SINGA

The Lion of Malaya

The story of a Malayan Resistance Movement organised and led by an Indian policeman, Gurchan Singh, and of the secret newspaper which he wrote and distributed himself during the Japanese occupation of Malaya.

ROLL OF HONOUR

They died that Freedom might live.

*Dan Singh, Inspector
Gurbachan Singh
†Ismail de Silva
*Lall Singh Bull
*Low Ghee Beng, Inspector
Shanmugam, M.
Teja Singh

* Died as a result of Japanese torture.
† Executed by the Japanese.

CHIEF MEMBERS OF THE SINGA ORGANISATION

who voluntarily and independently worked for the cause of the Allies during the Japanese occupation of Malaya at the risk of torture and death. All rendered invaluable service and stood loyal and true under conditions of grave danger and hardship. Some sacrificed their comfort and happiness; others bravely endured torture at the hands of the Japanese; others gave up their lives. They all sincerely fought for freedom. Many of them are mentioned in this book. In honour of them all their names are given here.

DR. ABDUL GHANI
ANTHONY ASH
ARUNASALEM, N.
ASTER GUNASEKARA
AUGUSTIN LYE NYEN FOO
BALAKRISHNAN, M.
BEHARA SINGH, Sub-Inspector
*BHAGAT SINGH GILL
SGT. BUGHAR SINGH
*BHAG SINGH
CHANAN SINGH
CHONG TAK NGIT
GURDIAL SINGH
GURNAM SINGH BULL
*JOHN SANDASAMY
KEHAR SINGH
KHEM SINGH
*DR. KOK HO TEIK
LEONG HEW MENG
LEONG KAI SWEE
MADAME LAU PENG KIM
RAMASAMY GANGA
RAMASAMY PAKRY
RODRIGO, B. M.
SARJEET SINGH
SARMUKH SINGH, Inspector
SUPPIAH, P.
TAN BENG HOCK
TAN BENG SAN
THIRUNALAN, M.
TOH CHIN GUAN
YAP GHIM LEONG
YAP GHIM HOE
YEOH CHAI LYE

* *Tortured by the Kempetei.*

SINGA

THE LION OF MALAYA

BEING THE MEMOIRS OF

GURCHAN SINGH

Edited by
HUGH BARNES

ILLUSTRATED

Quality Press Ltd
Publishers
18 Adam Street
Adelphi London
W C 2

THIS BOOK
IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY
OF ALL WHO GAVE UP THEIR LIVES
IN THE ALLIED CAUSE.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author wishes to express a deep sense of gratitude to Mrs. Lillian Buckoke for encouraging him to record his war-time experiences, and to Mr. Hugh Barnes for his help in writing this book.

FOREWORD TO "SINGA"

by

L. D. Gammans, M.P.

This is a fascinating story of a part of the World War about which very little has been written. Mr. Gurchan Singh, an Indian in the Malayan Police when the Japanese invaded the country, suddenly found himself a solitary individual abandoned by the Administration which he had served.

He could so easily have made terms with the Japanese invader, but he never lost his faith in the cause for which the Allies were fighting or his belief that one day the British would return.

In "Singa" is told what he and a few friends did to carry on a lone underground campaign against the Japanese under conditions of great hardship and the ever-present risk of torture and execution if caught.

This tale of loyalty, enterprise and cold courage is one of the best answers to those who tried to pretend that the fall of Malaya was largely due to the desire of the inhabitants to get rid of the British.

Printed in Great Britain by Ernest J. Day & Co. Ltd.
London, W.1
First published in 1949 by Quality Press Ltd., 18 Adam St.
London, W.C.2

CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE

Inspector Gurchan Singh, of the Malayan Security Service, wrote this book himself and sent me the MS. to edit and prepare for publication. I have confined myself to the minimum amount of revision required to make his narrative—I hope—easy to read. But the story remains essentially as he wrote it, and apart from the substitution of a few fictitious names to the best of his knowledge every word of it is true. It should be remembered, however, that the author is a policeman now engaged on arduous duties in the Malayan Security Service, whose only time for writing was often very late at night after a hard day's work.

When I read his first account of his experiences and returned it to him with some advice I tried to express my admiration, not of his first attempt to write this book, for it was like a laconic police report of impeccable impersonality, but of his achievement as "Singa". He replied: "Thank you for the compliments you gave me in connection with my work. I must say that I did it because it was my duty as a citizen of the British Empire."

I hope that as his editor I have done mine.

H. B.

CHAPTER I

BEFORE THE STORM

JULY 1941 had been even hotter than usual in Malaya. After one especially scorching day I decided to make an evening trip out to Tambun, a small village some seven miles from Ipoh. We had had a few Japanese nationals under surveillance there for several months. These elderly men and women were Buddhists, and they had been living for some years in retreat in the Tambun caves. One of the hot water springs at the foot of these caves had been enclosed so that visitors could bathe there in privacy for ten cents. As the Japanese looked after the place they were allowed to collect the fees and keep any profits after deducting expenses. Many people visited these hot springs in search of health because of the amount of sulphur in the water. There were also numerous sightseers eager to watch the Japanese with their meek, polite manners and squat figures, who only occasionally visited Ipoh or the village of Tambun to do their shopping and then silently returned to their homes in the caves.

Before leaving my office at Ipoh police station I called my assistant, Detective Kehar Singh, "I think you'd better come out with me to Tambun, Kehar. Who knows? Our agents in Tambun may have some news for us. Your figure could do with a bit of exercise, anyway." My colleague's enormous size was only equalled by his good nature.

We cycled along for six miles till we came to a turning on the right that wound steeply up the hillside. Apart from a series of grunts we said little then, for my companion was not in as good trim as I was for mountaineering. As we neared the entrance to the caves we saw a couple of dwarf-like figures peering at us from above. On recognising who we were they came down to greet us, and with true oriental hospitality invited us to climb the hundred or so steps to their quarters. No sooner had we taken off our shoes and seated ourselves on

the narrow planks that served as stools, than an elderly woman bowed to us and offered us cups of tea with milk and sugar. Her scraped-back hair was tied with black tape, and she wore a cheap cotton kimono. Two old ladies sat down and seemed glad to talk to us. We had visited them several times before and had always acted like friends and not like officials in authority. They had thus become more hospitable whenever we saw them. Very soon an elderly man joined us, too.

"Tuan, is all well with you and your people here?" I asked him. "Are you being troubled by anyone?"

"No one has disturbed us, we've been left quite alone," he replied.

Further enquiries led me to ask the inevitable question as to what the Japanese intended to do in South-east Asia. The two ladies and the old monk-like Jap shook with silent laughter at this question, while their leader solemnly replied, "There will be no war here." As he spoke I looked out through the entrance of the cave, and saw the crimson sun sinking below the horizon in all its warm glory. Kehar Singh moved uneasily, and we said good-bye. As we pushed our bicycles down the path I remarked that the Japanese were certain that there would be no war in this part of the world, just to see what he would say. "Did you expect him to tell us how many planes and big guns they have, and when they're going to show their hand?" he snorted. "I thought they might know," I replied laughing.

By the time we had cycled back to Ipoh darkness had swiftly overtaken the brief twilight. "What about standing me a beer after that strenuous exercise?" said Kehar. I replied that I was thinking of having one myself, and asked him to join me. As we sat in a crowded restaurant sipping our beer I caught sight of a cinema advertisement: "UNDERGROUND — Midnight première of this story of sabotage in Germany by the anti-Nazis." I suggested that we should go to see it, and Kehar agreed. After dinner we went on our routine rounds checking the surveillance squad till it was nearly midnight. Then we had another hasty glass of cold beer and wandered across the road to the cinema. Soon both of us were engrossed in "Underground." Once or twice Kehar whispered to me, "So this is what is really going on inside Germany." The

picture made me think how fine it would be to work for such a Movement and harass the enemy inside his own capital. I felt that I was a boy of fourteen once more, a boy who had always dreamed of adventure and was now seeing what he would like to be doing himself.

At school I had come under the influence of both British and American teachers, and later worked for the British first as a policeman and then as a detective in the Intelligence Branch. I wanted nothing better than to help the Allied cause in some way. As I left the cinema I registered a secret vow that I would redouble my efforts to keep all Japanese nationals under careful observation. At that time they were free to do what they liked in Malaya, and I respected them like other people; but after seeing "Underground" I made up my mind to watch them even more closely.

I had had many months of hard surveillance work then, and one Saturday afternoon I decided to go for a picnic with my wife. I wanted to forget about work and have a little fun after many weary days. About ten miles north of Ipoh there was a well-known beauty spot with a stream of fresh water running through a deep valley and a pool where people could swim. So we went there, and found several Indian and Chinese families already picnicking by the pool. Some Europeans were swimming in it, too. My wife, Dalip Kaur, suggested that we should escape from the throng and find a quieter spot further up stream where we could laze and talk more freely, undisturbed by the shouts and yells of the picnickers. I am sure that few people enjoying themselves there gave a thought to the Yellow Menace threatening our unsuspecting heads.

We had a dip in the water, and then after lunch my wife stretched out three mats in the shade of big tree near the cool rushing stream. We lay down there for a rest, and soon my wife and children were asleep. I stayed awake, my thoughts returning to the days of my early childhood.

More than forty years before my father, a Sikh, had migrated to Malaya, and about ten years later my mother had also come south from Northern India. They had lived in their adopted country ever since and remained happy and contented under the British raj. I was the eldest of a large

family. According to my mother adventure always dogged my footsteps even as a child. I had nearly been eaten by an alligator and only just escaped drowning before I was six. At the age of eight a friend of my father, Mr. Lall Singh Bull, got me admitted to a Methodist Mission School which was really a girls' school. I remained there for two years before going on to the Methodist Boys' School, where I completed my higher school education.

At the age of thirteen I became much interested in sports of all kinds, for I loved out-door life. My parents, on the contrary, hated to see me spending my time on the sports' field instead of at home with a book in my hand. They did not much mind what I studied provided I had a book in my hand and it was not upside down. Their attitude naturally made me dislike my studies all the more, and I was always trying to devise ways and means of leaving the house to play games. I used to tell my parents that I was wanted in school for afternoon tuition when there was none, and thus escaped with their full approval. But they did not know that I spent those two hours of freedom playing football or cricket, or cycling, these being my favourite sports. In 1930 I established a new long distance walking record, covering a distance of 63 miles in 21 hours 5 minutes and beating the previous record by over two hours. This is still a Malayan record. I took part in several cycling competitions whilst still at school and won several of them. My school record over a mile-and-a-half in 1933 has not yet been broken.

I was quite a popular actor in various school plays, my favourite part being William Tell in a play of that name. Then in 1932 came the chance of a lifetime for any schoolboy, when as an out-door man I was selected with another Malayan to join an expedition to Mount Everest.

My last year at school in 1933 was a fateful one not only for me, as Malaya was experiencing a terrific slump. When I passed my Cambridge examination early in 1934 conditions in my home in Kuala Lumpur were none too good. My family owns a couple of small rubber estates, and we had been badly affected by the worst slump in Malaya's history in those critical years in the early thirties. I was thus forced to look out for a job, which was far from easy as unemployment was rife.

The author and Mrs. Singh.

Front view of the author's house.

The author with his father and mother.

Where the author was born.

Owing to the influence I had gained by my outdoor activities, I was nevertheless confident of getting a job somewhere. But what sort of work did I want? I pondered long over that question, because I knew that my decision then would determine my whole future career.

The best jobs to be got at that time were clerical ones, a clerk's pay being $26 a month but without any pension scheme. The only other job that paid as well and included a pension was the Police. Moreover, the work was more varied and interesting. So after much thought I finally decided to join the Police as a recruit constable, believing that I had good prospects of a successful career there. My expectations had not been disappointed, and in that fateful year of 1941 I was in charge of a Surveillance Squad keeping a watchful eye on the Japanese and other aliens in Ipoh.

From thoughts of the past and present I began to think hopefully of the future. But my wife woke up from her short nap and said that we must have another swim at once if we were to return home before nightfall.

CHAPTER II

ALONE IN KUALA LUMPUR

THE Japanese landed at Kota Bharu on the north-eastern coast of Malaya on the night of 8th December, 1941. Four days later they had not only established a good foothold near the invasion points, but also pierced the Jitra Line in north Kedah. The whole state of Kedah was soon in their hands, including two big aerodromes at Alor Star and Sungei Patani. To us at Ipoh where I was stationed at the time, it was obvious that our forces were retreating.

On the afternoon of 14th December my superior British officer, Mr. D. W. Yates, called me to his office. "We've received orders from H.Q. in Kuala Lumpur," he said "to intern all women of Japanese nationality not interned with the men at the outbreak of war." When he had given me my orders I asked him where they should be put. He thought for a moment, then said, "The best place would be those three

Japanese-run hotels, they could all be accommodated there, and it would be quite comfortable for them. By the way, be polite to them—you understand? Tell them that they can each take one bundle of blankets, clothes, and such things." "O.K., sir," I said, and went off.

By half-past seven that evening I had seen that all these women—about fifty of them—were interned, and reported to the officer concerned. He told me that they were to be transported to Batu Gajah Gaol early next morning. As luck would have it no transport was available then, so they were left where they were.

That morning at about 11 o'clock I was on my rounds with my assistant detective, Kehar Singh, checking up on the sentries and internees, when an alert was sounded and planes were reported to be approaching Ipoh. I was uncertain what to do, but finally decided to ask the internees to go to the shelters. They looked rather happy on learning that Japanese bombers were coming. Some of them prepared to go, while others seemed reluctant and insisted on staying behind. The sentries appeared nervous and wanted to take to the shelters, so I let them follow the Japanese women. I told Kehar Singh to take charge there, remaining outside myself.

Two minutes later I heard the drone of planes, and within a few seconds ground ack-ack fire told me that they were Japanese. Then I caught sight of them flying some distance away. Later I heard terrific explosions—the aerodrome was probably being bombed. I began to feel nervous myself. My revolver was in my hand. I slipped it back in the holster, ran to a nearby drain and lay flat as the drone of planes came closer. Almost immediately a bomb burst so close that it seemed as if it had fallen on top of me. More bombs fell—they made me feel not only deaf but my blood run cold. I cursed myself for not having gone to the shelters.

At last I could no longer hear the drone of the planes. I lifted my head and looked around. Two of the hotels where the Japanese women were interned had been hit, and a bomb had fallen about 30 feet away from me. My heart was beating fast, and it was some time before I could control my fear caused by the blast of the bombs. The all-clear sounded. I got out of the drain. There right in front of me was the

wrecked hotel in which some of the Japanese women had taken shelter. Horrified I rushed towards it. Some women lying on the ground seemed to be dead, others were crying. On seeing me one of them pointed to a lady half-buried in the debris. At once I began to clear away the rubble, and was soon joined by Detective Kehar Singh. We made so little progress that others came to our assistance. When we pulled her out, she was dead—her whole face had been crushed. Two others died soon after being rescued, and three badly injured were taken to hospital.

On the morning of 23rd December I was in the office when again enemy planes were reported to be coming in the direction of Ipoh. I rode off on my bicycle at once to a little cave about a mile away. While I was there two Japanese planes came, circled around and then disappeared. About half-an-hour later thinking that they had really gone I left the cave to return to the office. On the way suddenly I saw three Japanese planes beginning to dive high in the sky right in front of me. They seemed to be coming straight towards me, and I thought it was the end. I buried my face in my already cold hands as I lay in a grassy dry ditch, cursing myself for leaving the cave too soon. I even had the feeling that I must get up and run. Before I could make up my mind the bombs began to burst. I counted one, two, three, four, five . . . The sixth seemed to burst close beside me and shook me so much that I lost count.

When I thought the planes had gone I struggled to my feet and went to my bicycle that I had left lying on the road. The front wheel and tyre had been cut by splinters, which had also cut six dead bodies a few yards away, while the road was littered with telephone and electric wires and branches of trees. Water was gushing high into the air from the middle of the road where the water main had apparently been struck. As I made my way through leaves and branches, broken wires and dead bodies, I saw that the bombs had fallen on a row of houses behind the Ipoh Club.

I had barely reached the door of my office when again I heard the drone of planes. I went to one of the nearby underground shelters where I stretched myself on a bench in a semi-unconscious state. Soon I heard and felt the vibration of bursting bombs. The raid lasted for over an hour; but it

was three hours before I recovered from the effect of those close explosions. When at last I left the shelter, high columns of smoke were rising and I knew that the petrol dump must have been hit.

Later at the office we were told that Ipoh was going to be evacuated next morning, and that all the bridges in the town were being mined by the sappers to be blown up then. On leaving Ipoh we went thirty-six miles south to Tapah, from where we retreated three days later to Kuala Lumpur, the Federal Capital. Here I was attached to the office of Mr. J. D. Dalley, Director Criminal Intelligence Branch, and became assistant to Mr. D. N. Livingstone who was dealing with Fifth Column cases. Before the Federal Capital was evacuated in its turn we had investigated three cases, one of them being a South Indian arrested in Kota Bharo near the aerodrome on suspicion of having tried to assist the enemy by means of a ground signal. A long mattress made of reeds and two pillows had been found arranged in the form of an arrow, which as seen from the air pointed straight towards the British gun positions.

When I left Tapah the fighting line was between Kuala Dipang and Kampar—a distance of about three miles, and about twenty miles south of Ipoh where for the first time since retreating from the Jitra Line the British Forces made a stand. The battle had been in progress there for some days when the Japanese landed on the west coast near Telok Anson at the mouth of the Perak River, coming in boats and barges. About the same time more enemy landings were reported from further south. Afraid of being cut off by these landings the British Forces retreated to their next fighting position in the Slim River area, leaving behind a detachment of Indians to carry on the fight at Kuala Dipang. Although they received no protection from constant Japanese air attack, these Indians fought on heroically for three days and nights until all of them were wiped out.

From then onwards the fate of the British depended on the stand they could put up at the Slim River Line, about fifty miles south of Kuala Dipang. It was generally believed that they could hold it at least for a time; but without air support it proved impossible. Even to retreat was hard. It could only

be done at night; during the day, as one British soldier put it, "we just sit in the shade of a rubber tree watching Japanese planes fly past, and sometimes trying to dodge machine-gun fire and bombs." No British ships were there to check the Japanese advance along the coast of Western Malaya, so they landed wherever they liked in sampans and small boats.

After wiping out the Indian column at Kuala Dipang the Japanese Forces advanced south to meet their comrades coming from Telok Anson and then on towards the Slim River Line. With the vigilant Japanese Air Force hovering in the skies there undisturbed from morn to night, the British Forces had no time to dig themselves in. On January 9th there were rumours that the Japanese had actually effected a landing at Port Swettenham. When we heard of it at Kuala Lumpur I was in Mr. Livingstone's office, helping him to record statements from two North Indian Muslims, who had been arrested on suspicion of acting as Japanese advance guards. We found, however, that they had simply fled south in terror of the Japanese, and they were soon released.

"If Kuala Lumpur has to be evacuated, Gurchan Singh, are you prepared to go?" Mr. Livingstone asked me as he closed the file of their statements. I replied that I was ready to leave whenever I was given the order. "Very good," he said. "Now how can I get in touch with you if the order to evacuate comes after office hours?"

"I am living just opposite the house where you are staying now, sir."

"You mean opposite my house on the top of the hill in the Botanical Gardens?"

"Yes; haven't you noticed a bungalow among some rubber trees on the hill opposite?"

"And there are usually a number of children playing about, and the radio's often full on?"

"Yes, sir, that's the house where I'm staying. There's a road up to it from the valley."

"Good. If we have to evacuate at night at short notice, I'll come in my car and fire three shots of my revolver. Then you must come at once."

'I understand, sir, I'll be with you as soon as I get your signal."

At that moment an air-raid alarm sounded. We rushed out of the office and made for a small hill opposite the building where some shelters had been improvised. Sitting there in one of the shelters I began to realise that the evacuation of Kuala Lumpur was becoming inevitable. There were rumours that the Japanese were coming down the west coast; some of them had even been seen off Port Swettenham about twenty-seven miles away. What could I say to my family, whom I would have to leave behind in Kuala Lumpur? It was obviously the best place for my wife and children, and my parents; but would they understand my reasons for leaving them? They would doubtless expect me to stay with them or take them with me. I decided, however, that I must tell them that I had been ordered to go, if Kuala Lumpur was evacuated; whether they liked it or not, they would have to put up with it. I believed that the Japanese would not reach Singapore, and that before long they would be driven out of Malaya.

When I went home for lunch I told them the news. As evacuation was unlikely to take place immediately, they were less disturbed than I had feared. My father asked me if I was going to take my wife and children with me. I told him that Singapore would be too crowded with refugees from the north and that it would be impossible to find accommodation for them there. "But is it safe for you to go to Singapore where the main battle of the Malayan war will be fought?" he asked.

"Oh, it's safe enough," I replied. "There's nothing for you to worry about. I don't think the Japanese will get that far. They'll be driven back before they go a hundred miles nearer to Singapore."

"Don't be so sure, son. From what I can see there is nothing to prevent the Japanese from capturing Singapore. I tell you, if you go down there your chances of coming back are very small."

"You don't understand British policy, father. They're bringing the enemy out of the jungles into the open country down south, where they can use their artillery. If the Japanese try to land on Singapore, I'm confident they won't make any progress. Anyhow, I'm sure they won't be allowed to land."

"We shall see. You were wrong when you said last year that Japan wouldn't declare war on the Allies. If you're

determined to go into the fire that you know is already burning fiercely, you're mad."

"I don't want to argue with you, father. And I'm not mad, either. You see, I've been told that if there's an evacuation, I shall have to go under orders."

That was my trump card, I thought, and after that there was surely nothing more to be said. But then my wife began to cry. She seemed to imagine that my father had spoken the truth, and that somehow or other I could not understand him. I tried to console her by telling her that she must remain with the children in Kuala Lumpur; but she ran upstairs to our room sobbing. I followed her and sat beside her on the bed, caressing her in my attempt to explain and convince her that I would soon come back.

"I don't believe you'll ever come back," she said, wiping her eyes. "Why must you go and get killed? Do you want to make me a widow and to hurt the children? You have a revolver. Why not shoot us all? Then you can do as you like. It would be better than making us suffer like this. If you really want to go, take us with you. We'll find somewhere to live in Singapore—even if it's only on a verandah. At least we'll be together, and if a shell or a bomb gets us we can die together."

"Listen darling," I said, stroking her head that was resting on my chest. "It's nothing for me to go to Singapore alone —I shall have nothing to worry about except to think of you all now and then; but if I took you all with me it would mean much suffering for all of us. I'm only going to Singapore because it's my duty. Then I don't believe the Japanese will get anywhere near it. . . ."

"Duty? What duty?" she cried, raising her head and looking up into my face. "Isn't your duty over yet? I thought it had come to an end when Ipoh was evacuated. Your friend Mr. Kehar Singh stayed behind there, and nobody asked any questions. So why can't you stay behind in Kuala Lumpur? You can't prevent the Japanese from getting to Singapore even if you do go there. Why don't you think of your family like Kehar Singh? But you don't seem to care what happens to us. You only think of the British Government—and what have they ever done for you? When you worked eighteen

hours a day for a whole year, did they give you any extra pay? Oh, no, you might as well have done no more than your usual eight hours work a day! And still you care more for your duty than for us! Who will look after you in Singapore if you get hurt? And if you're killed there, I shall have all the trouble and worry of going there after the war to find out how you died. Why can't you fight the Japanese here? If you want to get killed, kill some of them here first. That is your duty. But go where you like, die if you want to, don't think of us any more, don't be sorry if we're all dead when you come back."

She tore herself away from me and began sobbing again. It took me an hour trying to console her, and finally I had to tell her that I was not really going to Singapore at all, that it had only been suggested. "So you needn't be so furious when nothing's settled," I said.

Her arguments gave me some food for thought, however. I began to wonder whether I could not fight the Japanese more effectively by staying in Kuala Lumpur than by going with the British to Singapore. It was a new idea to me, and seemed worth serious consideration. Before leaving her to return to my office I gave her a good kiss for suggesting it.

I was still undecided, however. What was my best way of helping the British to stop the Japanese from advancing any further? And if I stayed behind, how was I going to fight the Japanese? I was even more worried as to what I could say to Mr. Livingstone at the office. Would he believe in the sincerity of my suggestion? He would have to mention it to Mr. J. D. Dalley, the Director. What would they say? I was afraid that they might misunderstand me. It would be dreadful if they thought that my morale was gone, and that I was making blind excuses in an attempt to avoid going to Singapore. All these thoughts led me nowhere, and I was still wondering what to do when I reached my office.

As I set to work every now and then I looked at Mr. Livingstone's worried face, studying it to see if he was in a good or a bad mood. I had to make sure that he was in a good mood before approaching him with my suggestion. I waited two hours, then broke the ice by saying somewhat nervously, "With regard to what you said this morning, sir, about evacu-

ating Kuala Lumpur if need be, may I make a suggestion?"

"Well, what is it?" he said, looking me straight in the face. "Don't tell me that you don't want to go to Singapore."

That made me even more nervous, and I had difficulty in finding the right words to express myself, but somehow I managed to say, "It isn't that I don't want to go to Singapore, sir, nor that I'm afraid; but I've had an idea. I don't think it would do the Government any good if I evacuate; but there's something I could do here which might help the British. By remaining behind in Kuala Lumpur I could form some units that could do guerrilla warfare. Though I've had no actual military training I learnt enough as a Boy Scout to organise resistance here."

Mr. Livingstone looked thoughtful and said he would consult the Director about it, so I went back to my desk. Since it seemed possible now that I might stay behind, I began to wonder what I could really do. Would it be as easy as I imagined? Would I dare to act when the time came? As a policeman I had no fear of not daring to act. But, of course, it all depended on Mr. Dalley, the Director, and he might think my proposal a mad idea. All I could do was to keep my fingers crossed as one does when expecting news of promotion or things of that sort. But evening came and Mr. Livingstone left without saying any more to me.

As soon as I got home I told my wife what I had done, and for the moment she felt happy that at least I was trying to remain behind with her. I went to bed very early that night, but not to sleep till very late. I had so much to think about. There was the question what the Japanese might do to men like me who had been working with the British Intelligence, and who had even interned Japanese in Malaya when war broke out. At that time I had no idea that the Japanese included chopping-off heads in their forms of punishment. I felt, however, somewhat disturbed, though I had merely done my duty and not hurt anyone.

It was the middle of the next day before I saw Mr. Livingstone again, and then he merely shook his head, saying that orders to evacuate had now come and asking me whether I was willing to go. I replied that I was, so he told me to go home and pack up, and he would call for me in the afternoon.

When I broke the news to my wife she started sobbing again, and my aged mother followed suit. It took me well over an hour to console them. I gave my wife $1,500 out of the two thousand I had and kept the rest for myself. Then with mixed feelings I prepared some clothes to take with me and waited for Mr. Livingstone the whole afternoon and evening, but he did not turn up. Next morning when I woke up I began to worry about him, but then thought that perhaps the evacuation had been cancelled after all. I told my family so at breakfast, and they looked somewhat happier. After breakfast I decided to call on Mr. Livingstone at his house on the opposite hill, but on arrival found it locked-up and no one about, not even the servants.

