhiraj Banerjee was one of the early leaders of youth who taught dagger-play and lathi wielding to youngmen like Benoygati Roy, Sudhirranjan Chattopadhyay etc.<sup>66</sup> The Anushilan Samiti had initiated an organisation in the town with which some youngmen were associated.<sup>67</sup> Even in the thirties the revolutionary cult had an impressive following at Balurghat sub-division. To justify this conjecture we should refer to the Hill Mail Robbery case.

On October 28, a Postal Official while receiving mail bags from the Darjeeling Mail at the Hill Railway station in Dinajpur was attacked by a group of armed youngmen. The mail bags were

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64. Masumdar, R.C., OP. Cit., p. 261.

65. Ghosh, K.C., OP. Cit., p. 653.

66. Chakraborty, K., 'Swadhinata Sangrame Balurghat' (Article in) Madhuparni, Aswin 1372 B.S., p. 13.

67. Ibid

snatched and the office of the Station Master was robbed. The booty amounted to a few thousand Rupees.<sup>68</sup> Soon after the Hill Mail robbery a large number of revolutionaries were arrested. Among the convicts Hrishikesh Bhattacharyya and Prankrishna Chakraborty were sentenced to death by a tribunal but eventually in the appeal case the High Court sentenced them to life imprisonment. Saroj Kumar Basu, Satyabrata Chakraborty, Prafulla Kumar Sanyal and Abdul Kader Chowdhury received 10 years rigorous imprisonment each. Kiran Chandra Dey received five years while Haripada Basu and Ramkrishna Sarkar received seven years rigorous imprisonment each.<sup>69</sup> Prankrishna Chakraborty, one of the principal convicts had a vast field of activities. He was arrested at Jalpaiguri while carrying some revolvers alongwith Nirmal Chakraborty and was sentenced to seven years rigorous imprisonment but succeeded in escaping from police custody<sup>70</sup> as we have mentioned earlier.

The revolutionaries were active in the district of Darjeeling also. Jatindranath Mukherjee the well known revolutionary leader, nicknamed Bagha Jatin made the first attempt at building up a revolutionary organisation at Darjeeling. A branch of the secret society Anushilan Samiti was started by him during his stay at Darjeeling as a finance department official in the first decade of the century.<sup>71</sup> During the period Charuchandra Dutta, the son of an

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68. Ghosh, K.C., OP. Cit., p. 608.

69. Ibid, p. 609; Chakraborty, K., OP. Cit., p. 19.

70. Bangabani, November 15, 1932.

71. Sarkar Sumit, The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908, p. New Delhi, 1973.

officer of Maharaja of Coochbehar engineered a plot to assassinate Andrew Fraser, the Lt. Governor of Bengal who was then at Darjeeling. Charuchandra collaborated with the Jugantar leader Barin Ghosh and the latter instructed Prafulla Chaki to proceed to Darjeeling with revolver and bomb and take up the job. Charuchandra and Prafulla surreptitiously watched the movements of the Governor but did not find any suitable opportunity to shot him or to charge the bomb.<sup>72</sup> Thus ended one of the earliest plots to assassinate Andrew Fraser on whose life a number of attempts were made in subsequent years.<sup>73</sup>

Even in the second and third decades of the century the revolutionary organisations were very much in existence in the district. In the early twenties prominent revolutionary activists like Satyendranarayan Masumdar were recruited from Siliguri by a revolutionary group which had its head quarters at Chittagong and maintained a nominal link with the Jugantar.<sup>74</sup> A member of this group named Madhu was responsible for its organisation at Siliguri.<sup>75</sup> Satyendranarayan Masumdar thus initially worked for the Chittagong group as well as Jugantar but later on during his stay at Rajshahi as a student of the Rajshahi College he joined the Anushilan Samiti.<sup>76</sup>

In the thirties too the revolutionaries made their presence felt in Northern Bengal. There was again a plot to assassinate John

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72. Uttarbanga Swadhinata Sangrami Sammelan Smarak Grantha, p. 17-18, Siliguri, 1976.