I bicycled on to the office. To my surprise it was also deserted except for a few clerks, who, like myself, were bewildered to discover that all the officers had apparently left during the night. Passing through the town I found that the bridges had been blown up, and crowds of people loaded with loot were rushing in and out of the abandoned shops. Godowns stacked full of rice and sugar had been broken open and were being looted of their contents. Shots were being fired on all sides. Some people were just firing random shots for the pleasure of shooting for the first time in their lives.

Deciding that the town was not a healthy spot I returned home feeling very sad and disappointed. Moreover, many questions were turning over in my mind. What could have happened to Mr. Livingstone? I could not understand why he had not come to fetch me after promising to do so. Worse still, I felt hopelessly sad at having lost so many friends. I could not believe that the evacuation had actually taken place. It all seemed like a dream. Yet there I was left behind in Kuala Lumpur, not knowing what to do next.

Though I could not understand it, there was hatred of the Japanese in my blood. They had brought war to the East, and I had heard many stories of Japanese torture, rape and wholesale execution of innocents in China since the outbreak of the Sino-Jap war in 1937. Then I recalled memories of my education at an English school from the age of eight, and all that I had learnt since then till I joined the Government Service. In my eyes it was a just Government under which every-

one lived in peace and harmony. People said that the British were Imperialists, but were not the Japanese so too? Had they come to Malaya to liberate it from the 'British yoke' and leave the Malayans alone to rule themselves? No, I thought, they have come to stay here for good. Malaya must be under the protection of a more advanced nation, so why not the British who have at least governed justly in the past?

These thoughts helped me to face up to what I knew was my duty—to do whatever I could to help the Allied cause and to play my part in the fight for freedom, even if it cost me my life, I knew well enough that mine would be a lone battle with the odds set heavy against me. Any British who had remained behind, unless sheltered by some daring and loyal citizens, would quickly be rounded up and interned. Moreover, unlike the paid agents of the Crown, I knew that I would not even have the consolation of British support in the background. It was one man—one madman, perhaps—pitting himself against an army of occupation.

Heavy at heart and greatly disturbed I had no appetite for the lunch that my wife served me that day. She was happy enough, for was not I staying behind in Kuala Lumpur? And I could not speak of my thoughts to anyone. To stop worrying I soon left the house and bicycled back to the town, my house being two miles away on the outskirts. I wanted to see if any Japanese had arrived, and also to watch the behaviour of the townsfolk in this period of transition.

On January 11th, 1942 the Federal Capital had become a no-man's land. Huge volumes of smoke from burning petrol set alight by the retreating forces covered the sky. Millions of gallons of petrol were burning with a frightful crackling noise. Everything was topsy-turvy. Shots from rifles of all sorts could be heard here and there. People were still looting the shops, carrying away their booty. Some were engaged in a free-for-all fight over the division of all these stolen goods. The wounded lay untended on the roadside amid the bodies of the dead.

That evening when I returned home all eyes of the family were on me. I passed them as though I had not seen them and went straight to my study, where I sat at my desk planning my next move. I felt somewhat disgusted with life and rather

desperate about the whole affair. It made me mad to think that I had missed the car taking the evacuees to Singapore, and I could not understand why Mr. Livingstone had left me behind.

Some of my friends arrived with a bottle of whisky, which they had obtained free somehow or other. Obviously they had nothing to worry about, and they expected me to be in a happy mood too. We began to discuss the war and how the Japanese would come to the Federal Capital. The conversation became more heated when my younger brother Americk Singh joined us. Like me my friends were pro-British, but my brother thought that his dreams had at last come true and that he would soon see the British driven out of India. A young man in the early twenties he was working as a parcel clerk in the Malayan Railways, and when war broke out was stationed at the Malaya-Siam border station of Padang Besar.

"The Allies are going for good," he said. "As for the British, at last they're going to be cleared out of Malaya, and out of India as well. Malaya's fate will soon be decided, besides that of the Philippines and Hong Kong. The main American fleet was given a knock-out blow at Pearl Harbour. Even in Africa the Axis Forces are on the offensive."

"You talk too much of the Japanese," retorted a Chinese, "but the war's not over yet. For us in the Far East it's only just started. The capture of Kuala Lumpur doesn't mean that the Japs have taken all Malaya. For all I know they may be driven back to-morrow. Don't forget that three-quarters of the population of Malaya are Chinese. Do you think that we Chinese are going to let the Japanese have it all their own way? Though outwardly we may have to agree with them, inwardly we shall be holding a dagger in our hand to strike at them whenever we can. Even if they capture all Malaya, we Chinese shan't give up. We shall fight to the last man. If our brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers can fight them unarmed in China, so can we here."

"That's all British propaganda," protested my brother. "You shouldn't hate the Japanese, they're Asiatics like us. We should be glad they're strong enough to defeat the so-called powerful Westerners. India will never be free without the help of Japan."

"But what makes you so certain that Japan is going to win this war?" I interrupted.

My brother Americk was an Indian nationalist, who only thought of the independence of his country; but, as my Chinese friend pointed out, it would never be achieved if Japan won the war and made India part of her Empire. Feeling somewhat ousted in the argument, Americk finally turned to me and said, smiling to conceal his annoyance, "I'd have thought that as an Indian you at least would be more patriotic, Gurchan."

"What do you want me to do?" I said. "To go around beating a drum telling everybody I meet that they must fight for India? Or to knock my head against something hard and declare that I'm doing it for the sake of India? I suppose you'd call me patriotic then; but would it do India any good? I know well enough that you want me to say that Japan must win this war, and that then she'll give independence to India. Of course, Japan can promise anything now, but she'll never fulfil those promises."

"Nor has Britain," he broke in. "She's been promising us independence long before the outbreak of the First World War. And what has she done? India's resources in men, money and materials have been mercilessly exploited by vague promises of Freedom. Though Indians played a major role in the 1914-18 war, what happened? They got their reward when General O'Dyer butchered innocent men, women and children by machine-gun fire till he had no bullets left at the Jallianwala Bagh massacre at Amritsar. Do you think Britain can ever cajole us to co-operate with her again? We Indians have been treated like uncivilised barbarians. The time for us to help ourselves has come, and no one can escape history. We'll train every single Indian outside India including you, and organise an Indian National Army so that at the right moment with the help of Japan we can come to the assistance of our brave fighters inside India and achieve our independence. That's what I want you to do. Tell every Indian you meet to welcome the Japanese, who in return will help us in our fight to free Mother India."

"I quite agree with what you say except for one thing," I replied. "I love my mother country as much as you do, and

I'm ready to fight for her rights but only when I feel justified in doing so. If I fought against the British to-day, I should be fighting alongside the Japanese forces and collaborating with them. Why should I or any other Indian risk his life if India is going to fall into the hands of another imperialistic nation? Britain has ruled India for centuries, and the day is not far off when of her own accord she will hand India over to us. She would have done so before, but she knew that we were not in a position to rule by ourselves. She knew that she would simply be handing us over to another power. Japan is trying to expand her colonial empire. No one can deny it. If she steps into India, she'll want to rule the country for the next two centuries. That's why I say that I'll fight for Britain and not for Japan. You should understand by now what is right and what is wrong."

"Yes, and I know you're wrong," he retorted. "You've been taken in by all this British Bluff and Bluster Corporation. You're deceived by it like so many other people. To-day Britain is saying that she's fighting for the Freedom of Mankind. But where is freedom in India? How can we Indians join in wars which are said to be for democratic freedom, when that very freedom is denied to four hundred million Indians? Was it not Britain who blasted to pieces a racial equality plan proposed by Japan at the Paris Peace Conference? Believe me, we'll never achieve our freedom by begging for it. British Imperialism will never abdicate from India of its own accord. Indian freedom will and must be won by India herself. In the words of Pundit Nehru—'Freedom comes to those who dare and act.' "

"We seem to be getting somewhere at last," I said. "You admit that Indian freedom must be won by India herself. You're right there, but not if you mean with the help of Japan."

"I mean that we Indians must have that help," he broke in. "We can't fight without it."

"Wrong again," I said. "You're getting back to the same old story. If you get the help of Japan, you'll simply be helping Japan to colonise India."

"We'll never understand each other," he said shaking his head, and went away.

When I was in bed that night I began to think again of what I was going to do next. I was deep in these thoughts when I heard my wife's footsteps on the stairs. I pretended to be asleep. Though my eyes were closed I could feel a blanket being put over me. She was about to leave the room, but I caught hold of her wrist. Laughing she said, "What! Not asleep? I thought you were." And she sat down beside me resting her head on my chest. "Darling, why do you look so upset?" she went on. "You should take things as they come. Only one thing frightens me, what the Japanese may do to those like you who helped to intern their countrymen here. Sometimes I have a feeling that they may try to punish you for all your pro-Allied activities."

I tried to allay her anxiety, telling her that I was not really worried but only thinking of what I must do after the Japanese arrival. "I can't tell you exactly what will be my fate, my dear," I said. "But you may be sure that I'll try to convince them I'll work as loyally for them as I've done for the British. Come, sweetheart, let us cease worrying about the past or the future. If you and I are together, we have better things to talk about."

She moved closer to me and kissed me.

CHAPTER III

SENTENCED TO DEATH

NEXT morning I was still faced by the big problem of what I was going to do, and I was no nearer its solution. My mind was made up, however; I was determined to do all within my power to organise resistance against the enemy.

I went to my study and began to make plans, small though they seemed; but I imagined a large number of followers helping me. With courage and with God's help, I thought, I will have them one day. Then I turned to more practical problems. First, there was the question of finance, for I decided to bear all expenses myself. I had some money of my own; my wife had some quite valuable jewellery which could be converted into easy money at any time. Then there were three

rubber estates and some money, which belonged to my three younger brothers and myself. Before I could use any of that money or the property I should have to get their consent, which was another problem. Unbeknown to them I must study their morale carefully, I thought, and find out their reactions to present events. If they were of my mind, I could ask for no better help than theirs; on the other hand, if their morale had been shaken by recent Allied reverses, I would have to make other plans.

I had no need to waste my time thinking about my second brother, Americk Singh; as an Indian nationalist who only wanted to fight for the liberation of India from the British I could dismiss him at once. (In fact, he was the first local Indian to become a member of the Indian Independence League set up in Kuala Lumpur after the Japanese occupation. To him it was his duty for which he was ready to give his life. Owing to his position in the I.N.A. I obtained much valuable information as time went on, and learned of many people holding important positions under the British Government who sold official secrets to the Japanese to win favours and promotion. After the liberation they changed their skins, and regained their high posts by pretending that they had only just managed to survive the horrors of the occupation.) My other two brothers, Gurbachan Singh and Gurdial Singh were different. I believed that they were both staunch supporters of the Allied cause. Both were still in their 'teens. Gurbachan was the stronger and more energetic, having been a cycling champion. I called him into my study and had a talk with him. Not only was he of my way of thinking, he responded to my plans with some of his own.

"It's a pity we haven't got a tommy-gun," I remarked. "It would be so easy then to finish off at least a dozen Japanese and get away without being suspected."

"You're telling me," he said, gnashing his teeth. "And the British call themselves a warlike race! They came here to protect us, didn't they? They should do so then even at the cost of their lives. Yet they keep on retreating without leaving anybody behind to fight. When they did leave a few Indian soldiers behind up north, they fought like men till they were all killed. If they'd only left behind some small groups

of men to take the enemy by surprise, there would have been many more Japanese casualties. But they're disgracing themselves with this retreat, and the Indian soldiers, too, who with any encouragement would stand and fight either to kill the enemy or get killed themslves. We Punjabis know no surrender. It's a disgrace to surrender, better not start the fight at all. Those British officers in charge of the Malayan units should have said something like this to their men: 'Though we've no air support, we must fight our own way by hiding in the jungles and in the hills, killing the enemy whenever we meet him. We've come here to fight, ready to die if need be, but we'll take a heavy toll of the Japs anyhow.' Some words like that would have played merry hell with the enemy. But the officers themselves were afraid of being killed. We'll tell the world the truth one day. For the present we've got our own part to play—a big part."

These were the most stirring words that I had heard since the invasion. They made me twice bolder than I was before. Moreover, I knew that he had spoken the truth. Malaya is a country where it would have been easy to hide in the jungly hills overlooking main roads and fight the Japs unobserved. It was only too true that most Malayans agreed with my brother as to why the British did not stand and fight or use other tactics against the enemy.

The British officers had a good alibi, too, in saying that the men were not trained for jungle warfare. But there were thousands of British in Malaya who knew the country so well that they could have led the troops through those jungles. I know several British civil officers who wanted to do it, but they were never given the chance.

"What are you planning to do now?" I asked my brother.

"To fight the Japanese," he replied without any hesitation. "I'll show them what a Punjabi can do."

"Do you really mean that you're going to fight the Japanese?" I said.

"Don't you believe me?" he retorted. "One day you'll probably see my head displayed on the top of the clock-tower for fighting against them. But before they take off my head I'll have killed at least a hundred Japs—I've got a few hand grenades."

"You mustn't be reckless," I protested. "What's the use of your killing a hundred Japs if you get caught? But if we work together and fight them systematically, we'd do far more with far less risk. We might even live to see victory itself."

"What do you propose to do?" he asked.

"I'll tell you in a day or two. Meanwhile, where are your hand grenades?"

"Come with me," he said, and took me behind the house under the shade of a mangosteen tree. "I've five hand grenades in a tin buried there."

All that he had said was sufficient answer for me. Here was my first agent, my own brother. It was a happy moment for me, I felt as if someone had put a nugget of gold in my hand. Then we discussed my brother Americk Singh, and decided not to mention our intentions to him. Gurbachan was sure that nothing could change his mind, for he was an idealist to whom the freedom of his native country was all that mattered. It was obviously unwise to strain even the closest relationship at a time of such political strife.

My youngest brother, Gurdial Singh, had worked in the Auxiliary Medical Service and attained the rank of sergeant. Most of its members who remained behind after the British Forces evacuated Kuala Lumpur, did wonderful work in looking after the wounded, never ceasing till the arrival of the Japanese. He was one of those who stuck to his duty to the last. Though still in his 'teens he was very skilful at all kinds of handicraft and mechanics, and had won several prizes for fret work at the Malayan Exhibition. When war broke out in the Far East Gurdial was sitting for his School Leaving Certificate (Cambridge Examination). Luckily, the examination papers reached London before the fall of Malaya; but he did not hear until after the Japanese surrender that he had passed Grade I.

That evening Gurdial came home from the town looking very weary and sad. I went and sat down beside him, while my wife prepared us some coffee. It was a beautiful sunny evening with a light breeze blowing, which made it difficult to think of war. We talked of the war situation, however.

"This is only a temporary retreat," I said. "It won't be long before our forces deal the enemy a heavy blow and every-

thing will be all right."

"I hope so. If the Allies don't win this war, my career will go to the dogs."

"Don't worry, Gurdial, the Allies will win in the end, that is, if we help them, then you can go on with your studies."

"But is there anything we can do to help?" he asked eagerly.

"For one thing, don't co-operate with the Japanese, by that alone you're playing your part. If you want to do a still better job, just tell your friends."

He nodded and looked somewhat consoled. There was no mistaking his feelings and ideas. He was obviously of my way of thinking, too. At that moment I felt more contented than I had done since realising that the British had been forced to retreat without us, leaving volunteers like us to take what was bound to be our fate once the Japanese started their informer service. I hated to risk the lives of my brothers, youngsters who had barely started on life; but I recalled the news that had so often reached us over the radio, all those stories of the horror raging in Europe—villages razed to the ground, menfolk taken away, women and children raped and left to die of disease, starvation and misery. With those thoughts in my mind I knew that I must go on. Not for one moment dared I let myself think of what might happen to my family.

When I told Gurbachan about Gurdial's intentions it made him very happy. Later in the day we all met in my study to discuss our plans. I told them that we must not let the rest of the family know what we were doing, success depending on secrecy and co-operation.

"You're both young," I continued. "Consider my ideas very carefully, perhaps you can add some of your own. To-day there are only three of us, but one day if we work hard we may have a battalion behind us without anybody knowing who's who. We three are going to be like the hub of a bicycle wheel, our agents or rather those who help us will be the spokes. Each spoke must be quite independent of the other—I mean, one agent mustn't know who the other is. Everyone will always be wondering who the other agents are, but no one must ever let the cat out of the bag."

"Yes, but what do you propose to do?" said Gurbachan impatiently.

"Three things—sabotage, propaganda, intelligence. We must sabotage the enemy whenever and wherever we can. Not only destroying his heavy armaments and ammunition depots, convoys, trains and bridges but the smallest thing belonging to him. We'll start with cutting lines of communication, removing papers from offices and destroying them. As for propaganda, we must start a sort of 'whispering gallery' among our friends, tell them not to co-operate with the Japanese and get them to persuade their friends to do likewise. In that way we can undermine the morale of the Japanese. Propaganda of that sort is a most powerful weapon. But I've got another idea, to publish anti-Japanese leaflets and, if possible, an anti-Japanese newspaper. I want you both to think of a suitable heading for these pamphlets and the newspaper—something striking that people can easily remember. Let us each make a separate list, then we can choose the best title. Come here again at eight o'clock to-night and we'll compare notes."

When they returned then I put our various suggestions on my desk. They ran as follows:—

Gurbachan Singh	Gurdial Singh
1. VOICE OF FREEDOM	1. VOICE OF LIBERTY
2. DEMOCRAT	2. FREEDOM
3. ALLIED NEWS	3. A VOICE TO THE FREEDOM PEOPLE

My own suggestions were:— 1. EAGLE-LION NEWS OF THE WORLD 2. ALLIED HEADQUARTERS COMMUNIQUE 3. FREEDOM MALAYA.

With a feeling of pleasure I noticed that we were all trying to express the same idea. After long discussion we finally decided that the best heading either for pamphlets or a newspaper would be: "THE ALLIED H.Q. COMMUNIQUE". Then we tried to think of a suitable signature to make the communique look more genuine. We did not want to use anybody's real name but that of some animal or bird as a pen-name. Our first idea was "MALAYAN TIGER", but Gurbachan said it was no good because the Japanese were already calling Lt.-Gen. Yamashita, the Commander of the Japanese

Forces in Malaya, *The Tiger of Malaya*. For a time we were silent, till Gurbachan said,

"If Yamashita is the Tiger, why shouldn't we be the Lions?"

"That's a good idea," I said, "but instead of using the word Lion, we'll put SINGA, which means lion in Malay."

So it was agreed that SINGA should be our signature. We laughed heartily when we remembered that the Sikhs are often called lions. As Gurbachan said, the Japanese would discover before long that there was a lion amongst them—hunting them.

Next morning we took our bicycles and rode along the roads to see what the city looked like. The petrol dumps and nearby gasolene depots were blazing, and enormous clouds of smoke rose high in the sky. In accordance with a scorched-earth policy some citizens had carefully carried out instructions to set fire to everything of possible use to the enemy. The streets were littered with broken glass, books, filing cabinets, records and even household goods of the most cumbersome kind. The food godowns stocked with a five-year supply of rice were already in the hands of the looters. Some of the bridges had been blown up in order to delay the Japanese advance.

Firearms and ammunition carelessly cast away by retreating soldiers were scattered here and there. We each took a rifle and picked up some rounds of ammunition. Many shots were being fired at random by irresponsible men, and those killed or wounded without knowing from whence came the shots lay untended in the streets. Mob hysteria was inciting many hitherto peaceful men and youths to shoot at anyone whom they encountered. Disbanded policemen and deserters all armed were wandering about in search of anything valuable. It seemed, however, that nothing had any value any longer. Articles which normally would have fetched a good price were strewn in the road.

Many were feverishly scanning the crowds in search of old enemies. For them it was vengeance at any price. A host of anxious friends and relatives were peering pitifully down into the faces of dead Chinese, Malays and Indians, staunching wounds which had already stopped bleeding, then begging onlookers to help them to carry away the corpses. Some were

given a decent burial before the entry of the Japanese. Other and newer corpses still lay in stark gruesomeness. I wondered if the souls of these dead were hovering around the scene of their untimely end, pondering on the futility of life. Or maybe they were of that different mould which counts the world well lost for a higher life in another sphere.

We were greatly disturbed by these grim reminders of war and all the ghastliness of the struggle that was threatening to overwhelm us. Could it be like this all over the world? Was our civilisation to be utterly destroyed by the Nippon war machine? None of us could quite realise the change taking place before our eyes. Our peaceful, beautiful city had been transformed into a battlefield where no one was spared—not even women or children. Deeply stirred by all that we had seen and also by the rapidity of the retreat, yet not daring to show our real emotions or to look for any friends who might still be there, we went home. The only sign of the enemy was in the air, where a couple of Japanese observer planes hovered ceaselessly overhead. By midday they, too, had departed, only to return later.

At about four o'clock that afternoon we could remain inactive no longer, and made our way once more towards Kuala Lumpur. This time we saw the Japs. An advance party of a hundred or so had cycled through the outskirts of the town and now seemed rather isolated. The sight of them was like poison injected into my veins making my blood boil. If a machine-gun had been lying around, all my ideas of sabotage would have gone with the wind—I would have tried to mow them down there and then.

To my surprise I saw a few Indians from the north, whom I knew, with the Jap soldiers. Although clad as civilians they wore Japanese caps. One of them was especially well known to me; I had last seen him at Ipoh the day before I left. Wondering what he could be doing in Kuala Lumpur thus disguised, I went up to him. He seemed equally surprised to see me, but he soon explained why he had come to the Federal Capital.

"At last I've got a chance of helping to drive the British out of Malaya," he said with a smile of triumph. "They've just run away and left us, anyhow. Pretended to be our protectors,

too; just a trick to get our money, of course. They took it away to England to defend their island instead of using it for our defence. They're done for in Malaya. Even if they surrender, the Japanese won't leave a white man or woman alive here. And I'm glad! The British hated me, but the Japanese have welcomed me with open arms, and I'm ready to give my life to see them win this war. Did you see that Jap plane dropping pamphlets over Kuala Lumpur a few days ago? I was in it."

While he talked I imagined what had led him to offer his services to the enemy. He had been imprisoned by the British as a criminal, and registered as a bad character by our Intelligence. Naturally, under British rule he had no chance of any big jobs, and worse still every intelligence officer suspected him. Now the tables were turned, he thought, and he was eagerly taking his revenge. My face must have betrayed my horror, for he looked at me with scarcely concealed amusement and began to question me as though he had become the intelligence chief.

"Are there any more British soldiers or other police officers around?" he asked.

"I don't know, but personally I don't think so," I replied, realising in a flash that I must not let him think that I still sided with the British.

"What happened to the Japanese nationals you interned?" he asked, knowing all about my job before war broke out.

"They were all sent to India by steamer from Port Swettenham," I replied, now well on my guard. "Whether they ever got there I don't know."

"Nonsense!" he said sharply. "You'd better tell me the truth, the Japanese know the full facts. You may not have done it yourself, but you know all about it, and the name of the British officer who did it."

"What are you talking about? I don't know what you mean by 'it'."

"I think you do," he said with a sneer. "Anyway, the Japanese do. Now, look here, if you tell me the truth I can help you, I'll tell the Japanese that it was your officers who did it, and that you had nothing to do with it."

"Did what?" I protested.

"Put the internees into a cauldron of boiling oil."

I gasped with amazement but, seeing from his expression that he really meant it, I broke out, "Where did you get that false information? Hate the British as much as you like, but don't make accusations that aren't true. If they'd done such a thing, I'd tell you. You know me well enough for that. Wasn't I the only member of Intelligence you could talk to? Haven't I often helped you with a bit of money when you were hard up? I'm glad the Japs have given you a good job now. I may have got some big criminals sent to gaol, but haven't I been a good friend to them after they've served their sentences? Do you think, if anyone—be he British or Asiatic—had done a thing like that, I wouldn't tell you?"

"I'm not saying you did it," he replied calmly, "I'm only asking if you did, or know who did. Anyway, forget it. Tell me, when did you leave Ipoh? And why haven't you gone to Singapore?"

"Oh, I left Ipoh around Christmas Eve, and have been staying at home since then. Why should I go to Singapore? Do you want me to be killed? It's suicide to go down there now. And you, how did you get taken on by the Japanese?"

"Some Japanese officers in Ipoh asked me if I'd work for them. I said I'd been waiting for the chance for years. My first job was dropping those pamphlets over Kuala Lumpur, then I was told to join the advance guards, get through the British lines and destroy their lines of communication. If I'm successful they've promised to make me Head of the Labour Department for all Malaya. Here I am, and I've done pretty well, so I bet I'll get that appointment when the Japs arrive."

Somehow I could hardly believe that he was working for the Japanese; but since he was here in Kuala Lumpur it was obviously true. Just then a Japanese officer came up to us, and bowing deeply said something in his own language, which was Greek to me but to which my companion replied as though he understood the lingo.

"So you can understand and speak Japanese now?" I asked.

"Yes, I'm just picking it up so that I can mix more freely with Jap high officials."

Though his words were daggers in my heart, I had to listen to his stories and pretend to agree with all he said. Nor did I fail to congratulate him on his achievements. He eyed me speculatively, and asked me where I was living and what I intended to do. I replied that since the British had deserted us I thought of returning to Ipoh. He said that we must meet again next day, and to make doubly sure of seeing me he asked me to bring him a bottle of milk. Mentally shrugging my shoulders I agreed. Since he was being employed by the Japs it seemed wise to keep in touch with him in case I needed his assistance later.

Leaving him I rejoined by brother, Gurdial Singh, who was standing with some other interested spectators watching the Japanese soldiers. Then we bicycled on through the streets. At dusk the large departmental stores of John Little & Co. Ltd. was set ablaze, and the flames were soon leaping high in the sky, which all around the town was covered with a heavy pall of smoke. No one knew who had set it alight, but we thought that a time bomb must have done the job.

Next morning, 14th January, I went to see my "Indian friend", taking with me a bottle of milk. I was refused admittance, however, at the building where he was supposed to be staying. I tried to send him a message, but that too was refused. So I walked on and joined a group of people looking at some Japanese lorries and the dirty way in which their drivers were dressed. Suddenly a Japanese soldier seized my arm and led me back to the building where I had expected to meet my "friend". He was there waiting for me, and I handed him the bottle of milk. He did not even thank me for it, but just grinned. By the funny look on his face I sensed that something was wrong. Then I was arrested by a man called Taru Singh, an Indian cloth merchant from Bangkok, who had come with the Japanese to Malaya in order to form a branch of the Indian Independence League there.

Roughly grabbing my arm Taru Singh took me to a table in one corner, and sitting down himself made me stand in front of him. Then like my "friend" the previous day he questioned me about the Japanese internees having been put into a cauldron of boiling oil. Apparently dissatisfied with my replies he handed me over to another Indian, Doba Singh.

Also a cloth merchant from Bangkok, Doba Singh had negotiated with the Japanese Consul there before the outbreak of war, and agreed to persuade Indian soldiers and officers in the British Army to desert and join the Japanese, who would help them to liberate India. He had now come to Malaya as head of the Indian Independence League. He told me that he wanted to take me before a Japanese officer, Major Fujiwara. As I stood there I noticed several Japanese soldiers coming up to have a look at me. At once I knew that my "friend" must have been talking about me.

A few minutes later I was taken to a room upstairs. Four Japanese officers were there, and a soldier who acted as interpreter. The Major at once began to cross-examine me, saying, "You were in charge of the internment of all the Japanese nationals at Ipoh, weren't you?" "Yes," I said nervously. "Then it's you who treated them so badly when the British were here?" To which I replied firmly, "I did not ill-treat them." On that he pounced on me, slapping my face and shouting in Japanese. I took the slaps without a sign of emotion.

Then speaking through the interpreter the Major said, "You did it! You had the internees put into a cauldron of boiling oil!"

Fully realising that it was no joke and that unless I convinced them of my innocence I might be killed at once, I hastened to reply, "That's not true. No internee was ever put into a cauldron of boiling oil. I saw them myself being shipped off from Port Swettenham—to India I was told."

This made the Major even more furious, and he slashed me twice with the scabbard of his sword, once on the side of my head and then again across my mouth, cutting my upper lip and breaking one of my front teeth. And he shouted all the time that I was telling lies. Turning to the interpreter I begged him to tell the Major that I had never ill-treated anyone, and that no Japanese had ever been put in boiling oil. I added that five Japanese women had been left behind by the British at Ipoh either because they were old or because they had been wounded by their own bombing. They could tell the Major that I was speaking the truth, otherwise I was ready to take the consequences. The interpreter was just going to speak

when the Major rushed at me and kicked me so I fell to the ground. I was struggling to my feet, but he kicked me again this time on the nose, and the interpreter told me to remain on the floor.

When the Major was told what I had said, he declared that the Japanese women had been wounded on purpose by British bombers to make it look as if it had been done by the Japanese. Such a childish invention in an attempt to extract a confession amazed me. If their propaganda needed such fantastic stories in order to conceal their own gruesome deeds, it was poor stuff. For about an hour they went on beating and torturing me, until my face was all bleeding and I had long since ceased to feel anything. I realised that my "friend" had invented this story himself to make sure that I was one of the first to be punished. Then I was flung into a corner of the room and told that I would be shot next day.

I did not know what to do. As the effects of the pain wore off I was beset with agonising thoughts. I wondered if my family had heard of my arrest by now, and if so what they were thinking. I prayed to God, begging for His help if only for the sake of my aged parents, my wife and children. While I was saying my prayers the interpreter came up to me and took me outside, thinking that I was watching the officers at work. I was made to sit down and a guard was put over me.

Surely I could appeal to someone against the death sentence, I thought; but how, and to whom? For hours I sat there gazing through the window into space, sometimes praying to God and sometimes cursing Him. If there is a God, I thought, why do the innocent always have to suffer? And then I would think that God is just a superstition and people like a flock of sheep following some dumb leader. But perhaps God did answer my prayer.

As I sat there with all these funny thoughts in my mind a man was brought upstairs and made to sit down near me. I recognised him at once, but he did not see who I was since my face was all covered with blood. It was my brother-in-law, Mr. Bachittar Singh, Managing Director of a Punjabi daily newspaper, a man with considerable influence among the Indians. I called him by name, and he turned round in sur-

prise on hearing my voice. He was even more surprised at seeing the condition I was in. I told him all that had happened and also asked him what had brought him there. He replied that Taru Singh had called on him, saying that the Major wanted to see him about his newspaper which the Japanese wanted to use for their propaganda; but he was afraid that he might get into trouble on account of what he had written against the Germans and Japanese before the war. I asked him to do what he could for me if he had the chance, adding that he was my only hope. So I left everything in the hands of God.

It so happened that Bachittar Singh had simply been called to see the Major about his newspaper, and he was treated most politely. When he mentioned me and vouched for my honesty, saying that I was his brother-in-law, somewhat surprised the Major agreed to let me go free.

Waiting anxiously to know what had passed between them, I eagerly scanned their faces when they came out. The interpreter told me to stand up and said, "The Major has decided to rescind the death sentence on condition that you give an assurance of good behaviour in future. You will make no attempt to interfere with military affairs or to meet your former colleagues." Bowing deeply I thanked Bachittar Singh and Doba Singh, and immediately took to my heels and hurried home. There I told my family all that had happened, and they insisted that I had been saved by the direct intervention of God. That evening I conferred with my brothers.

"This afternoon when I went to Ipoh Road three miles north of Kuala Lumpur," said Gurbachan Singh, "I saw some Japanese soldiers laying wires running parallel to the main road. They must be communication lines. Can't we do something about them?"

"Have you made any plans?" I asked.

"I think we might go along and clip them after dark."

"It's a risky job," I said. "We must find a point with a jungle path leading to it, so that we could easily escape if necessary. There's a path behind the house leading to a point some four to five miles north of the town. I think that will do."

Before we went to bed I set my alarm clock to ring at 3.30 a.m. At that hour I was aroused, and woke up Gurbachan and Gurdial. By 4 a.m. we were on our way along the jungle

path through the valleys, reaching our destination just before daybreak. There was the wire about fifteen feet away. According to previous arrangements we separated. They walked away along the road in opposite directions; if they met anyone they were to shout, "It's not a cow," otherwise, they were to walk on for about a quarter of a mile and then turn back. After their departure I counted a hundred, then slipped into the road, cut the wire in two places, removed at least a hundred yards of it, rolled it up and dumped it in a nearby river. All went according to plan, and we returned home feeling very happy at having so successfully accomplished our first sabotage job.

CHAPTER IV

THE SINGA ROARS

On 15th January I had another talk with my brothers about the important question of anti-Japanese propaganda. Obviously, leaflets were the immediate answer to the problem. With them we could try to raise the morale of the people, and perhaps later do even more significant work. I thought it best to start with an Allied News-sheet, merely contradicting the news which the Japanese were already pumping into the demoralised public.

All electric plant had been destroyed by our retreating forces, so there was no electric supply. Therefore, I asked my brother Gurdial, who was an expert radio mechanic, to convert our radio receiver so that it could be used with a battery. Having bought a battery, some paper, and a hand printing machine with a good supply of printing ink, we were ready to set to work.

We were so nervous and excited whilst printing the first copy of our first anti-Japanese leaflet, that we could hardly put the letters straight. It was slow work at first, too, for being unaccustomed to it we were clumsy and made many mistakes. I set up the type while my brothers sorted the letters.

"Where's the letter J?" I said. "I had it a moment ago, and now I can't find it."

"I saw it, too," Gurbachan Singh replied. "Ah, here it is in my hand all the time. Somehow I feel much more nervous doing this job than when we were out clipping the wires last night."

"So am I," I admitted.

"I know why you're excited," said Gurdial, laughing. "It's been your job to keep the law and detect criminals, and here you are breaking the law yourself. What a strange world it is. I don't think anyone understands it. You're doing wrong, yet for what's right. In the eyes of the Allies we're doing what they think every decent man should do; but on the other hand we are criminals. In the eyes of the Japanese Government we are committing a crime. There are millions of people who would agree with them, aren't there? Who are right—those who side with the Allies, or those who side with the Japanese? Surely one of them must be wrong and the other right. They can't both be right or both wrong. That's why I say it's a funny world that no one can understand. Only God can judge between them. Will He judge?"

He had barely said the last words when my two dogs began to bark. We knew at once that someone must be coming up the slope towards the house, for they always barked then even at members of the family.

"Quick, go out and see who it is, Gurbachan," I said, holding the letters B E in my hand ready to put them in position. While he went out, Gurdial and I turned out the light and prepared to leave, too. From a nearby window Gurbachan whispered, "There's someone coming up the hill, I can't make out who it is." He paused, and we waited anxiously. With a sigh of relief he said, "It's our neighbour James." So we returned to our work.

It took us over an hour to compose the few words of our first bulletin. Then I smeared ink on the block with a hand roller, laid some paper on it and rolled it again. As soon as I had finished Gurbachan grabbed the paper to see what it looked like, and burst into laughter.

"Fine printers we are, and we thought ourselves almost experts already. See all the mistakes we've made. There's no E in ALLIED, FOR and ARE we've put upside-down, and the two halves of FREEDOM hindside-before. How are we

The 'Four Musketeers' of the Singa Organisation.

Railway station, Kuala Lumpur.

Another view of the Round House.

Part of the Round House.

Head of Chinese victim.

Heads of Chinese children displayed by the Japanese.

Where the Sinoa pamphlets were published.

Direct hit on the Round House.

ever going to publish a full sheet if we make such a mess of these few words?"

"Don't laugh, brother," I said. "We're only beginners, and are bound to make mistakes. We can correct them, and we'll improve with practice. Next time we must be more careful, and we'll soon have the leaflet as we want it."

"I didn't mean we can't do it, I was only laughing at our making so many mistakes first time. Still, it's going to take us another hour correcting them."

"Don't be discouraged," I said. "We've never been printers in our lives before, nor were our ancestors. You didn't learn to read a book the first day you went to school. We are setting up words in print for the first time, and naturally we put some of them upside-down. But we'll learn the job all right in time. Let's untie the block now and start correcting it."

It was about midnight before we had corrected all the mistakes and obtained a clean proof. Then triumphantly we looked at the first anti-Japanese leaflet to be printed in Malaya since the invasion only thirty-nine days before:—

"ALLIED H.Q. COMMUNIQUE NO. 1
THE ALLIED FIGHT FOR FREEDOM. IF YOU ARE A FREEDOM LOVING PERSON DO NOT CO-OPERATE WITH THE JAPANESE, BE PATIENT, AND CHINS UP FOR OUR SPEEDY VICTORY.
SINGA."

We had barely finished when my mother, aroused by some noise and seeing a light downstairs, called out, "Who's there?"

"It's all right, Mother," I replied, "it's only me."

"What's the time? Haven't you gone to sleep yet?" she asked.

"It's about midnight, and I'm just going to bed," I said, and we did so leaving further work to the following morning.

Our first leaflet used about two reams of paper. Then came the question of distribution, which we found simple enough with that first copy. Leisurely making our way into Kuala Lumpur between seven and eight that evening we merely dropped the papers outside shops and houses. As there was no electric light in the town we could easily do it unobserved.

Next morning they were picked up and read by all kinds of people.

Every day we printed and distributed more pamphlets and newspapers, and rumours as to their origin and the identity of *Singa* began to spread. Many people thought that they must come from the hills, where members of the Allied forces were believed to be hiding. But no clue to the mystery puzzling the Malayan public besides the Japanese authorities could be found. Meanwhile, the *Singa* publications gave the lie to all the Japanese propaganda rapidly being spread throughout the whole country. Secretly passed from hand to hand even without our knowledge, they helped to stir up innumerable people in Kuala Lumpur and elsewhere, especially Chinese lads whose hatred of the enemy was already sincere enough.

A few days later I met a friend of mine in an Indian restaurant whom I had known in Ipoh before the outbreak of war. As an intelligence agent he had often helped me to obtain much needed information. A middle-aged Ceylonese Malay, Ismail de Silva had earned his living in many ways including that of commission agent. I was glad to see him as I thought he might be useful, and invited him to have a drink with me.

"What are you doing now, Gurchan Singh?" he asked. "Have you returned to your old job?"

"No, and I don't intend to," I replied. "I'm thinking of becoming a petition writer instead."

(A petition writer in Malaya is another name for a letter writer, who draws up letters for the illiterate at a recognised charge.)

"Why don't you return to Ipoh and join the Japanese Intelligence Department there?" he said. "Almost all your friends have done so and are having a good time."

"No, I'm not going to do that. But tell me, Ismail, what's your opinion of the Japanese? Do you think they've come here for good?"

"Personally, I don't believe they'll be here long; but the trouble is, most people think they will, and being discouraged themselves are discouraging everyone else."

"I know, they don't try to understand the real situation, and worse still there's no one to explain it to them."

"That's the whole trouble, Gurchan Singh. A Chinese

friend of mine told me, however, that the Allies have established Headquarters somewhere outside Kuala Lumpur. Maybe you've heard about it, too. They're asking people not to worry, saying they've got a strong force in the jungles only waiting for a chance to strike at the Japanese and drive them out. My friend showed me a leaflet which someone had given him. It warned the public against the foxy propaganda of the Japanese, telling the Indians not to join that foul Indian Independence League, and the Chinese to remember all that the Japs had done to their defenceless fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters in their own country."

"Did you see all that on one leaflet?" I asked.

"No, my friend told me some of the news. The leaflet I saw contradicted the number of planes alleged by Japs to have been brought down over Kuala Lumpur."

"That's all very good news; but do you believe it? Don't you think it might be just British propaganda?" I asked, trying to test his reactions.

"Oh no, I'm sure these leaflets are telling the truth," he replied earnestly. "You're an Indian. You don't believe that the Japanese are going to free India for your countrymen, do you? Anyhow, they haven't even captured Burma yet, their advance has been stopped outside Mandalay."

"You may be right," I conceded. "But the Japanese are poisoning the morale of the Indians by supporting the Indian Independence League. That's the pill which some Indians seem to have swallowed easily enough."

"Don't worry about that. These leaflets will soon open their eyes and bring them to their senses. You see, they're official, they come from Allied Headquarters. I'd give anything to be a member of their propaganda service."

"And if you were a member, what would you do?" I persisted.

"Oh, if I only had such luck, I'd work wonders."

"Wonders!" I echoed satirically. "So you say now; but for all I know you might become an agent of the Jap Intelligence and betray the whole group."

"That's nonsense, Gurchan Singh," he said, looking at me very seriously. "I'd never betray anyone even if it cost me my life, even if the Japanese cut me to pieces inch by inch.

In fact, I'm sure this *Singa* unit needs men like you and me to work for them; we know the country well, and whom to contact or not. Besides, we've done intelligence work before and know how to do the job."

"You can work for them if you like, you're not married. But how can I? I've got a wife and children to support, I daren't take the risk."

"I quite understand, you can't be like me who wouldn't mind being killed to-morrow," he said sympathetically, then paused and added somewhat anxiously, "But tell me, please, you are of my way of thinking, aren't you? Don't say you side with the Japanese?"

"What makes you think that, Ismail?"

"I don't know, but the way you question me makes me feel somewhat doubtful about your attitude."

"And you, Ismail, you sincerely hate the Japanese?"

"How can you ask me?" he exclaimed, with obvious distress. "After all I've said to you, how can you doubt me? But if you do, please tell me. But for God's sake don't get me into trouble if by any chance you're working for the Japanese Secret Service. I would never have dared to speak like this to anyone else, but we've known each other for so many years. We're friends, aren't we?"

"Do you really believe I could be working for the Japanese?" I asked.

"No, I know you're not; but in case you are, I'm only telling you to forget all I've said."

Taking a copy of the day's *Singa* communique out of my pocket I handed it to him to watch his reactions. He read it hurriedly with boundless happiness on his face, then said eagerly, "From whom did you get it?"

"A certain Chinese friend of mine," I replied quietly. "He's in contact with the jungle people, gets some copies from them every day and passes on a copy for me to pass on to my friends. I only show it to very special friends, and you're one of them."

"Do you think I could possibly contact the jungle people through your Chinese friend?" he asked. "I'd like to go up there and work with them."

"It would be very difficult. I've tried hard to join them

myself, but they won't accept me. They say I can play a more useful part here, and I think they're right. They want someone here in the town to work for them. Would you like me to suggest your name as their possible agent in Ipoh, where they want someone else?"

"Are you sure that they won't let me work with them in the jungle?" he said anxiously.

"Look, Ismail, the very fact that I've shown you this leaflet proves that I trust you. I'll vouch for you to them, and if they want anyone else in the jungle they may take you. Otherwise, will you work for them in Ipoh?"

"Yes, if I can't join them in the jungle. I'm returning to Ipoh in two days, get me as many pamphlets as you can, I'll play my part."

"Remember, this is a voluntary job, and you won't be paid for what you do. I'm not being paid, either. Maybe when the war has been won by us the Government may decide to pay us, but no promises have been made."

"I quite understand the financial side, and am ready to work loyally and voluntarily. When can I see you again?"

"Let's meet in this coffee shop at the same time the day after to-morrow," I said. " Though Singapore has fallen now and the Allied forces have surrendered there, the battle's not over, Ismail, it's just beginning. Despite this temporary retreat, the Allies are still carrying on the fight till they can deal the Japs a final blow. It's the duty of everyone in Malaya to help by resisting the enemy and showing that Malaya is not completely conquered. In doing this job your brain will be the weapon you're using, your words to the whispering gallery the ammunition. Every word you utter against the enemy will be a bullet fired at them. Many people have lost all hope of the Allies ever liberating Malaya. It's up to you and me to give them back that hope. Every good word we say will be like a blood-transfusion for them. We may be killed, but till then we must struggle on. One day we'll be rewarded, not by money but by the justice we demand and the happiness we want."

Ismail, who had been sweating while I talked to him in this spirited way, now wiped the sweat from his face with his handkerchief, saying, "Gurchan Singh, I never expected you

to be so bold as to talk like that. You should be in that unit in the jungles. Whatever they want you to do, be sure to tell me and I will do the same, too."

"I'm nobody, Ismail," I replied, "only someone like you acting on instructions given by others. One thing more—whatever we do we must never betray a friend no matter what happens. You may be arrested and tortured: you will have to endure it all by yourself. No one can help you but God. Now I must go. I will meet you here the day after tomorrow at this time."

I left him, satisfied that I had obtained a useful and most trustworthy agent to distribute our leaflets in Ipoh without his suspecting that I was their sole author. With Ismail de Silva as with many others the imaginary organisation in the jungles was to prove invaluable.

Soon afterwards I met another friend, who asked me if I had been along the Pudu Road that day. On my replying that I had not, quickly but quietly he said, "Go there, and after passing the petrol kiosk you'll see some good news on posters stuck to four electric posts. You should read it. Go there without delay."

I went, though I thought I knew what I should see there. To my surprise, however, the head of a Chinese youth was displayed on the pillar between the two electric posts on which I had pasted some leaflets the previous night. Under it there was a wooden placard on which was written in English, Chinese and Malay: "THIS WILL BE THE FATE OF THOSE WHO GO AGAINST THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY".

As I stood horror-struck another friend of mine came up and told me that there was a similar sight about a mile up the road. I walked on, and saw another head with a similar placard beneath it. I could not identify either of the Chinese youths, both were strange faces to me; but I was told that they had shot three Japanese soldiers dead a mile or so outside the town.

These Chinese lads whose names are not even known, played a noble part in the fight for freedom, and truly became the martyrs of Malaya. Their example inspired everyone with the desire to do likewise. They stole arms from armament depots,

shot at Japs in odd corners and cut lines of communication. But the Japanese had their own way of dealing with the situation. They knew that in every country there are always some people who will do anything for money, and it was from such that they learned who were, in their eyes, "the bad elements" in Malaya. Most of these traitors came from the Chinese and Malay communities, though there were a few Indians, too. I knew a few of them who worked behind the scenes in this way. And to-day I know that these same Indians, Chinese and Malays responsible for deaths which can hardly be proved in any Law Court, are not only occupying good positions in Malaya but also fraternising with high British officials, telling them how loyal they had been to the Allied cause during the war and even expecting to be rewarded. They dare not mention their real activities as informers to the Japanese Gestapo, which too often led to the arrest of innocent boys and youths and their public execution.

The Japanese intended these executions to serve as a general warning that anyone resisting their authority could expect the same punishment. Moreover, it was proclaimed that anyone molesting the Japanese Army would be denounced.

Strangely enough, however, all the heads thus exposed were those of Chinese youths, which merely intensified the hatred welling up in the hearts of that embittered people, hardening their resolve to avenge the wrong done to their children or brothers and sisters whenever occasion offered.

Again my brother came home from the town looking very weary and sad, and when I asked him what was the matter he said, "It's all those heads displayed in the town. They're an awful sight. Why must they exhibit heads like that? After all they're human beings. Then the Japs are maltreating the prisoners of war. They've forced them to work on that broken bridge in Java Street, and the guards even kick them. A passer-by gave one prisoner a cigarette, a sentry saw it and beat up that poor Indian, then he made him carry a heavy stone weighing more than thirty pounds over his head, and stand like that in the sun for about half an hour till he collapsed. He was not moved or given water. No one was allowed to go near him." He paused and looked unhappily towards the town. There was little I could say to comfort him.

I used these executions as a subject for propaganda in my pamphlets, which made the townspeople all the more eager to show their deadly hatred of the invaders. I wrote as though I were a Chinese, so in those early days *Singa* was actually thought to be a member of the Chinese community, and this belief persisted throughout the three years of the occupation.

Soon after the fall of Singapore I was in Ipoh when the Japanese announced that three members of an anti-Japanese movement were to be executed publicly in the market place. A large crowd assembled to see who the unfortunate victims might be. It became so big that the place of execution had to be transferred to a playground known as Coronation Park. The hour came, and a Chinese and two Malays were brought in a military lorry and made to line up. The Japanese waiting amongst the crowd smoked nonchalantly, chuckled and caressed their sword sheaths. Everyone else in that huge crowd watching the three doomed youths in the centre stood there in tense silence, their very hands chilled. There is usually a strong breeze blowing on this playground, since it is a large open space; but that day everything seemed strangely quiet and still.

The three youths were made to kneel about five yards apart. with their hands tied behind their backs. A Japanese executioner took up his position beside each youth, and did his duty as though killing a fowl. Within a few seconds all three heads were severed and lay some distance from the bodies on the ground. We took our revenge, however. For killing those three youths, who may have been innocent for all I know, no Japanese in Ipoh was ever spared.

Some time afterwards I was having a chat with my brother, Gurbachan Singh, after dinner at my home in Kuala Lumpur, when he remarked, "Brother, why shouldn't we use one of those hand grenades that we have? It could easily be done at night in the black-out, which would help us to escape."

"Not a bad idea," I replied. "But we'd better do it during the day, when we could watch out for anyone approaching, which would be impossible at night."

"In broad daylight in the middle of the town!" protested Gurbachan. "Surely that would be a bit risky, brother, and you're always telling us not to take unnecessary risks."

"No, of course we must choose a deserted spot outside the town then, where no one's likely to see us bolting for our lives. With our turbans if we're observed, we're done for. We must wear new turbans that day, and never put on the same clothes again. I think around twilight would be the right time. Now where would be the best spot?"

"Why not Ipoh Road where we clipped the wires? We could use the same jungle path to get there."

"No, no, we mustn't do anything there again for some time," I said, thinking carefully. "I have it—Victory Avenue near the railway station and that broken bridge. There's not much traffic on it these days, but enough for us to hook our fish if we wait there some time. And the neighbouring woods and hills would help us to escape afterwards."

"You're right," said Gurbachan thoughtfully. "We'll have to be careful about the timing of the grenades, or they'll explode on us and our bodies will get all the shrapnel instead of the Japs."

"I've thought of that," I replied, "and some other things, too. There's a point in Victory Avenue near Bluff Road under the railway bridge where, from a clump of bushes, we could see anything approaching the bridge on either side without being seen ourselves. Or even better than that would be on the bank of that small stream coming from the Gardens waterfall under the bridge on Damansara Road."

On the following afternoon we left home with our three hand grenades. Gurbachan carried one, while I had the other two and a revolver with all six chambers loaded. Being easily recognisable by our turbans, we were unlikely to be stopped and searched by the patrols, since the enemy was fairly well disposed towards Indians at that time.

We went first to the point I had suggested in Victory Avenue, and saw several Japanese soldiers walking steadily up and down the road. After lurking around for an hour or so we gave it up as a bad job, for there were always some other soldiers in the offing whenever we thought our chance had at last come. So we made our way towards the Damansara Road by the museum. Up and down this road we cycled, nervous and disgusted at being unable to finish the day's work. Suddenly my brother called my attention to a group of Japanese who

seemed to be heading our way. There were six of them all fully armed. We cycled past and found that the straight road ahead was deserted. This seemed the chance for which we had been waiting. Leaving our bicycles about a hundred yards away, we walked to a bridge where there was a good hiding place in a small drain. There we hid, watching the Japanese walking unsuspectingly towards us.

I had previously arranged with my brother that from one end of the bridge I would give him the signal, while he at the other end should pull the pin out of a grenade, count five and then throw it at the Japanese. Closer and closer they came. I began to feel excited, but knew it was a matter of life and death for us that I should remain cool. Was luck going to be with us? That is what made me feel nervous. I feared that some official car or military truck might pass soon after the grenades had been thrown. What my brother was feeling I do not know. For myself as I stood there with my hand on the grenade, I felt as though the ground were giving way beneath me.

When the Japanese came to within thirty or forty yards of us I whispered, "O.K. Let them have it." The first grenade burst about a couple of feet in front of them. Five seconds later I lobbed the second at them. We were too excited to wait to see the result as we had intended, but ran to our bicycles and rode off. It was almost dark, so I never knew whether all six were killed or not; but I think none could have escaped that second blast.

Next day the Japanese issued a proclamation, stating that a curfew order would be enforced from dusk to dawn, and that persons revealing the whereabouts of arms and grenades would be rewarded.

On January 17th I was cycling along the road running parallel to the Klang River when I noticed some Japanese communication wires on the ground at the foot of Petaling Hill, Presumably they led to Port Swettenham and the aerodrome. That evening I told my brother about them, and we made our plans accordingly. It was a lonely spot, so despite the curfew we went there at six o'clock, waited till darkness, quickly cut the wires, and then cycled home.

For the next few days we refrained from acts of sabotage,

but carried on with our anti-Japanese propaganda leaflets. Then on February 22nd, barely eleven weeks since the Japanese invasion, we did our first big job of sabotage in broad daylight.

At about eight o'clock that morning we happened to be passing the station, and I noticed petrol dripping from the side of some wagons. My brother idly remarked what a lucky stroke it would be if someone threw a lighted cigarette down near the small trickle of petrol. It would be enough to set both wagons ablaze.

"But who would be so careless?" I said, looking round at some Japanese working on some other wagons about a hundred yards away. "Wait a minute, I have an idea. I think we might do the job ourselves."

"But how?" objected my brother. "Someone's bound to see us, and we'd be suspected anyway."

Thinking quickly I told him to hang around while I made a closer inspection. Going up to the trucks I saw that the petrol had already trickled some distance away. Then at a nearby shop I bought a box of matches, two pieces of sugar cane and some cocoanut string. On my return my brother told me that the flow of petrol was steadily increasing. "That's just what I wanted," I said. My purchases seemed to mystify him, for he remarked, "Don't tell me that you're going to rub those pieces of sugar-cane together till they ignite the petrol." I laughed, and told him to watch me do it.

We sat down close by the railway track about fifteen yards away from the trucks, but only two feet away from the stream of petrol which was coming closer to us every minute. I gave my brother one stick of sugar-cane and told him to eat it, while I ate the other. There we sat munching our sugar-cane with our backs to the trucks and paying no attention to them. Ten minutes passed, and we were still unobserved. Then I took out the cocoanut string, which burns very slowly, and lit one end of it. I put it down beside me, and started to munch again. When I had finished my sugar-cane I slowly put the unlit end of the string in the small pool of petrol beginning to form beside us, leaving the lighted end that was burning steadily without any smoke some distance away. When we saw that the little flame was within two feet of the pool of

petrol, quietly but quickly we withdrew and sauntered down the street. Ten minutes later we heard a tremendous blast, and flames leapt into the air. Two railway trucks containing some thirty drums of petrol had exploded, and Japanese were running from all directions towards Kuala Lumpur station. Silently we shook hands and went on our way.

So far the *Singa* organisation had only consisted of myself, my two brothers and our one outside member, Ismail de Silva, in Ipoh. Obviously, if our work was to interfere effectively with the Japanese occupation and become of definite importance to the Allied cause, the scope of our activities would have to be extended. I realised that to do so we would need a number of people to carry out our orders. Furthermore, they must be the right people. So I began to observe constantly those around me, wondering who might be persuaded to help us in our work.