73. Ghosh, K.C., OP. Cit., p. 330.

74. Masumdar, S., Amar Biplab Jijnasa, p. 63, Calcutta, 1973.

75. Ibid, p. 48.

76. Ibid, p. 63.

Anderson the governor of Bengal at Darjeeling. On May 8, 1934, two revolutionaries namely, Bhabani Bhattacharyya and Rabindranath Bandopadhyay made an abortive attempt on the life of the governor.<sup>77</sup> The governor, however, escaped unhurt. Both Bhabani and Rabindra were overpowered by security men. Eventually Bhabani was sentenced to death and Rabindra received life. Among the persons arrested in this connexion were Manoranjan Bandopadhyay who received life imprisonment, Ujjala Mazumdar, Madhusudan Bandopadhyay, Sukumar Ghosh and Sushil Kumar Chakraborty all of whom except Susil Kumar received 14 years rigorous imprisonment. Susil Kumar however, received 12 years rigorous imprisonment.<sup>78</sup>

This plot was engineered by revolutionaries of Eastern Bengal and Southern Bengal.<sup>79</sup> The revolutionaries of Northern Bengal during this period busied themselves with some daring dacoities. Of these two or three deserve special mention. The dacoities committed at Tilni and Kakna Villages of Dinajpur respectively in March and February 1934 led to the arrest of a number of people including some tribals namely Dharani Koch, Matla Santal and Reska Santal.<sup>80</sup> These arrests added a new dimension to the terrorist activities in Northern Bengal. For the first time the names of some tribal people came to be associated with the overt activities of the radicals. The period was one of agrarian unrest and peasant

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77. Ghosh, K.C., OP. Cit., p. 631.

78. Mazumdar, R.C., OP. Cit., p. 543; Ghosh, K.C., OP. Cit., p. 632.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid, p. 633.

risings. The tribal people had also joined the movements launched by the Indian National Congress. But never before the Tilni-Kakna decoities we come across evidences of tribal association with terrorists in Northern Bengal.

Some of the revolutionaries who took part in the Tilni-Kakna decoities committed another decoity at Bolla Village in the Balurghat sub-division of Dinajpur along with other activists. On July 13, 1934 the revolutionaries looted the house of Pranbandhu Chowdhury at Bolla. In this connexion were arrested Nanigopal Das, Anathbandhu Saha, Harendrachandra Das, Samarendra Narayan Sarkar, Akshoy Kumar Chowdhury, Gamir Sheikh, Nani Mahanta etc.<sup>81</sup> Kamalendu Chakraborty of Balurghat received prohibitory orders of the authorities after the Bolla decoity.<sup>82</sup> It is interesting to note that there was a concerted plan of the Anushilan and the Jugantar behind the Bolla decoity<sup>83</sup> which leads us to suggest that sometimes these two revolutionary groups collaborated with each other inspite of their ideological differences.

In the thirties some other notable revolutionary figures like Dhiren Banerjee, Nripati Chatterjee, Falguni Mitra, Sasthi Ghosh etc.<sup>84</sup> all of whom belonged to Balurghat continued their political activities.

During the same period Santigopal Sen, Krishnapankaj Goswami etc., were active members of revolutionary groups in the district of

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81. Chakraborty, K., OP. Cit., p. 19; Ghosh, K.C., OP. Cit., p. 634.

82. Chakraborty, K., OP. Cit., p. 19.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid.

Malda. The latter chose his native district as the field of his activities. The youngman was arrested in 1934 and remained in house arrest. Vexed with excessive vigil arranged by the police he committed suicide on November 22, 1936 at his residence in Malda.<sup>85</sup>

However, in 1938 was issued the historic statement of Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay which officially announced the dissolution of the Jugantar.<sup>86</sup>

While in different Jails prior to 1938, most of the leaders of the Anushilan Samiti also officially decided upon accepting Marxism as a creed.<sup>87</sup> They formed an independent communist group and preferred to work for mass revolution instead of terrorist programmes

Thus came the end of a significant era in the history of independence movement which stirred the psychology of the younger generation in Northern Bengal to a great extent.