At that time I was printing the communiques every evening, and distributing them and pasting them on trees, walls, electric lamp-posts, notice boards, and such like. Now I decided to get in touch with as many friends as possible and form a sort of "Whispering Gallery", passing on to them the latest news and giving the more trustworthy communiques to be passed on to their friends. This kind of propaganda would not only raise the morale of the people, but also give the enemy a big headache and make them fear the existence of a vast Fifth Column throughout the country. I remembered the words of my pre-war chief, Mr. P. H. D. Jackson, now Chief Police Officer for the states of Kedah and Perlis, who said that a Fifth Columnist can not only disturb the peace of a country but also cause a great deal of headache to the authorities.

A few days after the Japanese declaration of war on the Allies he called all his Intelligence men together and lectured us on the situation. He warned us always to be on the look-out for men speading false news contrary to information appearing in the local Press. Also, for men who would raise false alarms in order to create public chaos. Nothing would demoralize people more than these false reports, or cause more public commotion.

Remembering what he had said, I decided that my communiques must always contradict the latest news announced

by the Japanese, thus making people distrust it. Then I planned to send them somehow or other to high Japanese officials, who would naturally reprimand their subordinates, especially the Police and Intelligence officers, for failing to discover whence they came. Nothing could give them a worse headache. In those early days of the occupation the Japanese had not yet fully organised their Intelligence Service, so I started looking for some trustworthy friends at once. Every morning I went into the town with a few communiques in my pocket, and whenever I saw any of my friends drinking together in the coffee-shops or restaurants I would join them. It was easy for me to gauge their attitude towards the Allies from their conversation, which if necessary I would lead towards the war.

"Have you seen that *Singa* paper?" said a man one morning when we were sitting with several other friends in a café. "It contradicts the Jap news in the local papers, and refers to many things they don't mention. Personally, I think *Singa* is right, because I checked up on his reports the other day. I read in the local paper, *The Malay Mail New Order,* that the Island Fortress of Corregedor off Manila had been captured by the Japs; but then I saw one of *Singa*'s communiques pasted up on the wall of the Town Hall, which said that the island's defenders had managed to keep the Japs at bay. Yesterday *The Malay Mail* had to admit that their previous report was—well, too previous, and that the island's fate was by no means settled. That's why I believe *Singa*."

"He obviously gets Allied news over the radio, and that's always correct," said another. "Because there's no electricity and we can't work our ordinary radios, the Japs think that they can bluff us as they like. How many copies of *Singa* have you seen? I've only read ten so far. He's always speaking of the Chinese, isn't he? It was news to me that the Chinese Army is fighting alongside the British forces in Burma. *The Malay Mail* never mentioned it."

Almost invariably the most probable identity of *Singa* would be discussed. Some believed that some spirited Chinese lads must be responsible for the paper, while others would say that it was the work of the Allied Fifth Column. At that time the Japanese had not started their informer system, so one could safely speak about anything.

While talking to my friends like this I always studied them. Then, if I found that they had pro-Allied sentiments, I would take a copy of the latest *Singa* communique out of my pocket and show it to them. They would jump with delight at the chance of reading such a thing, giving every sentence much thought and attention. In this way I discovered several friends who seemed genuinely interested in the *Singa* leaflets, and eager to assist in their distribution. So I asked them if they were prepared to take orders from *Singa*, and to help in circulating the papers whenever they were printed. I implied that so far as I knew *Singa*'s organisation was in the hills to the north of Kuala Lumpur. My previous gossip to this effect proved most useful. Not one of my friends guessed that it was I who had set everyone talking. I always emphasised that it was quite unnecessary for them to know *Singa*'s real identity.

Throughout the whole occupation I conducted my organisation in this way, although towards the end some of my most senior agents guessed that in some indefinable way I was *Singa's* chief agent, and even went so far as to suggest jokingly that I was *Singa* himself.

At the beginning of March, 1942, however, we had only four such members—or I should say active members, three in the state of Selangor and one in Perak. And the three Selangor members were simply my two brothers and myself. In fact, at that time the *Singa Resistance Movement* might have truly been called a family affair and nothing more. But it was not to remain so.

It was then that I went to Ipoh to contact our sole agent in Perak, the Ceylonese Malay, Ismail de Silva. I met him in a restaurant one morning, gave him the latest copies of our communique, and arranged to meet him at the same time and place next day. When in Ipoh I usually stayed with my friend, Kehar Singh, who had been my assistant detective when I was in charge of the Surveillance Squad of the Malayan Security Service before the outbreak of war. Now he was working as a detective again, but for the Japanese. So I went to his house, and he and his wife received me most kindly.

Next morning I returned to the restaurant to meet Ismail, but he failed to turn up. I was not unduly disturbed, because

I imagined that he must have been delayed by work connected with his part-time profession, which was playing billiards with side stakes. I decided to remain in Ipoh a few days in the hope of meeting him again, as I wanted to give him some further instructions.

On the following day I was having an afternoon nap at Kehar Singh's house when suddenly I was aroused by someone calling me. The voice was unknown to me; it appeared to be that of a Japanese. I got up and went out on to the verandah to see who it was. To my surprise two Japanese and a Chinese were standing near the steps; but it was one of the former who asked me in English if I was Gurchan Singh. I told them that I was. So they came up, and we all went into a sitting-room. The man who spoke to me in English gave me his name as Sazaki, adding that he was from the headquarters of the Kempetei (Japanese Military Secret Police).

"What were you doing before the war?" he asked me at once.

Sensing that since he knew my name so well he must have collected full information about me, I replied as courageously as possible, "I was working as a detective with the Police."

"And what are you doing now?"

"I'm looking for a better job; but if I fail, I shall rejoin the Detective Branch."

"Do you know Ismail de Silva?"

No sooner did I hear the name than I began to figure out why it had been mentioned. A tremor of fear ran through me, when I recalled the copies of *Singa* I had given him two days before, and his failure to keep his appointment with me the previous morning. What could it mean? Something bad? Almost a minute had passed since he had asked me the question, and I was just about to ask him which Ismail de Silva he meant when he said, as though refreshing my memory, "You know, that Silva who lives above the billiards saloon in Hale Street?" I pretended to be trying to recall the man, so he continued, "You know, that tall man, slightly bald, who always wears a coat and a sarong, and is very fond of playing billiards. He can always be found at billiards saloons."

"Ah, yes, I think I know the Silva you mean," I replied as though having just figured out the man. "He was the mana-

ger of Roneo Ltd., Ipoh, before the war, wasn't he? I haven't seen him for a long time. Is he living near here in Hale Street now? But he never used to wear a sarong. He was always dressed in a most gentlemanly way with collar and tie as the manager of a firm should be. But if he's not working now, perhaps he's given up wearing a collar and tie and has put on a sarong instead of a suit."

Sazaki realised that I was not describing the right person (I had purposely described another man called Silva), and resumed his own description of Ismail. I let him continue for some time, then said, "Oh, yes, now I know the man you mean. But I only know him by sight."

"Do you play billiards?" he asked.

"I did before the war when we had our own table, but not now. I've never played at saloons, only dropped into them in the course of my duty to keep an eye on some bad hats. Now you speak of it, I do remember seeing Silva playing twice. But I didn't know his name was Ismail, though I heard people calling him Silva."

"What do you know of him? Was he a bad hat, too?"

"I heard that he had been involved in some street fights, though not of a serious nature."

"Do you know that he was a Secret Service Agent of the British before the war?"

"No; and if he was one I doubt whether any Asiatic could tell you so. As a member of Intelligence I knew that all Secret Service Agents had direct dealings with British Officers unbeknown to us. Therefore I can't swear that he wasn't one."

"We think he was, and arrested him yesterday. We also found some papers on him which some other British agent had given. They contained anti-Japanese propaganda, declaring that the British will soon come back. Besides being a British spy, Silva has looted some diamonds from a shop in the town at the time when the British were running away. Did you hear anything about it?"

"No, perhaps because I've been away from Ipoh for some time. But I'm really surprised to hear that he is a British Agent. He must be mad to think that the British will ever return. We Indians want to see India free. If he's helping them instead of you Japanese, it's a shame."

"If ever you come across anyone talking against the Japanese," he said softly, thinking that I was on his side, "please let me know. We'll teach them a lesson. Maybe you can help us to find this gang who's publishing this anti-Japanese propaganda. We'll reward you and make you an officer."

"With pleasure," I replied without any hesitation. "But tell me, what do these anti-Japanese papers look like? Then if I come across any I'll recognise them at once. And since you promise to give me a reward—a big reward I think you said, I'll work hard to find some."

Carefully he described one of the anti-Japanese leaflets—one of my own leaflets! He warned me especially to look out for Chinese youths who were suspected of being responsible for the leaflets. He said that some British officers were believed to be in the jungle where they printed the leaflets, using the Chinese boys to circulate them. As a precaution the Japanese were going to barricade the roads and search all passers-by.

Just then Mrs. Kehar Singh brought us some cups of coffee. By that time we had become more friendly, and I asked him several personal questions—such as where he was before the war—to distract his attention from the main purpose of his visit. When I saw that he was in a better mood and talking more freely, I asked him how he had learned that I was living in Kehar Singh's house.

"You know Inspector Johns?" he replied. "It was he who informed me about Ismail de Silva and his pre-war activities. He told me, too, that you might know something about the man. Apparently you met Inspector Johns this morning, and he asked you where you were staying, and then told me: I went to the Police Station first, thinking you might be there, but they sent me on here. So that's that. Funny you know, lots of people still think the British will come back, I can't imagine why. If they were coming back they'd never have run away, and we'd never have been able to come into Malaya, either."

"Nonsense!" I protested most emphatically. "The British can't ever return. I don't believe it, and I won't allow anybody to talk like that."

At last, apparently satisfied with whatever information I had

given him and pleased at finding me so sincerely pro-Japanese, he left with his companions.

Mr, Kehar Singh, who had been in the house all the time that they had been with me, soon joined me and asked what had happened. I told him that Ismail whom he also knew, had been arrested and that apparently Inspector Johns was behind it.

"That mean fellow!" he exclaimed. "He'd stab his best friend in the back. He calls himself a Christian, but no true believer in Christ could be as mean as that. Are you worried about Ismail?"

Though Detective Kehar Singh was such a good friend of mine, I dared not tell him what Ismail meant to me nor what had actually happened. In reaction to the tension of the past hour my nerves were on edge. Besides my anxiety about Ismail, I knew that I was still in danger myself and might be arrested at any moment. And the more I thought about it the more anxious I became. The Kempetei would undoubtedly interrogate their prisoner, and what might not he reveal under that ordeal? I recalled my words to him when he first agreed to help me, that if arrested and tortured by the Japanese he would be alone with no one but God to help him. Cold tremors shook me as I realised that it all depended on him whether I should soon be in the same position myself. Controlling myself with an effort I replied to Kehar Singh's question, merely saying, "No, not exactly worried about him, at least not more than is natural when such a man is in trouble. As you know very well, Ismail gave us much useful information in the past, so it's only right that we should consider him now. Can you think of anything that we could do to help him?"

"Help him if he's in the hands of the Kempetei!" exclaimed Kehar Singh. "You ought to know that's quite impossible. I can certainly do nothing myself, because I was in their hands only three weeks ago and they nearly cut off my head. I don't know by what stroke of luck I escaped. If I go near them and say I'm Ismail's friend, they're bound to arrest me."

"Why did they arrest you last time?" I asked.

"The Chief of Police told me to take a truck to a certain godown and remove some wheat. It's become so scarce, you

know, that I decided to take two bags for my own use. Detective Balwant Singh was with me at the time, and it was actually his suggestion. So after delivering most of the wheat, on the last trip we took four bags and left them at a friend's house. Somehow or other the Japanese heard about it, and we were arrested. They put us in a dark room, and later we were severely thrashed. We spent three days there expecting our heads to be cut off at any moment. Then to our relief we were released with a warning not to do it again. Now I daren't go near the place."

"You were lucky to get off so lightly," I remarked.

That evening passed without any further news, though the Kempetei were said to be running about searching for people connected with Ismail. With increasing apprehension I wondered what he had said—or not said—at his interrogation. To my relief, but also to my dismay and admiration, I heard the details next morning from a Chinese who happened to be present. It appeared that Ismail's house had first been searched because he was suspected of having hidden there some diamonds, which had been looted from a merchant in Ipoh during the British evacuation. Then he had been arrested himself. The Japanese urged him to admit that he had stolen the diamonds, and also to tell them who had given him the *Singa* leaflets found on his person. In spite of torture he had flatly refused to admit anything, insisting that the papers had been planted on him and denying all knowledge of them.

Two days later I was out cycling and saw a large crowd in Jalan Bandahara. Everyone was gazing at something about a hundred yards or so away. To my horror I recognised that the something was Ismail. Wearing a white shirt and sarong, and smoking a cigarette, he was standing beside a hole in the ground. I bristled with fear, and tears came into my eyes. Behind him were two Japanese, one of them holding a revolver. A few seconds later I saw this man raise his revolver to the back of Ismail's head. A shot sounded, and Ismail dropped dead into the grave which he had been made to dig for himself.

For two days I was completely overwhelmed, and could neither eat nor sleep. My work was neglected. I found myself constantly thinking of Ismail de Silva—seeing him standing

there on the edge of his grave smoking a cigarette. Was it not more than probable that my own life would end in the same way one day? I shuddered. Might not one of my own brothers be caught to meet the same fate? And if I found any other agents, would not they all end in the same way? Such thoughts raced through my mind like a whirlwind and would not get out of it. For two nights I could not sleep, and became so weak and exhausted that finally I had a terrible attack of malaria as my body could put up no resistance to the germs. For a whole week I lay in bed with a temperature well over a hundred and two. My friend Kehar Singh gave me some injections and his wife attended to me, and slowly I began to recover. Their kindness to me then will never be forgotten.

Whatever my sufferings from the attack of malaria, the blow of Ismail's death was much harder to bear. But I managed to pull myself together and to settle down to work again. My work! It must go on. Moreover, I was comforted by the thought that Ismail had not confessed even when faced with the certainty of death, otherwise by that time I would certainly have been arrested. His memory often returned to me later, giving me added courage at times when everything seemed most black and hopeless.

For the time being I decided to lie low and not to enlist any more agents. In any case, we could temporarily do without further recruits as we were mainly concerned with propaganda just then. But when I had sufficiently recovered I went into the town to have a look round. There I met a Chinese whom I had known as a business man before the war. He asked me what I was doing, and thinking that like almost all the Chinese he must be a warm friend of the Allies I replied innocently, "Nothing at the moment, just waiting to see how things turn out; but I'll never work for the Japs."

"Don't you know that I am the officer in charge of Intelligence?" he replied, with a look of extreme astonishment on his face. "You'd better report for duty at once. I knew your work before the war, and you're just the sort of man I need. But you'd better be careful. I could have you arrested for making disloyal remarks like that. The Japs were looking for you when they first came to Ipoh: someone told them that you had been in charge of interning their countrymen: it was

lucky they didn't find you. Come to my office at eleven o'clock. If you don't turn up, I'll have you arrested."

Such words from an old friend were almost too much for me. I decided that his position as Intelligence Chief must have thickened his head. But when I reported his conversation with me to Kehar Singh and another police inspector, Mr. Chanda Singh, who had previously worked with me, they both said that the Chinese officer had become a very powerful man with full authority given him by high-ranking Japanese military officials. It would be most unwise for me to offend him; on the contrary, I should do whatever he wanted. When I expressed reluctance, Mr. Chanda Singh said that I might quite possibly not see him at all, but that I must keep the appointment at all costs.

The Chief's office was on the second floor of the spacious Chartered Bank Building. He had a large room of his own with a big desk in the middle of it. Some testimonials in Japanese writing and several whips hung on the wall. In one corner lay a variety of canes for beating up criminals. I was most attracted, however, by a radio receiver on a table in the other corner opposite his desk. I stood in front of him for about five minutes before he spoke to me, and then he said, "So you've come. Good! You'll start working right away under my orders. If you work hard for me, there's nothing for you to worry about and I'll see you get promotion. Nobody can boss me except the Governor, and I deal direct with him. The Japanese have given me this job in recognition of all the good work I've done for them in the past. Look at those testimonials on the wall. It took me nine years of hard work to get them, and now I'm sitting here instead of a Japanese official. I've spared your head for your disloyal words, so I hope you'll work hard. But don't forget, one word from me to the Governor would be enough to sever your head. Apart from various Japanese officials I'm the only other man with authority to shoot anybody I like."

I knew that he was only bragging and beating his own drum. So I merely bowed and went out. My chief interest lay in the radio-receiver in his room. Apart from the Japanese there was not another man in the whole state of Perak allowed to keep such a receiver.

I wondered if I could possibly get a chance of listening-in.

The Japanese had sponsored a newspaper known as the "Perak Shinbun". I soon discovered that its reporters were allowed to come to the Chief's office twice a day to listen-in to Radio Tokyo in his presence and take down the news. The Japanese precautions about wireless news were very strict, and they took no risks. The Chief gave orders that at least two members of the Intelligence should sleep in that office every night, taking it in turns. It was the very thing I wanted.

I envied those reporters who could listen-in to Radio Tokyo. If only I had their chance, I thought, I would tune-in to an Allied station, and if questioned pretend that it was by mistake for Tokyo. The other detectives had no such desire. Far from it, they much disliked the Chief's order obliging them to sleep in the office at night. So after the first few nights they arranged among themselves that anyone could evade it by paying one dollar to a volunteer prepared to take his place. If none was available, then he had to do his duty. I volunteered every night with the excuse that having no family in Ipoh I was quite willing to sleep there and earn the extra dollar. Naturally, it did not matter to me whether I slept at the office or in barracks. They always thanked me heartily for my co-operation besides paying me for it. I think I earned the money, because the office was very uncomfortable and there were many mosquitoes. Moreover, I was soon doing double duty being the only detective left on guard there.

Every night I locked the main door downstairs. Even if anyone knocked on it, the noise could not be heard upstairs. Then I would wait until 7.30 p.m. local time, when I would go into the Chief's room and tune-in his radio to the K.G.E.I. studios in America. After taking notes of the news I heard from there, I would pass on to India, London and Australia. I spent all the time until I went to bed at three o'clock in the morning either listening-in to the broadcasts or typing the news. For fourteen days I worked as a detective in the Japanese Intelligence Service, and every night I slept in the Chief's office and did what I wanted to do.

Then one afternoon the Chief informed us that some important Japanese military officers were coming to the office

especially to see us. He seemed far from happy about it, and I sensed that something was wrong somewhere. That evening when the officers arrived we were lined up to receive them. Then one of them told us that the Intelligence Office under this particular Chinese Chief was to be closed, and ordered us to report for duty next morning at the Police Station. I had guessed right. There had been some trouble between the Chinese Chief of Intelligence and his Japanese superiors. It was perhaps lucky for me. Seizing the chance for what it was worth, I hastily left Ipoh and returned to Kuala Lumpur.

CHAPTER V

DINNER WITH THE GESTAPO

FOR the next two months I concentrated solely on printing and circulating propaganda leaflets in Kuala Lumpur and the neighbourhood. To avoid suspicion it seemed wise that my brothers and I should have some ostensible employment, so we decided to become public-letter writers. With some stools and a small table we stationed ourselves under the shade of a mango tree in front of the Government Offices. Our work was to write letters in English for the illiterate who wanted to apply for something or make a complaint. Besides most members of the public every Government official passed that way. We were thus always under the eye of authority, and everyone could see that we were not idle but engaged on important business.

Although the administration was Japanese, office work was still carried on in the English language. Clients of almost all nationalities came to us to get their letters written in English. For every letter we typed we received a dollar (about 2s. 6d.), and very rarely did we come across letters of more than a page. During the day as busy letter-writers we collected much useful information which we transformed into suitable pro-Allied propaganda, whilst at night after listening to the news on the radio we wrote and printed the latest edition of *Singa*, utilising news from all sources to the best possible advantage. The numbers of our clients increased so rapidly that I had to engage four of our friends as assistants, two of them being Tamils, Mr.

Lionel Chellapa and Mr. Nathan, and two Chinese, Mr. Tan Cheong Wan and Mr. Ong Phang Kheng. They were all very well paid and made even more than that. The income which we ourselves gained from letter-writing was a great help to us in financing our resistance movement at that time.

While still carrying on with this work I decided to recruit some more agents and thus extend the area covered by our propaganda. In April I went to Seramban, a town forty miles or so south of Kuala Lumpur. There I contacted five more agents, who, of course, had been my friends in the past. I met them casually one by one and had drinks with them. From their conversation I discovered what was in their heads, and who could be trusted and who could not. If they seemed pro-Allied I would show them some *Singa* communiques, which had an immediate effect on them. They looked as though they had been hungry for days and were now getting some delicious food, the very dishes they wanted. They asked for more, and were given it in abundance. Throughout the Occupation they worked faithfully for the Allied cause. There were two Chinese who were brothers, Mr. Tan Beng Hock and Mr. Tan Beng San; a Malay, Inche Omar bin Said, who unfortunately collided with a military lorry whilst riding his motor-cycle, and died towards the last days of the Japanese occupation; and an Indian, Mr. Khem Singh.

Soon afterwards I went on a short visit to Singapore, hoping to get some more helpers there. I met an old friend who ran a small dispensary in Middle Road, where he practised as a homœopathist with many patients. I looked upon him as a godfather, for he had known me since childhood. He was surprised to see me, while I was delighted to meet such an old friend. But somehow he seemed a sadder person than I remembered, and I soon learned why. Some months before his youngest son, a student at the Medical College, had been attending the funeral of a friend killed in an air raid during the last days of the battle of Singapore; on his way home he, too, had been struck by a shell splinter and killed.

I had a long talk with Dr. L. S. Bull in his dispensary. (Like everyone else I always called him doctor, though he had no medical degrees.) His hatred of the Japanese was more intense than that of many who had suffered worse losses. After two

hours finding that we were alone in his dispensary, since his assistants had gone home for tiffin, I produced a *Singa* leaflet and watched the look of joy and astonishment on his face. "Where did you get this?" he asked. I replied casually that they were left for me daily by a Chinese friend who was in contact with some jungle people. Then he made me promise to send him copies whenever possible, and even wanted to pay for them.

His enthusiasm seemed so genuine that I ventured to ask him if he could find us one or more agents in Singapore to help in the work of distributing the leaflets. "Leave everything to me," he replied unhesitatingly. "You can rest assured that I'll carry out anything you want me to do; but you must send the propaganda without fail. And send as much as you can."

I agreed either to bring it myself every week or to send it by my brother. To avoid being seen by his family all of whom knew me well, I agreed to meet him every Monday morning at a restaurant about half a mile away.

Leaving the search for other agents entirely in his hands, and confident that I could rely on him to find them, I returned to Kuala Lumpur in a much happier frame of mind. I was more than pleased at having established a *Singa* agency in the most southern part of the peninsula, whose importance was much in my thoughts. I had other worries, however.

Besides its increasing risk my work was becoming extremely costly. As a man of principle and a firm believer in the ideals which had first led me to undertake it, I knew that I must go on. The prices of everything required for the work were soaring, however, and its cost was beginning to strain our inadequate finances. If I were to extend the area covered by our propaganda, I needed more money. We had decided that so far as possible running costs should be met by our own current earnings, while whatever we had to start with like jewellery and the rubber estates must be kept as a reserve fund. Our income from letter-writing was just enough to pay for our present activities; but it was extremely difficult to extend them. Some further work to provide additional income had thus become essential. I began to study very closely the various goods on sale in the many places I visited. I was soon playing a game as thrilling as it was profitable—buying articles in one

place and selling them in another at perhaps 200 per cent profit.

By August 1942, nine months since the Japanese invasion, I found that our total expenditure on printing materials, stationery, typewriters, radio receiving sets, etc. amounted to more than $7,000. Yet we were only publishing on an average about two hundred copies of our Communique every day. Once a week I certainly put one in a large sealed envelope, addressed it to some high-ranking Japanese official, and posted it. But nevertheless I thought that we ought to be doing more.

So I decided to change my business tactics. Whilst continuing my two jobs of public letter-writer and black marketeer, I began to organise sports on a strictly business basis. Before the war our annual cycling carnivals had always been most successful. So now I organised cycling races at the local amusement park on two successive nights. Not only did they produce more money than I ever expected, but also they enabled me to meet several members of the local Japanese Gestapo and their informers. This in itself was invaluable to me.

After the races I took the two ladies who rode in them to supper at a restaurant. As we entered some youngsters whom one of my companions knew, insistently invited us to join them at their table. My lady friend introduced me to all of them; no sooner had I heard their names that I realised that I knew them, but how or why I could not immediately remember. Then in a flash I realised that they were members of the Japanese Gestapo. With an effort I adjusted my attitude from hatred to one of friendliness. Yet though I laughed and talked with them like one of themselves, I was studying their behaviour all the time. I knew that they were torturers and extortioners, enjoying evenings out with girls at the expense of those whom they had arrested and only released on the promise of payment. If dissatisfied with what they received, they even went so far as to make the victim provide them with girls with whom to spend the evening.

On this occasion I discovered that they had got hold of a wealthy Chinese merchant, whom they had previously threatened with arrest for anti-Japanese remarks. It was a common accusation which these Gestapo agents used all over Malaya whenever they wanted to get something out of the

person concerned. And most of the victims were rich Chinese. Such people would usually have expressed anti-Japanese sentiments to trusted friends on some occasion. Counting on this the Gestapo agents would go up to them and say, "You'd better be careful, because you're a Chinese. We're warning you. Our Chief has told us to shadow you as someone has reported that you're anti-Japanese." That would set the ball rolling. From time to time they would visit the victim, and each time he would pay them some money. Finally, they would tell the victim, "We've told our Chief all about you. At first he wouldn't agree, insisting that you're to be arrested and given the water treatment. With great difficulty we persuaded him to believe that you're all right. Nevertheless, he says that we're to keep an eye on you. If we find you saying or doing anything anti-Japanese, we're to arrest you at once." To some extent the vistim would appreciate their help; on the other hand, he would always be afraid of being arrested at any moment. Thus he would continue to propitiate the agents by giving them money and supplying all their wants.

That was the case here. As we were enjoying our food and drink, one of them introduced to me as Ah Tuck said to me, "What are you doing nowadays? I seldom see you in front of the Government Offices as a letter writer."

"I've not been very well lately," I replied. "So my brothers have been managing without me for a while. What are you all celebrating here to-night?"

"You see that man on the other side of the table," he said. "He was to be arrested by the Japanese, and we've helped him to escape by telling our chief that we can vouch for him. So he's giving us dinner and supper, and he's ordered a girl for each of us, too. They'll be here soon. Would you like to join us to-night?"

"No thank you," I said, laughing. "I have to see these ladies home, and they live some way off."

After a few more drinks I saw the girls coming in, so I suggested to my lady friends that it was time we left, and they agreed.

About a month later I organised a similar carnival in Ipoh, which was also a big success from the financial point of view. Morever, it provided me with six good agents whom I en-

countered during the proceedings. They had been my good friends before the war; but I tested them individually as I had done with my friends in Seramban, and found them all true in spirit to the Allied cause. They all proved to be excellent agents and remained active throughout the Occupation. Six of my best agents were Chinese—Yap Ghim Leong, Yap Ghim Hoe, Thoo Chin Guan, Yeoh Ghai Lye, Leong Hew Meng, and Dr. Kok Ho Teik; and then there were the Indians—Police-Inspector Sarmukh Singh, Sgt.-Major Bihara Singh, Sgt. Bughar Singh, Detective Kehar Singh, and Teja Singh.

Two weeks later I went to Penang where I met several old friends; but somehow I could find no one eager to join in the work of sabotage or propaganda against the Japanese. In fact, few people showed the faintest signs of hostility towards the invader. Later their attitude certainly changed. There was, however, a serious reason for their apparent apathy. A disgusting incident had occurred during the early days of the Japanese occupation of Penang. Previously, the people had made little attempt to hide their anti-Japanese sentiments. But then without any warning the Kempetei had swooped down on the Chung Ling High School and arrested more than a hundred Chinese teachers and students, who had either been executed or just disappeared. The Japanese had apparently been informed of the strong feeling against them in the school.

During my stay in Penang I mixed freely with my friends in the hope of obtaining some more agents. I was especially intimate with a Chinese, Tang Ah Kheng, and an Indian, Sohan Singh. Both of them were very trustworthy, but unfortunately not politically minded. I tried in vain to turn their thoughts towards politics. When I asked them why they were afraid to discuss politics, they merely said that Penang was not a healthy spot in which to do so, since there had been hundreds of arrests whose victims had simply disappeared. So they were afraid to talk.

In these circumstances I was not surprised that I could not find one trustworthy person in Penang to help us. I tried to talk to the loiterers in coffee shops and restaurants, but everyone evaded serious conversation. So I had to do everything myself, spending the hour between dusk and dinnertime in pasting pamphlets on walls and trees in different parts of the city.

After that I visited Penang at least once or twice every month, doing all the necessary work myself. It was far from easy to get into Penang with all the literature that I always carried. At the pier after getting out of the launch everybody had to line up to be searched by the Marine Police supervised by Japanese officers. It was also a nuisance having to go to the police station from time to time to ask for a travel permit. Too many visits were liable to arouse suspicion as to the reason for such frequent journeys.

In November, 1942, I had a stroke of luck. Mr. Ong Huck Lim, the Manager and Secretary of the Penang Turf Club, put me in charge of the cycle races, an event now included in the day's programme of horse racing. Owing to lack of transport there were not enough horses in Penang to complete the usual programme of seven races, so after consultation with the Japanese Governor of Penang it had been decided to make one of them a cycling event. This enabled me to apply to him for a permanent permit to travel backwards and forwards between Kuala Lumpur and Penang to attend races. It was granted, so I no longer had to go to the Police Station whenever my work demanded a visit to Penang.

At first I was somewhat uncertain about Mr. Ong's attitude towards the Allies. I even thought that he must be a staunch Japanese supporter from the way he agreed to reorganise the Penang Turf Club. So I decided to find out exactly what was in his mind. Whilst discussing the races in his office one day I referred casually to politics. I expected him to reply like everyone else in Penang; on the contrary, Mr. Ong responded with a great show of interest. It seemed that he was already doing all he could to spread the pro-Allied Gospel. An ardent listener to the British broadcasts, he gave me some items of news that I had missed. In time I learned why he found it necessary to propitiate the Japanese authorities. He was married to an English woman, who was interned in Singapore, and he was trying to obtain her release. Finally, he succeeded. Though few people realised it at the time, in reality he was a most loyal supporter of the Allied cause. When we discovered that we could trust each other, we helped each other in many ways.

The Penang cycle races gave me a wonderful opportunity

of becoming more intimately acquainted with the Japanese Kempetei and their stooges. Being some authority on racing, I could give almost sure tips to anyone who cared to ask—thus winning considerable popularity.

Meanwhile, whenever I visited Penang, I performed my nightly job of pasting up pamphlets on walls and trees everywhere. It became an even more thrilling game, as the Japanese had now ordered that everyone entering the city should be searched, thus hoping to discover who was harassing the occupation forces. The Marine Police had a very busy time of it, since they were ordered to slit the collars of those whom they wished to search completely. But my smuggling defeated them.

I had three sticks of bamboo each about six inches long and an inch in diameter. Bamboo being hollow they formed natural tubes, which I filled with as many carefully rolled-up pamphlets as they would hold, and then inserted them into the hollow bar holding the pillar of my bicycle saddle. One of my agents, Mr. D. M. Rodrigo, a bicycle mechanic by profession, put a thick cork in the bottom of the upright bar, which held as many as ten of my small bamboo sticks. That was one part of a bicycle which the Japanese never thought of searching. It never entered their heads that anything could be concealed there. To take out the contents one simply had to turn the bicycle upside-down.

Mr. Rodrigo was most astonished when I asked him to close the bottom of the bar for me. I told him with a smile that I wanted to smuggle some goods in it.

"But what sort of goods can you put in a bar only an inch-and-a-half in diameter?" he said with a big laugh.

"Don't laugh, brother," I replied, patting his shoulder. "What I'm going to put in that bar would buy up not only your shop but also all the goods in it—something which can cost me my life."

"You don't mean diamonds, do you?" he said, somewhat more quietly. "Have you found the cave where the Forty Thieves hid their treasure?"

"Yes, that's it," I said, laughing myself. "The contents of that bar will be worth millions, and when I've smuggled it I'll sell it to you."

By far the hardest barrier to cross was always that of Penang. By adopting this method, however, I got into Penang no less than fifty times with my pamphlets. Nevertheless, every searching gave me many moments of acute anxiety, for if I had been caught it would have cost me my life. But the Governor's letter giving me permission to travel was a considerable protection. I usually put it in the top outside pocket of my coat if I wore one, or otherwise in my shirt pocket, so that it would be one of the first articles they would find on me. As soon as they saw it, not only did they put it back carefully in my pocket but they always allowed me to pass as though I were a most important person.

On landing in Penang, after buying some envelopes I always went straight to a hotel where I addressed them to various Japanese officers in the neighbourhood to whom I intended to send my pamphlets. Then I simply posted them at one of the post offices. At the same time I would send others to Japanese officers in Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh and Singapore.

One sunny afternoon in January 1943 I was at the Penang Races. The cyclists were parading in the paddock for the turfites to have a last glimpse of their favourite rider and prospective winner. I was checking up on their positions, arranging how they should stand at the start, when a Japanese officer came up to me and asked me in good English, "Who's going to win?" Unconcernedly I gave him a likely winner, and so it proved to be. A week later he approached me again with the same question, though I failed to recognise him. Again my tip proved a cert. After the race the Japanese officer, like everyone who made money from my tips, came to shake hands with me and thank me. Later he invited me to dinner with him that night.

Though I felt quite happy about it I knew instinctively that I must be careful and not talk too much. He called for me at my hotel and took me to his house in Green Lane. I noticed that he spoke English very well, and he complimented me on my fluent English, too. After the first few minutes with him in his car my suspicions of this man were aroused. Before long I discovered that he was a colonel in charge of the Japanese Intelligence Bureau.

On arrival at the porch of a large house he took me upstairs

to a sitting-room well furnished in the modern style with comfortable arm-chairs. Beside the settee stood a big radio. Soon another car drove up to the porch, and he said, "My friends have come, you will like them." I expected to see some Japanese officers, but it was not so. At least, one officer entered, saluted my host and told him something in Japanese. Then two attractive Chinese dames walked into the room, and the officer who had presumably brought them saluted again, went downstairs and drove off.

My host introduced me to his lady friends. Both of them spoke good English, too. One was called Mary, the other Kitty. We were soon talking merrily together and sipping some Japanese liquor known as *saké*, which is made from rice. Meanwhile, Colonel Sazaki, as I found the officer was called, went up to the radio and tuned it to San Francisco. My suspicions of him grew stronger when in reply to my protests he said, " Nonsense, I like American music." Though I said most emphatically that I did not, he insisted on letting it play on. I felt quite sure that he had something up his sleeve, and I decided to be even more careful. When the conversation turned to military matters, I asked him frankly what his job was. He replied that besides doing general intelligence work he was acting as liaison officer between the Japanese Military Service and the Indian Independence League, his department being known as "Hickary Kikkan".

As the evening wore on I became still more cautious, for I remembered that I had often addressed propaganda leaflets to this department. I observed that the Chinese ladies were seizing the opportunity to eat and drink as much as they liked. They were obviously "comfort girls" who had visited that house many times. Thus they talked freely. Quite possibly they were used as baits, I thought, when the officer had a visitor there. Was he using them as a bait to catch me? Or had he simply decided to give me a very good time? Whatever it was, they were soon very much at their ease. It was obvious that everything had been pre-arranged, so far as the girls were concerned.

It was one of them who started the topic of anti-Japanese activities on the island. They had certainly drunk more *saké* than myself or the Colonel, and may have begun to feel its

strong effects. In any case, I was careful to watch my step.

"Why are there so many Communists in Penang?" asked Mary, who was sitting close beside me on the settee with one hand on my shoulder and a glass of *saké* in the other. (All people showing anti-Japanese tendencies were classed as Communists by the Japanese, which led to everyone doing the same.)

"Only fools become Communists," replied Sazaki. "We people of Nippon are doing everything we can to help them, but if they don't appreciate it we'll chop off their heads. We don't want such people."

"You can't call them fools," said Kitty, who sat beside Sazaki almost on his knees. "They hate you because you've done bad things to them. You people of Nippon have acted like brutes. Your soldiers don't know how to respect people's wives, sisters or daughters. They think everyone's the same. They're sex maniacs. It's a fact that during their advance in Malaya the Japanese soldiers raped thousands of women before the very eyes of their husbands and parents."

Such words were enough to get anyone's head chopped off; but Sazaki just listened to her with a grin. I wondered what hold she had over him to be able to speak like that.

"That's not rape," said Sazaki. "We Japanese don't call that rape. Women are meant for it, and should be willing to comfort the soldiers who are fighting and giving their lives for women's freedom. It is only right that they should pay for services rendered, isn't it? You can't expect to see a cinema show free of charge."

"You may call that human in Japan," said Kitty, "but out here we call it inhuman. And the more your soldiers do it, the more we Chinese and other nationalities will hate you. That's why you get anti-Japanese sentiments in this country."

"Don't worry, darling," said Sazaki, caressing her. "We know how to take care of anti-Japanese elements."

"You've killed many political agitators," interposed Mary, "but many more always take their place."

"They don't worry us," replied Sazaki. "If we catch them we kill them, and those we can't get now we'll catch later."

After taking a sip of *saké* I asked, "Sazaki San (*San is Japanese for Mr.*), have you caught any of these political agitators red-handed?"

"Yes, and we've killed them all," he replied. "There are a few more left whom we hope to arrest very soon. They don't understand the good things that we Japanese have done for them. Such people don't deserve to be allowed to live in this world."

"That's quite true," I said. "All anti-Japanese people should be caught and killed. They're not fit to live in this peaceful country." Then taking another sip of *saké* I asked, "But how do these people annoy the authorities, Sazaki San? You can't mean that they succeed in doing anything really serious?"

"Haven't you heard anybody talking about us?"

"I've never heard any of my friends say anything against the Japanese before to-night," I replied. "But then they're all sportsmen, and no sportsman indulges in politics."

"Then you and your friends are living in another world," interrupted Kitty. "You can't know anything about politics, anyhow. Go into the streets, and you're sure to hear someone saying at least that the Japanese won't stay here long, and it will be good riddance because they're bad people."

With those words she gave herself away to me. I knew what she was up to. However intimate a friend she might be of Sazaki, even if she were his mistress, she would be fully aware that she could not speak like that and get away with it. She would not dare to say such words even to her lover. Therefore she was trying to trap me to imitate her. But I was too clever for her.

"Such people should be reported to the authorities at once," I said. "They're disturbing this country's peace. All we want is peace. We don't care who comes here or who goes. All we want is a good master. And the Japanese are good enough for us. After all, why should we have Europeans to govern us when we have an Asiatic government to look after us? Anyone who doesn't agree and says anything against the Japanese should be severely punished."

"You mean to say I ought to be punished for what I've said?" said Kitty, speaking to me but looking at Sazaki with a smile.

"Yes, Kitty," I replied. "You deserve to be sentenced to death. But never mind, you can't be punished for something

you don't really mean. It's a joke, isn't it? You're just pulling Sazaki's leg and trying to make him angry. But it's no use, he knows you're joking."

Everyone laughed uproariously at that. Sazaki caught Kitty and kissed her, saying "Oh, you naughty little darling, I'd like to catch you in the streets talking like that." When the kissing and the laughter had subsided he turned to me. "There are a few people here in Penang I'd like to lay my hands on, you know. They're the worst trouble we've got now. Some youngsters, Chinese I think, are going about pasting up anti-Japanese propaganda newspapers everywhere, demoralising the people. They don't know what they're doing. They're in the pay of others, of course, and all they care about is the money."

"What sort of newspapers are they?" I asked.

"Haven't you seen any of these anti-Japanese posters in the streets?" he replied.

I told him that I had never noticed one. Then taking advantage of his genial mood—produced by the presence of the girls and their lively conversation beside the fair amount of liquor he had drunk—I inquired whether he had seen one of these sheets himself and in what language they were written. He said that he had not only seen them but actually had one himself in his own house. He added that it was written in English for the English-reading public, and that it originated from an organisation known as *Sin Kah*, or so he pronounced it.

"And what does *Sin Kah* mean?" I asked, with an inward tremor of nervousness, for I knew that he was really speaking of *Singa*.

"I'm not quite sure," he replied, "but I think it's the name of the Chinese organisation. If only we could catch any of the youngsters pasting up the pamphlets, then we'd discover their source easily enough."

Out of the corner of my eye I was observing the girls, but they seemed to have no wish to talk and were just listening attentively.

So despite my quaking inside I asked, "What sort of a pamphlet is it? If only I could see one, then I could watch out for anyone trying to paste them up anywhere."

"Come to my room, and I'll show you the few I have," he

said, leading the way to the door. "I'd be thankful if you'd keep a look out for these criminals in the town."

He took me to a small room where he obviously worked, for there was a desk in one corner. I noticed that neither of the girls was invited to join us, nor did they attempt to come in. He showed me four news-sheets one of which had evidently been torn off a wall. I made some pretence of reading my own writing before remarking, "How did you get these three? They don't seem to have been pasted up at all."

"No, they came to our office by post. Apparently, the *Sin Kah* organisation is trying to demoralise us by sending them to us."

"But this signature," I added, pointing to *Singa* at the foot of the page, "surely that reads *Singa* and not *Sin Kah* as you pronounce it?"

"You think so?" he replied seriously. "Let's go back to the sitting-room and we'll discuss that curious word. You seem to be very intelligent, and maybe from a discussion together we may find a clue to its origin."

I did not like his reference to my intelligence; it only made me feel more nervous. I feared that I might have given away something to arouse Sazaki's suspicions, and thus to my way of thinking I was not so intelligent after all. I clung to the fixed idea that failure only comes from lack of confidence, and not wanting to lose the smallest bit of confidence in myself I tried not to feel nervous about it.

As we returned to the sitting-room I pretended to be reading one of the pamphlets, and when I sat down next to Mary she asked me what I was studying so carefully. With Sazaki's permission I handed it to her. Then shaking my head as though convinced that I was right I said, "I don't think it's *Sin Kah*, I'm sure it's *Singa*."

"No, no," he retorted, "that's merely misleading. But perhaps you can tell us if that name has some other meaning."

I knew that I had made another false move, and that I was getting nearer to committing myself. Under the influence of the liquor I was making one mistake after another. To save the situation I knew that I must answer his question promptly, so I said, "I think the word Singa means a lion in the Malay language. Yes, I'm sure it means a lion."

"Are you suggesting that this is the British Lion?" he snorted angrily.

"Well, it could be; but doubtless that's impossible," I replied laughing.

"You seem to insist that it means a British Lion. Why do you say so?" he asked sternly.

"Sazaki San, look at the heading of this pamphlet which reads 'Allied H.Q. Communique'," I replied in a confident tone. "Remember I'm seeing it for the first time, but it seems to me obvious that it must have originated from the jungles on the hills in this island, while agents—probably Chinese, Malay, or Indians—distribute it in the city. Now who could be in the jungles? Most probably, the British Forces themselves. *Singa* does mean lion; and since lion is a British emblem, I can only deduce that it means the British Lion has brought the Allied news to town to contradict the Japanese news."

"No, no, you're wrong," he declared emphatically. "My associates and I are certain it's some Chinese—obviously the word *Sin Kah* is a Chinese word. To put us off the track they've spelt it *Singa* instead."

Whereupon Mary disagreed, saying that *Sin Kah* had no meaning at all so far as that went, since it means "property" in Chinese. But Colonel Sazaki still insisted that *Sin Kah* implied a whole gang of Chinese, who would soon be caught, and then the public would be made to witness their execution as a warning of the inevitable fate of those indulging in anti-Nippon activities.

"I'll be one of the first to congratulate you when you catch a member of that gang," I said. "If I hear of anyone playing that dirty game, I'll find out who he is and where he lives, and let you know. Such people should be wiped out."

"I promise you a big reward if you do," he replied. "If we had more people with your good Nippon spirit, we'd soon win this war."

I heartily agreed with such sentiments, though inwardly relieved by the thought that *Singa*, thus mistaken for a gang of Chinese, would the more easily escape detection like the needle in the haystack.

Then Sazaki asked whether I could dance, and after a final drink we adjourned to a cabaret where I had several dances

with both the girls. In fact, I spent a very enjoyable evening.

After that peculiar party with the Japanese Colonel I felt somewhat more secure, and decided to call on him whenever I went to Penang. Later visits were even more enjoyable than the first.

CHAPTER VI

A JAPANESE PRESS CONFERENCE

AT that time I usually went to Penang for about a week every month, arranging my visit to coincide with the Turf races there. Besides the men's cycling event I decided to add one for ladies, which proved a great success. So I was often accompanied by two of my lady friends from Kuala Lumpur. I paid all their expenses, including picnics, boating excursions and other trips of that kind. None of them ever suspected that I had any interests outside cycling such as politics. My other friends and acquaintances thought that I was making the most of my chances of romance. In fact, I enjoyed a fine time just then without neglecting my mission.

The Perak Turf Club soon followed the example of the one at Penang by introducing cycling events, and in March, 1943 I was asked to take charge of them, too. What more could I want in the way of opportunities for my work? The prices of its necessities were still soaring, and this appointment was thus very welcome as it provided me with additional income that was becoming ever more essential.

With this invitation I was able to obtain a permit to travel freely throughout the whole province of Perak from the Japanese Military Governor. A few days later when I was about to leave for Ipoh, I decided to take a hand grenade with me. There might be a chance, I thought, of having a crack at some Japanese working on the line from the train. So I hid a grenade between two thin suits of clothes packed in an open rattan bag. The train was due to leave at 8 a.m. I went to the station at 7.30 a.m. and stood gazing around in search of a friend—Bhag Singh, the railway guard, one of my most trusted agents, who I hoped would be on duty. I wanted him

to take my bag into the train for me. Being a guard and a railway employee he would not be subject to a search by the Japanese gatemen, whereas I would be.

For fifteen minutes I waited. As he was still nowhere to be seen, I decided to buy a ticket and walk three hundred yards up the road running parallel to the platform. I did so without attracting the attention of anyone who mattered, then turned round and walked back to the train waiting in the station, thus avoiding entry through the gate. Into the train I went and got a good seat in spite of the big crowd. My worst problem still remained, however. How could I throw my hand grenade without being observed by other people in the carriage?

The train was crowded to capacity, and none of my ideas seemed feasible to attempt in daylight. Suddenly I realised that I was sitting just beside the toilet. Could not I throw my grenade from there unobserved? But how could I get it out of my bag in that crowded carriage without being noticed? We were jammed so tight one could hardly move an inch. It seemed an impossible task. If anyone observed me I should have small chance of escape. While pondering on the problem I kept a good look-out through the window.

Then I had an idea. Casually I opened the bag as though taking out a handkerchief. I did it twice more, apparently looking for some papers. Meanwhile I managed to cover the grenade lying between the suits with a handkerchief. I waited for some minutes, then for the fourth time opened my bag, quickly grabbed the handkerchief with the grenade inside it and shoved it into my pocket in the tick of a second. I looked round and sighed with relief. My companions had noticed nothing.

At about half-past eleven as I was scanning the countryside I spied a group of Japanese soldiers not more than half a mile away. I rose and went to the toilet: it was occupied. Inwardly fuming I returned to my seat and again sat looking through the window. It was not until half-past one that another opportunity occurred, when we were about thirty miles from Ipoh. Some more Japanese soldiers were standing beside the track some distance ahead, just waiting. Again I went to the toilet: it was vacant. By this time the train was moving much more

rapidly than at the start of the journey. When I judged that I was almost within aiming distance I removed the pin, counted four and flung the grenade out of the window—we were just passing the Japanese. A few seconds later a minor blast shook the train.

I returned to my seat and joined in the general enquiries as to what had happened. A quarter-of-a-mile down the line the train stopped, shunted backwards and stopped again to be immediately surrounded by armed soldiers. A grenade had apparently killed three of their comrades, and six or seven of them had been wounded. Armed Japanese who were in the other coaches alighted and covered the train with their rifles. Then all the passengers were forced to alight also, and were individually searched and questioned. It was evident that the Japanese did not exactly know from which coach the grenade had been flung. Some were pointing at our coach, others at the coaches in front and behind it. In each coach there were no less than some two to three hundred passengers. Being an Indian I escaped serious suspicion, and several Japanese even asked me if I had seen any doubtful character in my coach. The passengers declared that none of us had thrown, or seen anybody throw, anything out of the window. I supported them, adding that such an act would hardly have passed unnoticed. After questioning everyone for nearly an hour, the Japanese ordered the train to be driven on as rapidly as possible to Kampar, where there was a hospital for the wounded.

I expected some trouble and further investigations at Kampar. The usual enormous crowd was waiting on the platform to board the already packed train, which prevented me from seeing what was happening except near our coach. At any moment I expected to be asked to get out of the train; but after the wounded had been removed it was ordered to proceed. Then I expected that further investigations would be made when the train reached Ipoh; but nothing happened.

Meanwhile, our propaganda was going on well. *Singa* posters were appearing in ever increasing numbers in many places all over Malaya. The Japanese Gestapo showed their hand by announcing that the police had orders to arrest anyone caught sticking them up; according to information which

they had received, it was done between the hours of midnight and dawn, probably by some Chinese youths.

At that time I used often to invite some of my old police colleagues to a cup of tea or coffee, or sometimes they would invite me. But most of the entertaining fell to me, since they suspected me of making money on the black market as I had not rejoined the force and travelled about so much. Over our refreshments they would gradually become more friendly and talkative, and it usually ended in their telling me the latest orders given them by their Japanese overlords. In this way I was kept well informed about the newest methods of investigation, which often proved most useful.

Then a Proclamation was issued by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, who had come to Malaya in 1943 from Germany to be head of the Indian National Army being formed in territories occupied by the Japanese with its headquarters in Singapore. It declared that there was going to be a total mobilisation of all Indians in the East, who would be enrolled in the Indian National Army to fight side by side with the Japanese to free India. This proclamation gave my brothers and me much to think about. As all three of us were unemployed we would have no alternative but to join the I.N.A. My wife began to show signs of worry, too. In truth, she did not want me to do anything that meant risking my life. If I joined the I.N.A. I would have to go to the front to fight, which would entail the danger of my being killed,

After much hard thinking an idea eventually struck my wife, who told me about it one evening as we were sitting outside the house with the full moon facing us. "Must you be mobilised under the new proclamation, darling?" she asked.

"I'm afraid so," I replied.

"Is there no way of escape?" she said. "Isn't there any explanation, aren't there any reasonable grounds that would exempt you?"

"Honey, I've been trying my best to think of a way out, but I can't find one."

She hesitated, then said, "I have an idea, but I hardly like to mention it—I don't know if it would be a sound excuse."

"What is it, darling?" I said eagerly. "Please tell me.

Even if it's no use, it might give me a clue to a better idea."

"It's only this," she replied, looking up into my face. "Can't you tell them that you have a wife and three children to look after? If you're molibised, who is going to look after us?"

I shook my head sadly and said that as she had feared, it was not a sound idea; but she persisted. "There are four of your brothers. One of them is already in the I.N.A. If the other two could get work somewhere, you would have a good excuse for saying that you must stay at home to look after your family and aged parents, and their property."

"That's not a bad idea," I replied thoughtfully. "But what if the other two don't want to work? You really mustn't be so upset. Everything will come all right in the end. You know, I have no faith in this Japanese sponsored Indian National Army. The Indians who believe that the Japs will help them to free India, have swallowed a poisonous Japanese pill which will do them no good. I'm the last person to join them, you may be sure. But don't worry, I'll find a way out somehow."

Next morning I spoke to my brothers, suggesting that they should find new jobs. After some discussion they agreed. Gurbachan Singh joined the Police Department, soon afterwards was seconded into the Border Police and stationed on the Malayan-Siam border. Nevertheless, he occasionally visited Kuala Lumpur to obtain our news-sheets for distribution in the remotest part of Malaya. Only a short time passed, however, when the sad news of his death reached us. A bus in which he was travelling had overturned at a bend in the road, and injured in the abdomen he had died almost immediately. His death occurred at a time when his services were most needed, and my brother Gurdial and I missed him sorely. Now we two had to carry on without the help of a very able lieutenant. None of us even had the luck of seeing his face for the last time before he was cremated. The news of his death only reached us three days after the accident; it took me another three days to get there, and by then his remains had already been put to sea.

As Gurdial Singh was greatly interested in radio mechanics, he told me that he would like to work in some radio concern

where he could learn more about them. I happened to know the senior Radio Mechanic in the local Broadcasting Station, and through him I obtained Gurdial a job as an assistant in the transmitting department, which besides controlling the broadcasting system was also used for radio repairs. Damaged radios belonging to high Japanese officials were taken there to be overhauled. Gurdial thus had a unique opportunity of learning about transmission and how to build a transmitter. He could also listen-in to Allied stations for news, which he would jot down on pieces of paper and bring home to me.

One day in August, 1943, Gurdial told me that an all-Malayan Press conference was going to be held in Singapore to which journalists from all parts of the country were to be invited.

"Good," I said. "I'm a journalist, aren't I? I hope the Japanese will invite me, too."

"Of course, *Singa* will be the first man to be invited," he said, laughing. "They'll give you a special reception. The propaganda department is arranging the invitations. You'd better tell them you're free to go. Otherwise, they may think you're too occupied with your paper and would not like to disturb you."

"I'll 'phone up Imano San, the propaganda chief, and tell him about it," I replied, roaring with laughter. "Or better still, send him a copy of *Singa* to make sure he doesn't forget me."

For a time we laughed over what struck us as a good joke. Then more seriously I remarked, "I'm going to find out more about this to-morrow from my friend Bachittar Singh, the managing director of the Punjabi newspaper. He's sure to know all about it. *Singa* must be represented at that conference somehow."

Next morning I called on Bachittar Singh, invited him to a nearby restaurant and asked him about it. He said that two days before he had received a circular from the Japanese, informing him that the Propaganda Chief of Southern Regions was calling a conference of all Malayan journalists in Singapore. Each journal should send at least one representative.

"Are you going down yourself to represent your paper?" I asked.

"No, I don't think so," he replied. "I haven't made up my mind yet whether to go myself or to send someone else. I'm not very keen on it, because I'm ill as you know. But three of my men are on sick leave, and I can't think of a suitable representative."