From an analysis of the organisational structure as well as the programmes of the revolutionary groups we may conclude that terrorism was accepted as a creed by a large section of the lower middle class youth who formed the bulk of the revolutionary leader in different secret societies.<sup>88</sup> Disillusionment about the 'Briti

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85. Ghosh, K.C., OP. Cit., p. 665.

86. Ibid, p. 674.

87. Lahiri, Tarapada, 'The Eventful Decade' (Article in) Freedom struggle and Anushilan Samiti (Ed. N. Roy et al.) Vol-I, Calcutta, 1979, p. 289.

88. Ibid, p. 271.

models of political activity' as well as the liberal methods,<sup>89</sup> a predilection for violence originating from the popularity of Shakti cult in Bengal,<sup>90</sup> the influence of revolutionary movements in Europe<sup>91</sup> and of course the economic hardships faced by the lower middle class contributed to the growth of revolutionary movements. While in the thirties the realisation that without mass support and mass movement political goals can not be achieved led to the dissolution of terrorist organisations like the Jugantar. The statement<sup>92</sup> of Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay dissolving the Jugantar Party *as* Justify our hypothesis :

"My friends have come out today to face a new situation. Passing through different phases that has held the field so long, they have reached the stage of socio-economic politics. The gospel of social emancipation is now the creed of the Indian Revolution. Throughout the world the struggle between the two civilisations, agricultural and industrial is seeking a solution in a social reconstruction so that the exploitation of man by man cease, so that the social control over all means of production and distribution may be established, that poverty, unemployment and illiteracy may be replaced by truly human conditions of life, so that the work may be recognised as a right, a privilege and an honour for all. To attain such ends,

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89. Gordon, Leonard, A., Bengal : the Nationalist Movement (1876-1940) p. 136, Delhi, 1974; Desai, A.R., Social Background of Indian Nationalism, p. 339, Bombay, 1976.

90. Gordon, L.A., OP. Cit., p. 136.

91. Desai, A.R., OP. Cit., p. 339.

92. Lahiri, K.C., OP. Cit., p. 674.

mass organisations are growing up throughout the world with slogan that class privileges must go. When organisations on such basis are giving unity and strength to the masses elsewhere, it is inevitable that the Indian masses also will see similar source of strength for themselves but there are only broad indications of the lines in which forces are developing. The shape each will take at a given moment will always abide by the objective conditions prevalent and must be subjected to the considerations of ever shifting strategy and tactics of the political fight".

The Anushilan Samity cadres also abandoned the path of sporadic violence and turned to mass politics and communism.<sup>93</sup> In the forties, the Communist Party of India which was joined by a number of revolutionary workers participated in many mass movements including the agitation of the peasants and labourers which we have discussed at length in relevant chapters.

One interesting aspect of the revolutionary movement in Northern Bengal was the participation of the students. We have already noted that a number of revolutionary activists like Krishna Jiban Sanyal (Malda), Birendra Duttagupta (Jalpaiguri), Biren Dasgupta (Jalpaiguri), Mahendranath Das (Malda), Ajit Basu (Jalpaiguri), Nani Gopal Singh (Malda), Kalinarayan Das (Malda) were all youngmen and most of them were still in schools when they participated in the overt activities organised by their respective revolutionary groups for the first time in their life. Moreover the revolutionaries enlisted the support of a section of the intelligentsia including men of higher

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93. Lahiri, T., OP. Cit., p. 270 ff.

independent professions like Bireswar Gangopadhyay, the Jalpaiguri Lawyer who earned reputation for his organisational activities during the early phase of the movement. The sympathy of a section of the landed aristocracy with the movement was also a significant factor. In this connexion we have referred to the role of Saratchandra Roychoudhury, the Rajah of Chanchal.

But the revolutionaries did not receive the support of the masses in general, the importance of which they recognised at a much later date. In spite of their weaknesses, we may safely conclude, they were considerably successful in strengthening the demand of Indian People for complete independence.