Taking advantage of such lucky circumstances I said, "If you've no one to send, why not suggest my name? You know I'm a good mixer, and I'd enjoy the whole entertainment, which being a vegetarian and an ardent Sikh you wouldn't. Besides, at your age you'd find these young journalists rather trying."

He seemed to like my idea, which relieved him of so much trouble and worry, and he promised to send in my name at once. To make doubly sure of my accepting the invitation, he begged me repeatedly not to turn it down for anything else when the day came. I assured him that I would not do such a thing, especially as I had other business to do in Singapore. I agreed to take notes of everything that happened, and to give him a full report on my return. The main object of the conference was to persuade Malayan journalists to write more Japanese propaganda, and to show them how it could be done. Moreover, they were to be lavishly entertained in expectation of their good work in the future. I had some excellent reasons of my own for wanting to attend it. First, if I learned what was said there I should know in advance what to contradict in my own propaganda. Secondly, I had only been as it were a professional propagandist for a short time, and I was eager to take tips from the experts—at least from those who called themselves masters at the job. Finally, I wondered if I would have a chance of pasting-up some *Singa* posters in the conference room and giving the Japanese the fright of their lives.

My name was duly accepted, and on the appointed day I was requested to go to Kuala Lumpur Railway Station in the morning to entrain for Singapore. There I met not only some local journalists but also many who had come from as far north as Penang and Kedah, all waiting to board the same train. I knew almost all of them by sight, but some were surprised to see me. One of them even said, "Since when, Gurchan, did you become a journalist? I thought you were

in the Police." The train left very early, and arrived at Singapore quite late at night.

Next morning we were taken to the conference room on the top floor of Fullerton Building. There were about fifty journalists and propagandists present. I should have been feeling very pleased with myself if it had not been for one thing. Before leaving my house I had put some pamphlets on one side ready to take with me to Singapore for distribution in the conference room, but as luck would have it I had forgotten to put them in my pocket at the last moment. This quite upset me.

Facing the journalists behind the President there was a big Rising Sun flag. When we had all assembled the Propaganda Chief who presided, advised us to lay special emphasis on Japanese victories—which should always be given bold headlines; on the other hand, any news reaching us of possible reverses must never be printed.

"I want you all to bear in mind," he continued, "that no prominence must ever be given in any newspaper to our reverses. You will remember that when Italy capitulated, the only paper in Malaya to give the news prominence was *The Malay Mail* of Kuala Lumpur. I'm very sorry that the editor should have done such a thing, and as grateful to the rest of you for suppressing that unfortunate piece of news so far as possible. The Editor of *The Malay Mail* is here, I presume. Perhaps he will explain why he put the Italian capitulation in the headlines, and in such bold type, too."

There was a slight stir in the conference room, and the Editor of *The Malay Mail* rose to reply. "The news of the Italian surrender was given me by the Japanese-owned news agency—the Domei. I sent a proof copy to the Propaganda Office for censoring, and they passed it for publication. As a journalist I put it in headlines."

"That is the British way of doing things," retorted the Chief. "We don't like it. In future I want you to follow the Japanese way. If you don't practise it, how are you going to teach it to the public who are depending on you? The people of Malaya must be taught how to do things like Japanese. You must publish accounts of Japanese cities, too. The people here know so little about them. The British have even led them

to believe that buildings in Japan are made of paper, and the better buildings made of bamboo. It's not true. It's insulting to speak like that. Some days ago I visited Kedah where I was the guest of His Highness the Sultan. Even he didn't seem to know the vast size of Japanese cities, which he thought were little bigger than Malayan villages. And he remarked that Alor Star, the capital of the State of Kedah, would be bigger one day than Tokyo itself. I strongly objected to his saying such a thing. If you journalists had done your job properly, if you'd fully described Japanese cities, he would never have dared to compare Alor Star with Tokyo."

"I've been doing my best to explain Japan to the villagers in my jurisdiction," protested the representative of the Negri Sembilan Propaganda Department, a Seramban Indian, "but unfortunately I've never been supplied with photographs to show the people what the cities look like."

"This is wartime and it's very hard to get photographs," replied the Chief. "Transport conditions are difficult. You'd better carry on as best you can. Meanwhile, we'll try to send you more magazines and books about Japan."

One of the delegates then asked whether news of Japanese reverses supplied by the Domei News Agency should be published or not. In reply the Chief said that such news must be suppressed, so that the public would be unable to learn of any reverses suffered by the Imperial Japanese Army. If it were not published by the newspapers, the public would have no opportunity of discovering the true news.

"People in this country learn of the news much earlier than it is published in the Press," remarked another delegate.

"How do they manage to do that?" demanded the Chief furiously.

"Although all receiving sets have been sealed to allow the medium wave-length only to be heard, yet some Allied stations can be got on it," said the delegate. "There are other ways, too. Some people with unsealed sets listen to the news, and then pass it on to their friends. And so it goes on and on."

"Nonsense!" retorted the Chief, white with anger. "My chief engineer says that only Malayan stations can be heard on that wave-length."

"I've heard Allied broadcasts on the medium wave," said another member.

The Chief then murmured some words in Japanese, which I imagine were, "So you're one of those who listen to Allied news." Turning to one of his deputies he ordered the Chief Engineer to be called, and on his arrival had a heated conversation with him. "It's all right," he announced to us at last. "The engineer says that reception is only very faint." In conclusion he said, "I hope you all know what to do in future. Remember, Japan's victory is your victory."

I kicked myself many times for having forgotten to bring my pamphlets to the conference; but I noted the names of a few Japanese Deputies to whom I might post them later.

Nothing more of any interest occurred at the meeting, which nevertheless lasted all day. Next day excursions had been arranged for the delegates, and we were taken by bus to see places of interest in and around Singapore including the Broadcasting Station. At night we visited the Amusement Park, and saw a documentary film depicting the Japanese invasion of Malaya and its capture. The following night we left Singapore to return to our homes.

Whatever the representatives of other Malayan newspapers gained from the conference, *Singa's* representative found it most instructive—though perhaps not quite in the way intended. It revealed to me the weakness of the Japanese propaganda machine, and later I ridiculed it in my pamphlets. Much to our disgust there had been an increasing amount of anti-Allied propaganda appearing in the Press, and I had long wanted to find out whether it was being published by the newspapers willingly or under compulsion. Almost all the Malayan journalists of any importance attended the conference, so it gave me a fine opportunity of discovering their respective activities.

I soon found out that all those present—except four—were whole-heartedly co-operating with the Japanese. For instance, an Indian who was the representative of the Negri Sembilan Propaganda Department, said he accepted their instructions more trustfully than a child its own parents' lessons. In many private talks with them all I learned how intensely they believed in the ultimate victory of Japan. To them it was no

matter of opinion, but an overwhelming conviction. I was stunned as much by their lack of understanding of the Allies' policy as by their failure to condemn the crimes being daily committed by the Japanese. This became quite clear to me when we discussed the potential powers of production of the Allies. I realised that I would have to emphasise the Allied policy far more strongly in my pamphlets than I had done in the past.

I took the risk of jotting down in my notebook what seemed to me the most serious weakness in the Japanese propaganda machine. For instance, the Chief made one astonishing remark. He said that the Malayans must be prepared for another war in their country if the Allies came much nearer, and that they must keep a constant look-out for enemy submarines approaching the coast to land agents. For a man in his position to be apparently unaware that Allied broadcasts could be heard on medium-wave wireless sets was certainly remarkable. It was even more curious for him to stress the fact that the tide of war might return to the Malayan coast when his department was simultaneously trying to convince the people that Japan was fighting a winning battle.

At this conference in September, 1943, for the first time since the Occupation the Japanese were hinting at the possibility of the war being fought once more in Malaya. If that had been my only discovery, it would have justified my dangerous journey to Singapore. Previously, they were always saying —ironically enough—that the British and Americans had gone for good, and that the longer it lasted the further away were the Allies being pushed. For a recognised leader of the Japanese to make such a partial admission was a very important statement, which I could exploit most advantageously in *Singa*.

By the time I returned to Kuala Lumpur most of the "important" speeches made at the conference had already been given wide publicity in the Press, so I began my propaganda at once. I was well aware that the ordinary people of Malaya were beginning to have great faith in everything I wrote, especially in whatever I stressed as important. Now I had a chance of telling them what was really going on in the newspaper offices, and of teaching them how to read between

the lines of the rubbish with which they were being so lavishly fed. The *Singa* news-sheets and pamphlets had appeared so often and so regularly over such a wide area that, by now, their reputation for speaking the truth was becoming well established. So people readily believed what I printed about the possible return of the Allies very shortly, and also my immediate contradiction of the many lies published in the daily Press as a result of the Singapore conference.

For about the fiftieth time I warned the Indian population to steer clear of any Japanese attempt to enlist their aid in the event of Malaya again being involved in the war. And I emphasised more strongly than ever that the Japanese were using these local Indians merely as a stepping stone towards their own domination of India. I knew that an increasing number of Indians were joining the newly-formed Indian National Army, so I redoubled my efforts to convince them that an independent India could only be achieved through an Allied victory. I tried to make them realise their folly by revealing in unmistakable colours the crooked game being played by the Japanese. "Why," I asked, "do the Japanese protest so much about their plans for the liberation of all Asia, and how they are going to free her from European and American domination, when she herself has invaded defenceless China? Why not independence for Korea and Taiwan? No, as Japan is ruling over those unhappy countries so she intends to rule over all India, and you yourselves are helping her to the best of your ability and resources."

Towards the end of 1943 the news from almost all fronts told of Allied victories, so it was easy for me to satirize and hold up to ridicule all the Japanese propaganda appearing in the daily Press. Their officials received a constant stream of my literature, which they still suspected was being smuggled into Kuala Lumpur from the hills outside. They therefore placed stronger guards on all the roads leading into the town, and every passer-by was thoroughly searched and even made to remove his shoes, socks and collar—if he had any.

I had several narrow escapes when at work pasting-up posters. One of the worst was in Ipoh where I had gone with the latest communiques. After pasting-up two news-sheets on one side of the town I was cycling to another part when all of

a sudden the Japanese drew a cordon across the road and put up a barbed-wire barricade. Everyone there was hemmed in and made to stand in line. On the handlebars of my bicycle hung a canvas bag containing a shirt and a pair of trousers, which covered a packet of my communiques and an ink bottle full of paste.

There were about a dozen armed Japanese, four at the barricade searching the passers-by one by one. I had twenty people in front of me and as many behind. Immediately behind me were two Chinese ladies muttering to each other. Ahead I could see the Japanese searching everyone very carefully from the top of the head to the soles of the feet, including the personal belongings. If the soldiers laid hands on my canvas bag it meant death for me.

My turn drew nearer. There were only ten men in front of me, and still I had done nothing to dispose of the pamphlets and the bottle of paste. On either side of the line a few paces apart stood more soldiers with fixed bayonets. All I could do was to slip my hand quickly into the bag, pull out the bundle of pamphlets and drop them on the ground in front of me. Had I done it without arousing suspicion? Neither the man in front of me nor the ladies behind me seemed to have noticed it. Then a Japanese sentry rushed towards me shouting at the top of his voice, his rifle held in front of him by both hands. "Done for," I said to myself. "He's seen me and is coming for me now." My heart seemed to come out of my mouth and the earth to leave my feet. I did not move, but kept my eye on him. But no, he had not seen me. He was not coming for me, but went to the ladies behind me. Apparently he had seen one of them pass a handkerchief to the other, and thought it was some missile. With a sigh of relief I took out my own handkerchief and wiped the sweat off my brow,

I looked ahead. There were five more persons left. I was happy at having got rid of something which could have cost me my life. It had been a close shave. But I still had the bottle of paste to worry about. I thought I might get away with it by saying that it was intended for use at home. It just depended how they happened to take it. Three more men to go, and still I had not decided whether to get rid of the bottle or not. Then it was too late, my turn had come. I was searched, but not

as carefully as the others. Perhaps I looked quite innocent. They just felt my body from head to foot with their hands, and let me pass on without even examining the canvas bag.

I rode on, feeling relieved but still somewhat cold from the ordeal I had gone through. Later I found out that the trap had been set to catch some Communists who were supposed to have come to town after a recent exploit. They had attacked a police station about six miles south of Ipoh, killing the officer-in-charge. I was having tea with some policemen in Ipoh two days afterwards and asked them what had actually happened.

"I don't know all the details," said one man. "All I know is that the sergeant was shot dead by some Chinese Communists who had come to Lahat on bicycles. After killing him they bolted, leaving behind one bicycle."

Later I met Kehar Singh, who was now acting as one of my agents in Ipoh though still working as a Police Inspector for the Japanese, which he continued to do till the end of the war. He had been to the scene of the murder to make investigations soon afterwards, and told me that the bicycle found near the victim had been traced to an elderly shopkeeper, a grocer, The Japanese Chief Police Officer had arrested this old man, who admitted being its owner but denied all knowledge of the name of the person to whom he had lent it. The old man said that a youngster who often visited his shop to buy goods, came up to him on the morning of the incident to borrow his bicycle but had not returned it. The Japanese refused to believe that he did not know the youngster's name. So the old man had been beaten up at the police station till he died.

This had not been all, however. Not being satisfied the Japanese had arrested the old man's two grown-up sons. Without questioning them two Japanese officials took the brothers and three Tamil labourers to the graveyard, where the latter had been made to dig two graves. Then one of the officers told the Chinese youngsters to get into them. With tears in their eyes they pleaded, "Please tell us why you're going to kill us. We have done no wrong. We are both family men. You have already killed our father. For the sake of our families and our aged mother please spare us." But the Japanese officers had no pity for them. Kicking them into the

graves whilst they cried in vain for mercy, they chopped off their heads.

None of this, of course, had any effect on the flow of anti-Japanese propaganda infiltrating everywhere in the name of the unknown and still uncaptured *Singa*—in fact, it was rather a flood so well was my organisation now working. I was thus able to finish the year with a sense of considerable satisfaction. Had I not put a good spoke in the wheel of the Allies? And were they not rolling on towards us in Malaya?

CHAPTER VII

MILKMAN BY DAY, BILL-POSTER BY NIGHT

THE early months of 1944 saw a marked improvement in conditions for the Allies, at least from my point of view. The news became so increasingly good that all I had to do was just to pass it on to the people. Owing to the extreme scarcity and expense of paper, however, my communiques had to be very small in size and as concise as possible in the wording. The larger the public who read them, the heavier became my expenses. I was spending money at an ever increasing rate, and the problem of finance arose again.

I had long since abandoned cycling events and similar contests; they involved too much travelling and left me little time to listen to the radio, which was becoming ever more important. So once again I had to think of ways and means of making more money.

In the early days of the Japanese occupation I had bought some milch cows. As the Japanese could not import condensed milk from overseas, there was a growing demand for local fresh milk and its price began to rise. So I bought six more cows for $14,000, and became a milk vendor and roundsman. Every morning I cycled through Kuala Lumpur with two large baskets full of milk.

Every day I rose at about five o'clock in the morning, promptly milked the cows, and then did the bottling which had to be finished by 6.30 a.m. Most of my clients wanted to hear the latest news—the real news, so I always gave it to

them before selling my milk. I also carried pamphlets to pass on to my agents at pre-arranged waiting places. On completing my milk round I cycled leisurely through the town, just to see if the posters which I had pasted up during the night were still there. I often noticed people re-tracing their steps to re-read them. Sometimes I drew my friends' attention to a poster somewhere which they seemed to have missed, and then they would rush there to get a glimpse of it.

I also visited my only medical agent in Kuala Lumpur, Dr. Abdul Ghani, a Malay, who was an assistant Medical Officer in charge of the out-patients at the hospital. I went to see him almost every other day and joined the patients waiting outside his consulting room. When my turn came the doctor always made me lie flat on the bed as though he was going to examine me. Then when he had sent the nurse assisting him away on some errand which he always invented somehow, I would hand him my latest pamphlets while he bent over me pretending to examine me, and we would also have a few words about the war news. Finally he would say, "Gurchan Singh, you're improving now but you must go on drinking that medicine without fail." Sometimes the nurse would just be returning to the room as I left.

From the hospital I would go on to see another agent, Mr. Aster Gunasekara, the Sports Editor of *The Malay Mail*, who was mainly responsible for spreading Allied news among his Ceylonese countrymen. In spite of being well past forty he was extremely active. Besides receiving my pamphlets he would tell me the news which he had heard on the radio at great risk to himself. He never knew that I listened to the Allied radio, too, so I had to pretend that what he was telling me was indeed news to me.

On returning home at about ten o'clock I breakfasted, then taking with me a light lunch, paper and pencil I drove the cows to a nearby pasture. Whilst they contentedly munched the grass, I sat under a shady tree forming new ideas for my propaganda sheets. Besides the news I always tried to include a more personal message. Nothing gave me better ideas than these few hours of peace and quiet. After writing one or two paragraphs I could sit back and relax, enjoying many a silent laugh at the way I was outwitting the Japs. Working under

such difficult and dangerous conditions, I found those moments in the beautiful Malayan countryside wonderfully soothing and inspiring. I could let my thoughts dwell then on all that I had so far achieved, and I was happy.

Often, when she had finished her morning's work at home, my wife would come down the valley and sit quietly beside me. If I had done my work, too, all would be well. But otherwise it became rather awkward, as I had kept her quite ignorant of all my anti-Japanese activities. If I were still writing she would display that inevitable curiosity of most women—not, of course, in all things but in anything suspected of touching affairs of the heart. Being a woman she imagined that my constant letter-writing must be due to some such affair. I assured her that I was merely going over some accounts, or writing to an old friend. Then we would sit with our hands on each other's shoulders, content to discuss the day's happenings. Sometimes we would talk about the war, when she would always beg me to stop listening to the radio every night.

"You see, dear," she would say, "how happy we are together; but separated wouldn't we be as unhappy? If you listen to the radio every night, we may be parted at any moment. You know how many hundreds of people have been killed by the Japanese for listening to the radio."

"Honey, I quite understand what you mean," I would reply, "but I don't listen to Allied broadcasts all the time. I'm always tuning-in to some Japanese station broadcasting in English. Only once in a way do I listen-in to Allied news to confirm the actual position of the war."

"Both Father and Mother are feeling very sore about it. They think that you may be caught one day. And they love you so much, you're their eldest child and the bread-winner of the family. If anything happened to you, it would break their hearts as it would mine. You can listen once in a way, but please—please don't do so every day and night."

Patting her hands I would say, "All right; but it's not an offence to listen to Japanese broadcasts, and that's all I do to pass the time."

"I'm only telling you that Father and Mother keep on grumbling about it, and you ought to consider them."

"The next time they do, you tell them that you've warned

me, and I told you that I'm only listening to news broadcasts by the Japanese, and that's no offence."

"There's another thing," she would say. "I'm sure you've been gossiping with your friends in town about the news you hear on the radio. You're always telling us at home that the Allies will win this war in the end. If you talk like that to others, you'll never come home to see us again. You'll be arrested and suffer the fate of so many others. For heaven's sake—for my sake, please don't do it."

"Never you mind, sweetheart," I would say, giving her a kiss. "I'm not a baby to indulge in idle gossip in town."

"I hope not," she would reply without much conviction. "But why haven't you kept your promise to take the children out one evening for ice-cream?"

"I've been too busy; but I haven't forgotten. One of these days I'm going to get my brother, Gurdial, to do the evening milk round for me, and then I'll take the children out and give them pints of ice cream. Won't you come too?"

"I'd rather you took me to the pictures," she would say.

Truly, not the least of my difficulties and anxieties was this necessity of lying to my wife. Of all my troubles at that time it gave me some of my most unpleasant moments. I was thankful when I could sometimes tell her what I was actually doing. One day I got involved in a brawl with a Japanese; she heard of it and asked me about it. Since it had nothing to do with my anti-Japanese activities I was able to tell her what had really happened.

I was having breakfast with two friends in a restaurant one morning after delivering my milk to my various customers. They were kind enough to compliment me on the fine quality of my milk, and then one of them remarked. "Talking of milk always reminds me of someone who has proved that man can live on milk alone—I mean, of course, Mahatma Gandhi."

"And talking of Gandhi always gives me a queer feeling," said the other. "What an unusual politician he must be to win the love of everyone who hears his name. How does he do it?"

"I'll tell you," I said. "He's a God-fearing person who has sacrificed all his wealth and pleasure to gain his country's independence. One word from him could set all India in

turmoil. But no, he doesn't want it that way. He wants his country's freedom without bloodshed. That's why whenever one hears his name one has a feeling of holiness, He's more than a politician, he's a spiritual leader."

"Funny, isn't it?" replied one of my friends. "While Gandhi Ji is our spiritual leader, for the Japanese it is Tenno Heika, their Emperor. They regard him as a god. Yet one has the feeling that he isn't a saint like Gandhi Ji."

While we continued to discuss the special qualities of these two world-figures—the Japanese Emperor, Tenno Heika, and Mahatma Gandhi, a Japanese soldier came into the restaurant and sat down at the table next to us. Though we took no notice of him and went on talking as before, he showed signs of listening attentively to our conversation, which, by the way, was in English. Finally, without so much as a by-your-leave or what-you-will, he rose and joined our table, immediately breaking into the discussion. He maintained that not only was Tenno Heika a much greater person than Gandhi, but also that he should be worshipped. And he added that every morning all Japanese soldiers, officers and civilians paraded facing the sun and gave a bow to the Emperor.

"Tenno Heika is undoubtedly a king," I retorted, "and is entitled to his subjects' respect, but no more. But Gandhi's a spiritual man who wouldn't hurt a fly, yet many of the world's greatest powers are afraid of him besides respecting him. To us Indians he's like a king."

The soldier leaped to his feet in a great rage, saying that the Japanese were not afraid of Gandhi. Then he stood at attention, crying at the top of his voice, "Tenno Heika Banzai," and ordered us to give the same salute, adding "Gandhi Dammae (no good)." To satisfy him I rose from my seat, begging him not to talk like that but to sit down. Thinking that I had risen to challenge him he landed out with a punch that knocked my turban off. I was so angry that I swung a swift left to his head followed by a right hook to his jaw. He reeled backwards over a table behind him and fell to the ground, knocking out some of his teeth. He stumbled to his feet with blood coming out of his mouth; but two more punches from me sent him back over the table. Recovering himself he paused, obviously counting his chances against me. Then he

grabbed his bayonet and lunged at me, whilst I seized a chair to use as a shield. Meanwhile, a large crowd had collected; and with the help of another Japanese who had just come in, we were separated. As my friends led me away, I saw with a grin of satisfaction that blood was flowing from the soldier's cheeks besides his mouth. I never encountered that Japanese again, but I did not return to that restaurant for some time for fear of being waylaid by him.

When my wife's alarm at this story had subsided, she asked me to tell her more funny stories of these Japanese soldiers and their curious ways. And thus in our shady corner under a huge Brazil-nut tree with our heads nestling close together, I made her laugh at their serious attempts to persuade us to appreciate the Banner of the Rising Sun.

I told her of a funny propaganda story published a few days before which they expected the people to believe. According to them, two of their patrol planes had sighted an Allied task force near one of the South Sea Islands, consisting of two aircraft carriers, two cruisers and as many destroyers, all going full-steam ahead. The patrol planes were flying at a height of two to three thousand feet. On spotting the task force they radioed Tokyo to send fifty odd bombers and fighters to the scene. Then they circled watchfully over the ships in which the Allied crews were naturally "fast asleep". Two hours later, a flight of Japanese bombers and fighters arrived. Now, of course, it was too late for the lazy British and Americans to try to escape. Finding that they had not enough petrol to return to their base, the pilots of the patrol planes then performed Kammikaze (the suicide act), diving headlong into the two aircraft carriers and sinking them. Thus the whole task force was destroyed at the cost of these two planes, while the others returned safely to their base where all their pilots drank to the honour of Tenno Heika. And all this we were expected to believe!

"Why do they take the trouble to invent such silly stories?" said my wife, laughing heartily.

"If they were not stupid they wouldn't have declared war," I replied. Then just to hear her laugh still more, I gave her this example of Japanese logic. "If a Japanese soldier wants a coco-nut, he hasn't got the sense to get someone to climb

the tree to pick the fruit, even if he's too lazy to do it himself: he cuts down the whole tree in order to eat one coco-nut."

I also told her how the ordinary Japanese soldiers would show off their ill-gotten riches in order to impress the simple-minded Malayans. They would parade down the streets of the towns wearing several wrist-watches and as many as ten fountain pens.

These happy hours alone with my wife were few and far between, however. Then I could almost forget that we were in an occupied country, since I tried to recall as many funny stories as possible to make her forget her worries. But we had many other things to think about, for they were the only free moments I had in which to plan for our children's future. If it had not been for her wonderful patience and understanding. we should have drifted apart during those difficult months.

Sometimes our children would join us as we sat there under that shady tree. And then for a brief while we could really forget our troubles.

At half-past three in the afternoon it was time for me to take the cows back home and attend to their food and drinking water. After that my father and brother would milk them, and my mother would fill the bottles with the help of my wife if she was not cooking. Meanwhile, I would have my bath and get ready for the evening delivery. Then off I would go on my round with my pamphlets and a spare bottle of gum tucked away in the baskets. By half-past six I had finished my rounds, and by then or a few minutes later complete darkness had fallen. So I hastily did my bill-pasting, sticking up my pamphlets on walls and trees, and finding fresh suitable spots for them every night. By half-past eight I was back home again, ready to listen-in to Allied broadcasts on the radio.

As I am no shorthand-typist I could not jot down the news word for word. I could only listen to one of the Allied stations, perhaps Chunking, London, America, Moscow, or India, and take rough notes of what was said with a writing pad on my knees and pencil in hand, following it as closely as I could. I was particularly anxious not to miss any figures that might be mentioned, so I always noted them carefully. After listening-in to one station in this way I would tune-in to another so as to check up on details. This seemed to me very important, since

any pamphlet bearing the well-known signature of *SINGA*—as all mine did—must be absolutely correct and accurate in every respect. Then I usually managed to get a sound sleep, if only for four hours.

For several months I worked thus as a milkman and cowboy by day and a bill-poster by night. My young brother, Gurdial, had become more useful to me than ever. Whenever he had no work to do he would listen-in to some of the Allied broadcasting stations and jot down items of news for me. How he managed to smuggle his notes out of the closely guarded building I don't know. It greatly lightened my own work, as I could compile my news-sheets much earlier in the evening instead of waiting till about midnight.

Mere propaganda began to dissatisfy me, however. I felt a hankering for more active operations again—to do some sabotage once more. It struck me that traffic on the railways was increasing, thus sabotage there would do more damage than ever before. But it was not a job like bill-posting that I could do alone. It required a lot of guts, and someone working on the railways to help me. I tried to think of ways of tackling the problem. Many thoughts came into my mind, but none of them would agree.

What I required was a reliable assistant working on the railways such as an engineer foreman; I knew no railway employees of that kind, only a guard, Bhag Singh, who was nevertheless a most trustworthy friend and had done much valuable work for me in carrying my posters to various places throughout the whole Peninsula. I wondered if he could introduce me to anyone in the running-shed who would suit my purpose.

So one fine sunny morning in February, 1944, after my usual milk round I met Bhag Singh by appointment at a restaurant in one of the most crowded streets of Kuala Lumpur, Batu Road. Most of its fifteen tables were occupied by Japanese soldiers being waited upon by attractive Chinese waitresses, while a radiogram was playing recorded Japanese melodies. After ordering some coffee and the girl had brought it I turned to Bhag Singh, saying, "Look, Bhag, I want you to find me some reliable friend in the railway workshops—a supervisor, or locomotive foreman, or even an engine driver."

"Why do you want such a man?" he asked, eyeing me curiously. "Don't tell me that you're going to run your own locomotive!"

"No," I replied, "it's our headquarters in the jungle—they want to know if we can get hold of any men like that. It's not my business to ask why, but to carry out their orders. Tell me, have you a friend of that sort—someone you can trust?"

"When do you want such men?" he asked.

"In a day or two, or as early as possible after that."

After thinking for a while he said, "I've two friends in the workshops whom I think I can trust, but I can't say if I can get them for you. Anyway, I'll see and let you know."

"I knew I could count on you," I replied, smiling. "But there's something else to ask you. Could you find out about the movement of goods trains north and south of Kuala Lumpur?"

"You are a funny fellow," he said, with a hearty laugh. "What's in your head now? Still, I won't ask awkward questions. Yes, I can find out many hours in advance the times of all train movements, and also where a train's going, what locomotive will draw it, who's driving it, and its cargo."

"That's fine, Bhag! I'll let you know when I want it."

"You trust me, don't you? Can't you tell me a bit more?"

"You know I trust you, Bhag. It's this way. You know, there's a large force in the jungles waiting to do something. If we could find out which trains are carrying petroleum and other war material, and pass the information on to them, they'd see it never reached its destination. Japan needs petroleum very badly now, and every gallon blasted would help our side."

"You think they can do that?" he said, his eyes alight with enthusiasm. "I can get all that informtion for you from our control office without arousing any suspicion."

We met several times after that, and he did tell me all about the movement of goods trains, their contents and destinations. But what could I do alone? I needed somebody working on the railways to assist me.

It was not until about a month later that Bhag Singh brought with him a South Indian Tamil named John Sandasamy, and introduced me to him. All three of us went to a café on the

second floor of a large building, where some good music was being played. We sat at a table near the window. Here we could talk freely, for behind us was the window overlooking the street and about fifteen feet away in front of us the band-stand with a seven-piece orchestra.

Before getting down to business with them, however, I gained some useful information from another source. I noticed a pretty Eurasian lady named Dolly sitting alone at a table not far from ours. I knew her from previous visits to this café, and asked her why she was alone. She said that the Japanese officer previously with her had been called away on important business. So I asked her to join us until the return of her friend, who was, I learned, a Gestapo officer. Apparently, he was dealing with the arrest of someone caught indulging in anti-Japanese activities.

About an hour later the Japanese officer returned, and was somewhat surprised to find his table occupied by other people and his mistress—Dolly—missing. As he was standing there rather disconsolately, Dolly saw him, called him to our table and introduced us. He seemed to be in a good mood.

He told us that a Chinese had tried to throw a hand grenade at a local dance hall crowded with Japanese soldiers, and had been arrested. After flinging the grenade, which failed to explode, the Chinese had tried to make a bolt for it, but had been seen by the watchman, chased and arrested. Continuing, he said, "We've given him such a good beating that he's lying unconscious at the police station now." I agreed with him that it was a well-deserved punishment.

"That's not all," he went on. "When he's better to-morrow we'll beat him again till he becomes unconscious again. If he's still alive after that, we'll give him the water treatment."

"And what's that?" I asked as though I had never heard of it before.

"Pumping water into the stomach," he replied, his eyes glinting. "One end of a rubber-tube is fixed to a water-tap, whilst the other end is put down the gullet of a person lying flat on his back. Then the tap is turned on—it's very painful."

"And why are you going to do that to this man?" I asked.

"We want to know where he got the hand grenade," he said. "Maybe they have plenty more. Also, we want to dis-

cover the names of his associates. And he's sure to confess when enough water's got into him."

Pretending to be very pro-Japanese I said, "I can't understand why these people want to make so much trouble when the war in Malaya is over. They might let us join the co-prosperity sphere of Asia and live in peace now."

"I know you Indians feel that way, but not so the Chinese," he replied. "However fairly we treat them, they obstinately go on fighting against us. That's why we give them such strong treatment now. But we'll soon get rid of all these ruffians."

My friends agreed with him that the Nippon army would soon destroy these subversive elements, which seemed to make him very happy. Then we talked of other things, sipping our drinks. About half an hour later they left us.

Bhag Singh, John Sandasamy and I then got down to business. I asked Sandasamy what he was doing. He said that he was a second-class engine-driver, having put in several years' service, and that he had known Bhag Singh for a long time.

"Have you ever seen a *Singa* pamphlet?" I asked.

"And read them, too, Bhag Singh's often given them to me."

"Do you believe what they say is true?"

"I should think I do. They don't bluff like the Japanese newspapers, which always boast of their slightest victory but never mention any reverses. One side of a *Singa* pamphlet is no more than one-eighth the size of a Jap newspaper, but it gives more news than all their papers do in three days."

I told him how pleased I was to find an Indian, unlike so many of our countrymen in South-east Asia, who refused to be cheated by the foxy propaganda of the Japanese.

"That's why I haven't joined the Indian Independence League," said John. "As an Indian I would do anything for my mother country, but this is not the hour. We must first help the Allies to win this war, if we want to gain independence for India."

"I'm glad you think that way, John," I said. "As citizens of the British Empire it's our duty to do what we can for the Allies. We all know the Japs aren't sincere. If they succeeded in driving the British out of India, they'd be sure to colonise it."

After talking to him and Bhag Singh for another half-hour I left, arranging with John that he should come to see me whenever he was free. I met him several times before finally making up my mind to accept his services and to ask him to do something for me. We discussed our duty as loyal subjects, and I discovered that his was no blind devotion to the Imperial Crown but one based on firm principles.

On 2nd May, 1944, I met Bhag Singh again, and he told me that an ammunition train was due to leave Kuala Lumpur Station for the north at 10 a.m. the next day. Owing to the shortage of locomotives there was only one engine available—a No. 80 "O" Class, which the Japanese would doubtless use to draw it. If it was ammunition or petroleum, I knew that it was intended for Burma, since owing to the trend of events the Japanese no longer dared to send such invaluable war material by the sea route. This locomotive would probably draw the train as far as Ipoh about 150 miles north of Kuala Lumpur. Thanking Bhag Singh for all this information I made my way to John Sandasamy's house in Bungsar Road, where I was told that he could be found at the locomotive round-house. He was there chatting with some friends.

Calling him outside I asked him if he could do anything to locomotive No. 80, which was going to draw an ammunition train to Ipoh. If it could be sabotaged, other trains would be delayed and the whole railway disorganised. Being such an important train, special arrangements had doubtless been made for it, and its delay would upset the bookings up-country and prevent many other trains from running to schedule.

"That's the very locomotive I'm supposed to be cleaning now," he said, pointing to a large engine in the yard. "That's it over there. But tell me, how did you find out that it's booked for to-morrow?"

"I went into the control office and asked them," I said, laughing.

"Anyway, it's a smart piece of work. Don't you worry, I'll see that No. 80 is either not used to-morrow or goes wrong while running. I'll come to see you when I've finished work to-morrow."

On 3rd May, 1944, he thus did his first job. When the large locomotive was on the turn-table line in the round-house at

about half-past four in the morning, he set the turn-table against the engine, opened her regulator, jumped out of the cab and ran away, whilst she moved slowly off and got herself derailed. After daybreak he came running to me to report that he had successfully completed his first assignment, and asked me to wander round to see for myself.

He had certainly made a good job of it. There was the huge engine on its side, and I congratulated myself on having found such an excellent colleague. During the next two months he repeated this operation several times. He also damaged many locomotives by interfering with the proper setting of their valves. He filled their gear boxes with water besides oil, and painted over the oil-indicator glasses of night trains so as to mislead their drivers as to the amount of oil remaining in the gear boxes, thus causing engines to fail through lack of lubrication.

Then he would purposely leave various bolts, nuts and screws loose, so that crankshafts broke during the journey thus delaying the train. Or sometimes pins would drop off and bend the rods, which in their turn would bend the coupling rod and sometimes even break it altogether. As a result engines would fail at unexpected spots, not only delaying that one train but also holding up other transport. And at that time breakages and delays of any kind meant a lot to the Japanese.

John always informed me of all he did, and I kept a careful record of his activities. It is a long one. What he and Bhag Singh did then deserves deep and lasting recognition.

On D-Day in June, 1944, Bhag Singh came to me in a hurry to say that a goods train consisting of arms, ammunition and gasolene was due to leave Kuala Lumpur next morning for Nompladuck, Siam. He said that this consignment of goods was obviously intended for the Burma front, and I agreed with him. I hastened to tell John, asking him whether he could find out which locomotive was going to draw this train. As luck would have it, he was picked for duty next morning on the very engine—No. 74 "O" Class. I told him that at all costs he must do something to delay the train either at the start or some miles outside Kuala Lumpur. Thanking him for his sincere and loyal co-operation I left him, asking him to come to see me as usual after he had done the job.

Water front, Singapore.

Another view of Singapore water-front.

Johore Causeway—linking Singapore with the mainland

The Johore Causeway.

John Sandasamy.

A direct hit on the central workshops.

Direct hit on the central workshops. (Another view.)

The valley into which the author escaped from the Japanese

On my way home I wondered what he would do. Would there be an "accident" similar to the one that had overturned locomotive No. 80? But no, he did something else which not only delayed the train but also put locomotive No. 74 completely out of action for several months owing to lack of spare parts. As he was supposed to be working on that engine he was the first to arrive at the round-house that morning, and thus could move about freely without causing any suspicion. Before any other workmen arrived he had not only removed the set screws but also slackened the piston cotter. Consequently, both the crankshaft and the piston head broke not long after the train started.

By delaying many trains and putting several locomotives out of action John seriously disorganised much of the Japanese transport system by rail. At that time, the Allies were blockading Malaya by sea and their submarines were playing merry hell with Japanese shipping, so his sabotage work was of considerable assistance to the Allied cause.

As more and more locomotives broke down, the Japanese began to smell a rat and to keep a more strict look-out. Finally, one morning Bhag Singh came to me with the shocking news that the day before—28th October, 1944—John Sandasamy had been arrested on suspicion of having caused several locomotive breakdowns. In deep distress I asked Bhag for more details. He said that he knew little; a detective called Gerald had told him, however, that John had been arrested only on suspicion.

"Oh, Gerald?" I said. "I know him very well. I'll have a talk with him and see if anything can be done about it."

A few days later I met Gerald in the town and invited him to have a drink with me in a nearby restaurant. I knew he would accept—detectives counted on getting many free drinks at that time. As we were sipping our drinks I remarked casually, "I hear you've made an arrest in a big case of anti-Japanese sabotage, Gerald."

"How did you come to hear about it, Gurchan?" he asked, giving me a sly glance.

"Oh, I was down at the station seeing off some of my Ipoh friends who've been here on holiday," I said, "and I overheard some railway men talking about one of their mates

having been arrested for sabotage activities. They said that you were responsible for his arrest."

"What else did they say?"

"That their mate's innocent of the charges against him."

"Yes, I did arrest him," he said, somewhat boastfully. "I know he's caused the breakdowns of several engines, and is definitely in the pay of some Chinese."

"Have you found out who they are?" I asked.

"Not yet, but we shall soon—also the names of the other members of his gang. He's still being tortured now. If he goes on refusing to talk, I'm afraid he'll be dead before long, however."

"What's his name?" I asked, as casually as I could.

"John Sandasamy—I've been making secret enquiries, and I'm sure he's responsible for all these breakdowns."

"What's he got to say about it?"

"Oh, of course, Sandasamy won't admit anything, nor confess who's paying him, or else assisting him."

"Are you absolutely convinced that he's guilty of committing these alleged offences, Gerald?"

"Yes, and you'll agree, too, when I've explained how I checked up on him and finally began to suspect him."

"Suspect him!" I interrupted. "That's the whole trouble—you only suspect him, he hasn't been caught red-handed neither by you nor anybody else, and you admit it." I paused, as recollecting that this was merely an impersonal argument, and went on more quietly. "Of course, you must do as you like—it's your business, not mine. I don't know who this John Sandasamy is, I'm only thinking of justice. And from what I've learned from you and other sources, so far as I can see he may not be guilty at all. If he isn't, then you're committing a very big sin, which, as a Christian, you ought to realise. As the name suggests John Sandasamy is a Christian, too."

My words about Christianity and the torture of an innocent man obviously made him feel uncomfortable; but still he maintained that he would compel John to confess his guilt even if his victim died as a result. I knew Gerald was stone-hearted. There was nothing more I could do at the moment, and soon afterwards he left me.

For the next two-and-a-half months John suffered untold

tortures; if it had not been for his strong constitution, he would have died from them. They used their worst methods in the attempt to make him confess who were his confederates. He was given the water treatment, tied up hanging from the ceiling and whipped, and there was still worse. But all to no avail. John Sandasamy stood firm, all the while saying, "I didn't do these things. Nobody ever told me to do anything wrong, so how can I give you any names? If I give you any names they will be false. In the name of Christianity I will not give a false name."

Later, thank God, Gerald paid for the sins he had committed. Shortly after the liberation by the Allies, this traitor was arrested and tried for torturing prisoners, and is now serving a term of five years' rigorous imprisonment as a true patriot—of the Japanese.

CHAPTER VIII

ONE-MAN JOB

THE tide of war was definitely turning in our favour in that Spring, 1944. But apart from my communiques the people of Malaya had little chance of knowing what was happening on the various battlefronts. Few of them had radio sets—and they were all sealed to medium wave-lengths, which prevented them from listening to overseas Allied stations, so they could get no Allied news on the radio. During that time I often issued three or four long communiques daily, such as this one:

ALLIED H.Q. COMMUNIQUE NO. 552 of the 17th April, 1944. ALLIED FIGHT FOR FREEDOM. ALLIED FIGHT AGAINST AGGRESSION.

To-day's news is to-morrow's history. This news bulletin originates from Somewhere in Malaya, giving the true news round-up of the world. Tell your friends about the news you have read to-day in this communique, so that they may know that the news as given by the Japs in the local Press is untrue. If you are a freedom-loving person, you will not hesitate to pass on this news and watch for more to-morrow. For this co-operation of yours we thank you.

India.

An Associated Press report from New Delhi says that Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in South-East Asia, paid a visit to Imphal Front on Saturday 15th April and held a half-hour conference with the commander of the garrison there. In a short speech to the forces of the garrison he said that he had complete confidence in everyone, and that very soon they will deal such a deadly blow at the enemy that he will be put to retreat, and that we will pursue him until he surrenders. Our Forces are now waiting for the enemy to get closer.

Soviet-German Front.

Moscow Radio reports that Tarnopol has been re-captured from the Germans. Besides leaving thousands of dead on the battlefield a large number of Germans and large booty was seized.

On the lower Dniester the Soviets have gained further ground, whilst the Germans are still retreating.

London.

Allied bombers have carried out new terror attacks against towns in South-eastern Europe, causing casualties and damage to military installations, particularly in Belgrade, stated a report from London.

Attacks by British bombers last night were also directed against military installations in Paris. These attacks caused several huge fires and considerable other damage in the target area.

Allied heavy bombers also made terror attacks on Western Occupied Europe, causing heavy military casualties and damage.

Pacific Front.

Several B25s and F4Us raided Jap positions on Ponape Island in the East Caroline Group, causing serious damage.

Karieng—New Ireland—was blasted by more than 60 B24s yesterday, devastating port and other military installations.

About 30 B24s raided Mereyon Island in the Caroline Group, inflicting heavy destruction on the enemy at the same time shooting eight or ten enemy interceptors out of the sky.

Italian Front.

On the Italian Front the enemy had to retreat to new positions in the North-west of Littoria in the Nettuno beachhead area in face of heavy air and land bombardment put up by the Allies.

General.

Freedom-loving People! Time is now ripe for you to give up co-operating with the Japs in any way. Tell your friends about it. Now is the time to strike at the Japs and to do what little you can to disturb the peace. By doing so you are really playing your part towards an early freedom.

Tell everyone that the Japs have now been here for two years. Can anyone say that he or she is enjoying life in the hands of the Japs as they were doing before the war? Are they getting sufficient food and clothing? No. Why not? The Japs had two years in which to bring all these things. According to their propaganda they have not lost a single ship since they declared war on the Allies. So why do they make the people suffer?

The Japs have not been able to import even a single yard of linen from Japan. Why not? It is because the Allied Navy and its submarine flotilla has played merry hell with the Jap Navy, sending to the bottom of the seas more than three-quarters of their navy. The Allies are causing such a blockade that the remnants of their fleet cannot move freely anywhere.

It will, therefore, not be long before the Allies will be here with all the food you want and with all the other necessities of which you are now so short. You can help the Allies to an earlier victory by your non-co-operation with the Japs. Keep your spirits up and tell your friends to do likewise. The day is not far off.

SINGA.

So the true news of the world was published for the people of Malaya, and distributed to them free of charge by my various agents. The best news that I could ever give them in the whole war was in June, 1944, when the whole town of Kuala Lumpur was decorated with pamphlets telling of the

opening and establishment of a bridgehead on the Second Front in France. For two days there were rejoicings amongst all freedom-loving people.

At about that time the Japanese announced in the local Press and by proclamation that all persons above the age of sixteen must seek some kind of employment with Japanese firms, otherwise they would be severely punished. I looked around and found a job—a job only in name—with a boot manufacturing firm. The work was not arduous and therefore did not interfere with my more serious activities.

Before going to work in the morning I cycled to different post offices to dispatch my latest communiques to various high Japanese officials, who were becoming more numerous then and had countless offices. My letters, or rather pamphlets, made them very angry and troubled at heart as to who *Singa* might be. They began to realise that a wide public was being supplied with *Singa* news-sheets every day, yet somehow it never seemed to occur to them that pasting-up these papers in and around Kuala Lumpur could possibly be a one-man job. I used about fifty regular points for my bill-posting, with plenty more in reserve should it be necessary. To the Japs, however, it appeared as though my organisation must have the support and help of thousands of people.

The Japanese then increased the number of their agents whose sole duty was to detect anti-Japanese offenders. As a result many loyal citizens were arrested, and many were killed. Some were fortunate enough to escape with a term of imprisonment. In their attempt to obtain confessions they resumed their old methods of torture, all in order to ascertain the identity of *Singa*. But all they learned for certain was that the posters were stuck on walls and trees between the hours of midnight and dawn. So their agents started snooping around at that time, hoping to catch the Big Offender.

My private little war with the Japanese thus became more desperate, as they tried harder than ever to catch at least one of *Singa's* agents. Meanwhile, they went on torturing many people they arrested in the hope of getting someone to confess who *Singa* was. They were quite convinced that a huge gang of men, and perhaps women too, were sitting all day at their receiving sets, jotting down all the news as it came in over the radio,

hastily composing articles and printing them, and finally turning out hundreds of pamphlets all on a single sheet quarto-size, which nevertheless had as much news value as a newspaper of at least sixteen pages. But with this settled conviction their logical reasoning encountered a stumbling block; how could such a battalion of workers possibly exist in Kuala Lumpur without at least some of its members having been caught by them?

The Japanese gnashed their teeth on seeing the very word *Singa*, but could do little more. If they took stronger steps towards his capture, it would advertise his importance in their eyes and their present failure. The public also wondered how such a large band of *Singa* co-operators could evade the Gestapo, whose strong hand was to be felt everywhere and let little escape it. But there the mystery remained: not a single man arrested by the Japanese could give any real information whatsoever about the *Singa* organisation, or even suggest anyone who could do so.

I had much good fun listening to people talking about *Singa* and expressing these opinions. One Sunday morning I called at a local coffee shop for breakfast. At the next table to mine sat a party of five Chinese all discussing my pamphlets. I had a sudden surge of pride, as though it was the prowess of my own son. Indeed, I was now so proud of my propaganda leaflets and newspapers that remembrance of the days before *Singa*'s birth seemed like some dreadful nightmare. To my joy it was appearing now in ever increasing numbers throughout all Malaya. Moreover, the public was eagerly reading my full accounts of the Allies' smashing victories over the enemy in Europe besides the one within the gate.

The best fun of all, however, was mingling with the crowds in the early morning before I went to work. Everyone was reading my news-sheets, which I mostly pasted now on public buildings such as the Government offices, the police stations, and Broadcasting House. In view of my increased activity I decided that it would be wise for me to mix once more with the police and their known agents. So I had many drinks of coffee and occasional meals with them, and carelessly and unsuspiciously they answered my seemingly innocent questions. I gave them the impression that I was especially in-

terested in how their Japanese officers treated them, and let them imagine that circumstances permitting I would have been pleased to rejoin the Force myself.

They told me that from time to time their Chief would send for them and lecture them rather like a bunch of naughty schoolboys. "Despite my repeated warnings," he would say, "none of you has made any worthwhile arrests. You haven't caught one proved Communist or anti-Japanese agent connected with these *Singa* pamphlets. It's most disappointing, and I'm very displeased. I accuse you all of taking interest in nothing but making money by corrupt methods." On the other hand, if he had had a fairly successful week extorting false confessions by torturing people, he would tell them that it was quite in order to take a little money from the people, but not too much.

Finally, the Japanese Gestapo showed their hand by offering a substantial reward for information leading to the arrest of the persons responsible for the *Singa* publications. Whilst the reward fattened, I speeded up my activities, and many Gestapo men must have lost weight. Then I heard that more agents and informers had been engaged, and given orders to arrest anyone on the slightest pretext. Agents well known often approached me in the street to ask for my help in catching someone. I always gravely assured them that if I came across anything of possible use to them in their search for *Singa* and his agents, I would pass on to them the information at once. Whereupon we would shake hands with cunning smiles like conspirators in the same plot, and go our different ways.

Since most of my bill-sticking was done in the evening when dusk was falling, I continued as fearlessly as if Dame Luck herself had promised to protect me and was urging me to fear no one. This feeling that I would never be caught was always with me. There must have been something in it of the thrill always supposed to come from wrong-doing. I often thought of what would happen to me if I were captured. I was well aware that it would mean torture and death. Yet despite that I remained determined to go on whatever the consequences. Somehow I knew that I must.

There were times when the very risks that I was running made

me more fearless than usual. One sunny afternoon in early February 1945 I decided to give a thrill to the crowd of some thirty thousand spectators sure to be present at a local Turf Meet. In such a vast throng would not there be many who would like to see their favourite news-sheet displayed in a prominent position? Moreover, I wanted the public to realise that *Singa* could work under the very noses of the Japanese. It would undoubtedly raise the morale of the people, and at least give the Gestapo another headache.

In the days before the Race Meeting was due to be held I prepared suitable propaganda for the public to read, including the latest news. On the very day before the race I was lucky enough to pick up the news that Allied forces had landed on the Bonin Islands, which the Japanese newspapers had not yet published. With the Allies no more than 500 miles from Tokyo I had something sensational to exploit—something that would set people buzzing with excitement when they read it. For propaganda's sake I also included a warning of an Allied air raid that would take place the very next day over the Sentul area, where there were many factories all producing war material for the Japanese. All that week I had been sticking up posters in that area, urging the workers to stay home that day and to keep away from the Sentul district,

The races were due to start at 1 p.m. local time. That morning I made my final plans, going into every detail in advance from the time of my arrival at the race-course to my departure. Most careful timing was essential to success, since the Japanese present there would immediately inform the Kempetei as soon as the ubiquitous *Singa* made his presence felt. Leaving home with about thirty of my specially written news-sheets and a bottle of paste concealed on my person, I arrived at the course nearly an hour before the first race. If I succeeded in pasting-up a third of that number, I thought the hazardous job would be worth it. Hazardous or not I was determined to do it, neither fearing nor considering the consequences if I were caught.

At first I thought of getting the help of one of my agents, several of whom would be on the course. But none of them knew that I was responsible for all the *Singa* billposting during the past three years. If I asked for their aid now, they would naturally conclude that I had done it all before. Not that I

was afraid of their discovering my identity—I merely wanted to let the mystery of *Singa* continue as long as possible. Moreover, the race-course was a risky spot for such activities and there was more chance of arrest than escape. If I was caught, I could take the consequences without involving others; but if they were arrested, it would not be so good. So I decided to do everything myself.

I bought a race card, which gave a full list of the day's events, and went promptly into one of the men's toilets. My first job was to paste a pamphlet on the inside of each W.C. door at the right height for anyone to read it easily without any fear. There were sixteen toilets, and soon there was a *Singa* communique behind each closed door. Then I hid my remaining pamphlets and the bottle of paste on the top of a water-cistern in one toilet. It was six feet from the ground so no one would notice them unless he put his hand up there—which no one was likely to do.

My next job seemed the hardest of *Singa*'s whole career. Could I paste my news-sheets outside on the posts and walls in front of the totalisator and the grand-stand? Could I fool the thousands of on-lookers all around? Could I use them as a sort of "blind?" Before leaving the toilets I took one news-sheet from my store, smeared some paste on the back of it and concealed it behind my race-card which I held in my right hand. Then I went out.

I walked straight to a post in front of the totalisator, which was the most crowded part of the course. Leaning my right shoulder against it I faced the totalisator, as though keenly interested in how the betting was going. Then I glanced around at the crowd with apparent amusement. A few seconds later I began to jot down the names of the jockeys on my race-card—a most common sight. Naturally, it was not easy to do in the air so to speak, so I turned round and rested the card on the post behind me. With the fingers of my left hand I set the edges of the news-sheet in line with the sides of the post—and when I strolled away still examining my race-card I left behind a *Singa* communique pasted-up for all to read.

Returning to the toilet I pulled out another news-sheet, smeared its back with paste, made my way to another post in front of the totalisator and repeated the performance there. So

I went on along that row of posts until ten of them bore similar posters, by which time I noticed excited crowds buzzing round the first ones and eagerly reading them. It seemed time to cease operations, and I sauntered casually to another part of the course where I could more safely watch proceedings.

To be caught reading a *Singa* communique was in itself a deadly offence in the eyes of the Japanese, but all freedom-loving people thought it well worth the nervous strain it caused them. I could see them slowly edging their way towards the posts, nervously glancing round to make sure that no Japanese were in the neighbourhood. Then they would give a few quick glances at the communiques to assimilate their contents and move hurriedly away so as not to be the first to incur the Japs' wrath. Before long, however, they would return to get a glimpse of what they had previously missed. Then as they mingled with the crowd with happy faces they would tell their friends what they had just read. Whereupon others would make their way to the posts to read it for themselves. From the remarks of people near me I gathered that the biggest surprise was the announcement of the air-raid due to take place next day. They could hardly believe that it was true. Some of them said that it definitely was not.

While I was thus watching the crowd, one of my most trusted and active agents, a Chinese called Leong Khai Swee, came up to me and said, "Gurchan, have you seen those papers on the posts there?" Pretending that I knew nothing about them I begged him to take me to the nearest one, saying that I would much like to read it. But when we approached the post we saw a small knot of people standing at a respectful distance, watching some Japanese officers reading the communique and then tearing it down. Before long the others were doing likewise elsewhere.

We discussed the most likely Japanese reaction to this latest act of provocation, and agreed that they would probably round up everyone present and subject them to a rigorous search and examination. "But," I said, "who do you think has been daring enough to do such a thing in broad daylight in front of all these people?" My friend Leong Khai Swee seemed amazed at my ignorance and replied, "But the Communists, of course. It's their work sure enough. Many of them must be

here to-day. I expect there'll be a general round-up soon." I nodded as though agreeing with him.

After my friend had left me I began to feel somewhat annoyed at the Japanese tearing down my news-sheets. It seemed as if they had beaten me, and I did not like that. On the other hand, if only I could paste-up some more on the same places, it would definitely give me the best of it and also cause a sensation. And wouldn't it raise the morale of the people, which was what I wanted to do, if *Singa* appeared for a second time on those posts like a phoenix arising from the shreds of paper to which the Japs had reduced him? Still it was more dangerous than ever, as the posts might now be kept under secret observation. The idea was too tempting, however. I decided to try not only to replace the torn news-sheets with fresh ones, but also to put one in the pavilion where only the "big shots" saw the races.

I returned to my store, pulled out another pamphlet, smeared its back with paste and went back to the course. Whether that post was watched or not I succeeded in pasting it up, then others as well besides one in the pavilion. A few minutes later I saw some armed Japanese followed by Asiatic detectives entering the Club, and I knew that the matter had been reported to the Kempetei. But what did I care? My work was done, and there was nothing to prove against me. Oh, yes, there was. When I looked at my hands I saw that they were all sticky and covered with dried paste. Quickly I went to wash them.

My second bill-posting certainly caused a sensation. All over the Club people were talking about it. No one could understand how the pamphlets which the Japs had destroyed had been so soon replaced by fresh ones. I overheard several people say that it must undoubtedly be the work of a large gang and that such a rash act terrified them. Some people afraid of being involved in a round-up even left the race-course. When I returned to the men's toilets about two hours later to see if my posters on the closet doors had been torn off, they were still there.

After the races the whole town was talking of what had happened, and discussing the air raid on the Sentul district announced for the following day. I was so thrilled at succeed-

ing in the distribution of my propaganda in broad daylight, that I began to wonder whether my Allied air raid might not have a similar success. I doubted it, however, for it was only guess-work. But now my announcement would at least achieve its purpose in persuading many workers to stay at home, thus delaying the Japanese war production.

On the fateful morning at about half-past seven a solitary Allied plane soared over Kuala Lumpur without at first attracting much attention. I was on my bicycle at the time approaching the town. Someone told me that it was not a Japanese plane. So I dismounted and started gazing into the sky, whereupon others did likewise. Before long the plane was out of sight, so I mounted my bicycle and rode on into the town. There I saw it coming back again. Everyone declared that it was not a Japanese plane. A few seconds later the air-raid siren sounded.

I watched it hopefully, thinking that if it would only drop a bomb somewhere I could claim my forecast as correct; but after about five minutes of leisurely flight it zoomed away.

Half-an-hour later came the first wave of bombers, three B29s. Could I believe my eyes? Yes, there they were—three of them, three monsters of the air. I was standing then on the roof of the highest building in Kuala Lumpur, and I admired them whether they had come for the express purpose of bombing the town or not. It was indeed a thrilling moment, anxious and awe-inspiring; I only prayed that they would lay a few eggs as they flew past over my head. But on they went till they appeared as small things near the far off horizon, and I feared that they had gone for good when I saw them turn. Back they came and a few seconds after they had passed over the building where I was, I saw the first bombs being released. They fell like balls tied together. Anxiously I wondered where they would land. Then I realised that it would be several miles away from me. But I lay down flat on the roof in case a splinter came my way. When I rose a few seconds after the blast a huge column of smoke was rising into the sky, and I watched the planes fly away into the horizon where they were lost to sight.

My joy knew no bounds. Had I not unwittingly foretold what was now really taking place? I waited there a few minutes

but as no more planes seemed to be coming I began to go downstairs. I had not gone far when three more planes appeared overhead, so I returned to the roof to watch a repeat performance. This time I did not lie flat when the bombs were released, but stood up to see them fly away. Turning round I saw two more waves coming, and both released their bombs on the same place. After that wave after wave of planes zoomed over, each one circling round before dropping its load of bombs and then rising again into the blue and sailing away to their base.

From where I stood it looked as though the bombs had fallen far beyond the Sentul area; but when after the raid I left the roof and went in that direction, I learnt from people on the way that it was not so. "It was Sentul all right," I said to myself laughing. My propaganda had proved to be one hundred per cent true—even to the date. What greater luck could I have wanted?

I counted that in all three hundred bombs had been dropped. Some went slightly astray, but most found their target, which was the railway workshops at Sentul. Much damage of serious consequence to the Japanese was sustained there. Unfortunately stray bombs that missed the target took a heavy toll of civilian lives in uncovered shelters and the workers' quarters. Over a thousand people were buried alive there, while thousands were rendered homeless. On visiting the whole area I found that the Allies had carried out their mission with the utmost consideration for the innocent; those who lost their dear ones or their homes knew that the stray bombs could not be helped.

The damage to the railway workshops was beyond repair for many months to come—if at all. I mingled with the crowds in Sentul and listened to the people talking of the terrible catastrophe—for such it was with thousands killed and wounded. They all agreed that the Allies were not to be blamed for what had occurred. Had they not given a clear warning of the intended raid on that area by means of *Singa*'s communique asking the workers and neighbouring inhabitants to get out of danger in time? What better warning could they have had? There were many ironical remarks, too, about the invincible—but apparently invisible—Japanese Air Force. More than satisfied by what I had heard I cycled home.

leaving these simple labourers to their own thoughts.

That night on listening to a broadcast from New Delhi I confirmed that the planes which raided Sentul were B29s; but no further details were given as the authorities were doubtless awaiting the results of air reconnaissance reports.

Two days later *Singa*'s latest communique appeared on walls and trees throughout Kuala Lumpur. It included a message from Eastern Bomber Command, sympathising with the innocent residents of Sentul who had lost their dear ones or their homes, but explaining that such unfortunate accidents were bound to happen in any raid, which was why a previous warning had been given to them. I mentioned as a fact what was really a fiction on my part, that whenever the Allies intended to carry out large scale bombing, they always warned the civilian population to escape to a safe area. From the many conversations I heard at the time, it was obvious that no one blamed the Allies for the heavy toll of life in Sentul. And their failure to do so was poison to the Japs. They did not know how to turn it to their advantage, nor what was their next best move. In their search for *Singa* they had enlisted the services of every suitable person, but entirely without success. They still had no clue to his identity or whereabouts, and not the slightest idea where to begin looking for him. After my correct forecast of the raid, they became quite nervous as to what *Singa* might do next. More and more agents were placed on their payroll; but my communiques continued to be pasted up every night.

Meanwhile, I decided to warn the townspeople of the possibility of another raid—this time in the Travers Road and Brickfields area. Almost at once people began to move out despite the threats of the Japs. Mixing freely with the inhabitants as they evacuated their homes, I was surprised to find what faith they had in my writings,

One night towards the end of February, 1945, I had a most strange dream, which was nevertheless very funny, too. In my dream I was asleep, then I was aroused by the Japanese Gestapo who had come to arrest me; but before they took me away my father intervened, saying, "Don't take my son, he is innocent." One of the soldiers replied, "We'll take you, too, if you talk any more." Whereupon my father turned to

me and said, "Son, if you can escape, do so, and then don't forget to cut your hair short. It would be a very good disguise." As I was being led down the hill from my house I made a dash for it, and managed to escape. Then I opened my eyes and to my surprise found myself in bed, and therefore knew that I had been only dreaming. Every incident in my dream was clearly stamped on my mind, however.

At breakfast next morning I related my dream to my family. My parents laughed heartily at the idea of my cutting my hair short and getting rid of my beard. As a staunch Sikh, in reality my father would be the last person to suggest such a thing, for it is strictly forbidden by the rules of the Sikh religion. And that religion commands its members to abide by these rules no matter what the consequences may be—even unto death. So my father could never have spoken as he did in my dream, which much amused us. I joined in their laughter; but my wife was silent, and suddenly she turned to me saying, "Are you doing anything that makes you afraid, and thus dream of your acts?"

Taken unawares I stumbled like a guilty person and fumbled awkwardly in reply, "I'm doing nothing wrong—I mean, I'm not doing anything. I just dreamt it that way."

"You are doing something then, I was sure of it," she persisted. "That's why you're afraid and have dreamt such things."

"Who said I was afraid of anything?" I protested, laughing. "It was only a dream. You know no one is safe now. We can't say what might not happen the next minute. If anyone hates another man, he can just spitefully tell the Japanese that his enemy is talking against them or listening to Allied broadcasts. It would be enough for that man to be arrested by the Japs."

Perhaps unconsciously my mother came to my aid, saying, "But what could my son be doing? He just dreamt of events no one has ever heard of, or likes to hear of, as we all do at times."

My wife, however, remained unconvinced, and said, "But why do you listen to the radio every night, when all of us are tired of telling you not to do it? Our neighbour, Inche* Ali,

* Inche is a Malay word meaning Mister.

has warned you, too, as he knows our house is being watched from near his own by a Malay detective called Mohamed Noor. He's a dangerous man, as you know well enough. Since he left this neighbourhood over a year ago he hasn't been near us, but for the last few days you can see him hanging around here almost every evening. Yet you seem to listen to the radio more than ever. It's on afternoon, evening and half the night."

"Don't you worry about Mohamed Noor," I said. "I know why he's coming to Inche Ali's house. That's why I leave the radio on so much. It's always tuned-in to a local Japanese station, he can't do anything about it then. I only listen to Allied stations for a few minutes, which won't ever be noticed. The only thing that worries me is whether that detective is putting in a false report about us."

"Can't you do anything about it?" she asked. "Why not see him? He might stoop to a bribe."

"He'd stoop all right," I replied. "I know him very well. Yes, I think it might be as well to give him some money."

"But if you're doing nothing against the Japanese, why are you so worried about it?" she enquired, pouring some coffee into my cup.

"You don't understand," I replied patiently. "They could arrest me though I'm doing nothing at all. They might ask why I'm not working for them. I haven't volunteered for the Indian National Army, which, as an Indian, I should have done. You see, if they say I'm doing wrong, it's wrong even if it's right. Many people are being arrested to-day for doing no more than that."

By then my parents had left the table and I was alone with my wife, so I spoke to her more frankly, saying, "Listen, darling, if anything does happen to me—if by any chance I am arrested you mustn't worry. You mustn't neglect the children, worrying about me. You must keep up your courage and look after them. As for me, I'll do my best to escape. Remember that, take care of the children and my parents, do your best to live somehow, and in the end I'll come back to you."

"I wonder if I could ever bring them up as you would wish," she replied wistfully, putting one hand on my shoulder. "But

there's one strange thing that's happened to you I still can't understand. Why do you go to bed so late every night?"

"There's nothing strange in that," I said. "What makes you think so? The only time I have to write letters to all my friends is at night."

"All right, you must do as you like," she said, rising and going out into the kitchen.

That night I brought out Communique No. 844. It was the first one that I managed to smuggle into the Indian National Army Camp at Kuala Lumpur.

CHAPTER IX

ON THE RUN

By now my communiques had an average daily circulation of four hundred copies in Kuala Lumpur and its immediate neighbourhood, without speaking of their distribution throughout the whole peninsula. It so enraged the Japanese that the Gestapo was ordered to start a country-wide search in the hope of thus catching *Singa* or his chief agents. Their most usual method was to grab some unsuspecting person, perhaps a labourer merely caught reading a communique, or someone indiscreet enough to mention the news in public. The unhappy man would then be submitted to all kinds of torture, in the attempt to force him to confess that he had seen someone pasting-up these perfidious notices.

One morning I walked into a nearby restaurant and sat down next to a group of six or seven Chinese, who were also there for a late breakfast. Not understanding their language I was unaware that they were discussing the latest *Singa* pamphlet. Shortly afterwards, ten Japanese soldiers, all armed and accompanied by a Malay and a Chinese detective, rushed in and surrounded their table. Muttering angrily and threateningly all the time, they roughly began their search.

I felt extremely nervous as I still had some pamphlets in my pocket, which I intended to deliver to two of my agents. I knew that I must get rid of them before the Japanese transferred their search to my table, so I casually put my hand in

my trouser pocket, cautiously removed the papers and dropped them on the floor under the table.

Now at least I could deny all knowledge of them, and hope for the best.

Carefully watching the search party at work, I noticed that though they found nothing they constantly slapped the faces of the Chinese, besides punching their heads and bodies, all the time asked one question: "Communist-ka?" meaning, "Are you a Communist?" After ten minutes' futile search they took them all away in a truck. I casually asked the occupants of another table, who had been watching the scene with ill-concealed fear, what had caused this arrest. They told me that the Chinese had been gossiping about the war news.

Two days later I met Mohamed Noor, the Malay detective who was still keeping my house under observation. I invited him to have a drink with me, and later asked him why he was doing so. With some hesitation he replied, "But who says I'm watching your house? It's not true."

"Look, Noor," I said, patting his shoulder, "we've been friends for many years, and before the war we worked together. Now you're working but I'm not. You haven't been round our way for over a year, but lately you've been coming to Ali's house every day. And all you do is sit on the stairs and keep staring our way. It doesn't take much common sense to spot your motive. Come on now, tell me what you want? What are you supposed to do?"

"I knew you'd suspect something," he replied somewhat awkwardly, but with something of his old friendliness, "and I don't want you to misunderstand me. I don't come here of my own accord. I've been posted here to watch your movements, those who come to your house, and when you turn on your radio. You see, I'm on duty, and if I don't do it the Japs will cut off my head."

"That's all right, Noor," I said, patting his shoulder all the more. "I'm glad you've told me exactly why you're here. I know you can't refuse when detailed for duty. But while you've been observing me, what have you discovered?"

"Nothing, and that's the truth. There's nobody coming to your house, and your radio is always tuned-in to the Kuala Lumpur station. That report about you that you're always

listening to British news is quite wrong. I don't know why anyone was fool enough to make it."

I realised at once that he had done so himself, reporting to the Japs that I had an unsealed radio on which I listened to Allied news. But I gave no sign of my suspicions that he was the informer, and merely said, "You know I'm a poor man with a big family to support, Noor. How could I have time for politics? But since you've told me about this report, tell me what you think I'd better do about it. I count on you to help me, and here are fifty dollars for your trouble. That's all I can afford, and I trust you'll tell your boss that it's a false report against me."

"Don't worry," he said, pocketing the money. "I know what to say. I'll see that report is destroyed."

Soon afterwards he left me, thanking me for the bribe I had given him as though I were paying him handsomely for services rendered, which indeed I was. At that time, and during the transition period after the Japanese surrender, Noor got so many people into trouble that no one grieved when some Allied partisans killed him. It seemed the just penalty for his sins.

On 2nd March, 1945, I was introduced to an officer of the Indian National Army, a captain who was in charge of the detachment stationed in camp at Kuala Lumpur. When Singapore fell in 1942 he had been a lieutenant in the British Indian Army. I became interested in him at once as I wanted to find out his feelings towards the Allies. We had met in the sitting-room of a friend, who was a strong pro-Allied man himself. During the course of our talk I asked him frankly, "Mr. Singh, what do you think of the Indian National Army?"

"Not much," he replied at once. "And that's the opinion of other officers besides myself. We joined for the sake of an easy life, to escape becoming prisoners-of-war and being sent to a concentration camp. But we're longing for a chance to get to the front."

"What, to fight against the Allies?" I asked.

"Nonsense, that's not our idea at all. But we'd like a chance of getting across the frontier into India, so we could go home."

"So you really believe Japan's going to win this war?"

"Japan win? Never!" he retorted scornfully. "Japan can't win. See what's happening in Imphal now. The tide's

definitely turned against her. Japan's days are over. She hasn't enough modern equipment for war in these days."

Then I asked a question that much interested me; "What are you members of the Indian National Army going to do in case of an Allied invasion of Malaya? Are you going to fight for the Japanese?"

"We officers have lost all faith in the Japs. If there's an Allied landing in Malaya, we'll turn the tables on the Japanese all right."

"And your men here in Kuala Lumpur—what will they do?"

"While I'm in charge they'll obey my orders," he replied shortly, adding, "but most of them are at one with us in this matter."

It was better news than I had dared to expect, much as I had longed to hear it. Then my friend who was entertaining us, asked me if I had received any of the latest communiques. I told him that one had come that afternoon, but I had left it behind at home, curious to see the Indian officer's reaction to my words. Immediately he asked, "What communiques are you talking about?"

"The *Singa* pamphlets," replied my friend.

"Do you get one every day?" he asked me with obvious astonishment.

"Yes, sometimes two or three times a day. Don't you get them, too?"

"No, though some were pasted-up on trees in our camp the other day—about two days after the Sentul bombing. That's the only one I've read. What's in to-day's communique?"

Pretending to recall what I read some hours before, I said, "The most important news to-day is that Kuala Lumpur is going to be bombed again on 10th March."

"And does it mention the target area as it did last time?" enquired the officer.

"Yes, it asks all the railway workers in the marshalling yards bounded by Brickfields Road, Travers Road, and Damansara Road not to go to work that day, and everyone else to get out of the area, too."

"This house isn't far from the yards. Do you think we shall be affected here?" interposed my friend.

"I expect it's just progaganda," I suggested.

"No, it's true enough," said the Indian officer. "The Allies do their best to save human lives, they always give a warning of a raid. They know that Malayans are longing for the day when the Japanese will be driven out of their country."

"That means the Allies are giving the Japs a chance to make preparations in advance, too," I remarked, laughing.

"What have they got to prepare?" replied the officer. "Where are their anti-aircraft guns? Not a shot was fired during that last raid. But those *Singa* communiques you get every day—do you think you could show them to me, too? I'd like to see the one you got to-day."

"Certainly, I know I can trust you," I said. "As luck would have it, I didn't burn it. Usually I destroy them pretty quick, you know how dangerous it is to be caught with one."

"Yes, we must be careful. I'll drive you back to your house in my car."

When we reached my home, I showed him my latest communique. He read it with much interest several times, and finally returned it to me, saying, "This is the stuff. The Allies really know what's good for the people. They must have sent some fine equipment to the people in the jungle who are doing this dangerous job. This pamphlet contains everything—news from all the war-fronts and the latest at that. You'll be doing a good job yourself if you pass it on to me. I promise you that I won't tell anybody, and will destroy it as soon as I've read it."

In order to show him that I did so myself I burnt it in front of him then. Before he left the house I invited him to dine with me the following Sunday, 4th March, which he accepted with apparent pleasure.

He arrived that evening with two of his friends as I had suggested. We started off with drinks and were soon talking freely. For a brief moment I felt I could relax and enjoy myself—yet unbeknown to me one of my best agents was being tortured by the Kempetei at that very hour. Meanwhile, we discussed the war in all its aspects. Towards the end of the evening I thanked one of the Sikh officers for his attitude towards the Japanese, knowing that one day these men would have a chance of showing their loyalty to the British and of winning again the respect of their fellow men.

Unfortunately, all this unaccustomed drink and congenial companionship went to my head, and long before my guests departed I had to be helped upstairs to bed and left to sleep it off. This must have been somewhere about 11 p.m. I remember nothing more.

At about midnight I was aroused from deep sleep. Vaguely I heard the voice of my younger brother, Gurdial, who had only returned from Penang a few days before. There was an urgent tone in his voice as he told me to get up at once. Slowly I opened my eyes. The light was on, and the room seemed full of people, all armed. For a moment I thought I was dreaming and this was part of my nightmare. All sorts of ideas chased through my mind, and it was some seconds before I realised that the dreaded Gestapo had come to my house. Then a revolver was stuck into my ribs and a harsh voice rasped in my ear: "Are you Gurchan Singh?"

"Yes," I replied as calmly as possible, "I am Gurchan Singh."

"Then you are *Singa*," bellowed the Jap.

Without giving me a chance to deny the charge they roughly dragged me off the bed and gave me a thorough search. Meanwhile, my bed was stripped, even the mattress and pillows being torn open. No weapon was found, but they were not content. Three of them stayed on guard whilst the other seven went downstairs. The first place they searched was the study, so I knew my number was up. Enough would be found there to prove beyond all doubt that, even if I was not the elusive *Singa*, at least I was a valuable tool of his.

Whilst the search went on I pondered on how they could have discovered my identity. My thoughts flew at once to the Indian National Army officer whom I had trusted, and I decided that he must have betrayed me. I was made to sit on the floor of the landing upstairs in front of the altar upon which lay a Bible. My younger brother was also made to sit there whilst the guards sat beside us with revolvers in their hands. One of them said, "You smell of drink. Have you been drinking?"

"Yes," I said, "I've been celebrating my brother's engagement."

They all burst into laughter. I laughed, too. Then in a loud voice I asked my wife who was downstairs to prepare some

coffee for them. The guards seemed to appreciate it, thinking me a kindly person. I kept cool, not showing the least sign of the ordeal I was going through. One of the guards got up and went to the altar, asking what was covered by the silk cloth. I said that it was a Bible. Then he poked about behind the altar, and brought out a basket full of radio parts. "And what is this?" he asked.

On the spur of the moment I replied, "Those are radio parts bought by my brother."

"Why did he buy them?" he asked. I told him that my brother was working in Penang for the Japanese who had sent him to Kuala Lumpur to buy radio parts for them. This was actually so. My brother had made this excuse in order to visit us but in fact, he had not taken the trouble to buy any.

He had really been collecting these radio parts for several months and hiding them here with the idea of constructing a transmitter, so that we could make our own broadcasts and also communicate with Allied aircraft when they came over Malaya.

Just then one of the Japs below shouted something to my guards, and I guessed rightly that they had discovered everything. I was taken downstairs and made to sit on one of the four chairs in my small lounge. The three guards sat alongside with their revolvers pointing menacingly at me. From my seat I could see the Japs continuing their search, and my wife standing by. She asked me whether I was to be taken away; but I was too full of mixed emotions to answer. I knew that the penalty for me would be death, but first they would delight in torturing me in the most cruel way possible. How would I react to their methods of obtaining information? But perhaps they would execute me at once in their fury at having found *Singa* at last, instead of trying to make me tell the names of my agents?

Silently I watched the Japs taking out of my study radios, typewriters, hand-printing machines and hundreds of copies of old communiques. They even held to the light sheets of carbon paper on which the signature of *Singa* could be clearly seen. This was obviously the end.

They will surely kill me, I thought. Why then should I first submit to inevitable torture? They will probably break

my spirit, I shall be reduced to revealing the names of my agents. But if I pretend to put up some show of resistance now, they will surely think that I am attempting to escape. Then they will fire, and three revolvers fired at me at such close quarters—it will be instantaneous death. I shall die happy, knowing that I have not betrayed my fellow workers, and that they will carry on with my job till the Allies come to our aid.

But what about my family? What would they do to them? In a hurry I prayed to God to have mercy on them—they are innocent, I said. My father and mother were in their room, whilst my children were still fast asleep. I took a look at my wife's face, then at my brother's, then again at my wife. I knew it was going to be the last time I saw her. Then I weighed the matter. It was one family against so many other families. To save other families I must get myself killed so that I could not talk? Yes, I must do that. Then the Japs would not get any more information than they had already, and that could hurt no one. There was no list of names in my house, nothing that could lead them to my agents. All of a sudden something told me that within the fraction of a second I must strike those three guards. They were sitting within arm's length of me, one on either side and the third in front. My mind started to work very quickly, but I gave no sign of it. I knew that at all costs I must remain cool and fearless even to the end—a sudden end to my life, which I must confess did not appeal to me. I felt that my work was unfinished. I prayed to God again, asking Him to give courage to my wife, my brother, my parents and children, that they could endure anything He should ask them to endure—even what might happen before their eyes. I felt sure that He would bless them as they were entirely innocent. For myself, I regretted nothing. In the same circumstances I knew that I would act again in the same way. It had been worth while. I had done my job. It would be an honourable death, or a lucky escape.

The guards were busy talking amongst themselves, their revolvers resting lightly against their thighs. I finished my prayer. Then throwing out my arms in a desperate gesture I punched two of them in the ribs and simultaneously kicked the one in front of me, causing all three to lose their balance and collapse on the floor beside their chairs. It was a stunt I had

often seen on the films—but now it was done with real precision. As they clumsily leaped to their feet and began to collect their wits, I darted off and bolted through a side door.

With each step I expected a shower of bullets, but I had taken twelve or fifteen strides before I heard the first shot. I took such enormous leaps that I soon found myself in the valley below my house. There are no set footpaths down the slope, but the whole hillside was well known to me. During those first few minutes salvo after salvo was fired blindly at me. As it was pitch dark I could not even guess if they were aiming accurately or not. My one thought was that I had got away, and must keep on moving. The darkness closed in behind me. I was safe, at least for a time.

I ran through the valley at a speed that would have broken any record. I felt completely mad, like an animal gone crazy—running on and on without knowing why. My feeling of safety wore off, and once again I thought of what might happen to me if recaptured. In my blind haste I ran full tilt into a barbed-wire fence. Its position was well known to me, but now all sense of direction had left me. It gave me several nasty cuts, and tore my shirt right off. Nevertheless, I kept on running, through all the small hills and valleys in which Kuala Lumpur abounds.

I reached the top of a hill partially covered with jungle, so I sat down and drew a few deep breaths. After a welcome respite of a minute or so I started the trek down the other side. I had gone only a few yards when some dogs began to bark furiously. Fearing that the Japs might also be there and nearer than I dared think, I made a detour and again climbed the hill. From sheer exhaustion I fell to my knees, and so began a long crawl beside roads, creeping through wire fences and getting more torn and wounded as I did so, until just before dawn I reached the house of a lady friend.

This lady and her husband had dropped in to dinner with me the previous evening, when I had been entertaining the Indian National Army officers. They seemed still asleep. I knocked at the door, knocked and knocked until at last a voice came from upstairs. "Who is there?" "Gurchan Singh," I said, "please open the door." At last it was opened by the lady in her pyjamas with her hair all loose. I went in and caught her

hand. "What is the matter with you?" she asked. Just then her husband came downstairs and joined us.

"After you had all gone home the Japanese raided my house, and they found what they wanted to find," I said.

"And what was that?" they asked.

"The *Singa* pamphlets which I've so often shown you. I managed to make a bolt for it. Now please let me have some clothes."

The lady went upstairs and soon brought me a white shirt and trousers. She also gave me one of her old sarees for my turban. As I changed I asked both of them, "Do you think that I.N.A. officer whom you introduced to me, and who dined with us last night, could have reported the matter to the Japanese?"

"I've known him a long time," said my friend. "I don't think he would do such a thing. I've been telling him all the pro-Allied news from the *Singa* communiques for months now. No, I don't believe he could have done it, though you can't trust anybody these days."

The lady then gave me a glass of milk, and her husband asked me if I needed any money. I said that I should much like to have twenty dollars, which he gave me. As the lady took me to the door she caught hold of my right hand in friendly encouragement.

It was far too dangerous to stay there any longer, so I left and made my way to my sister's home which I approached from the back. There I met my brother-in-law, Bachittar Singh, the managing director of the Punjabi newspaper. He was somewhat surprised to see me so early in the morning. I told him exactly what had happened. Thereupon he asked me, "What about the family? Have they taken them away?"

"I don't know," I said. "About half-an-hour after my escape I heard a few revolver shots on one side of the hill. It may have meant anything. Will you go to the house under pretext of wanting to buy one of the cows, and find out what has happened?"

He said that he would do so. Then my sister joined us, and my brother-in-law told her what had happened. She begged me to take care of myself, assuring me that she would do her best to look after my family. Then she gave me fifty dollars and her blessing, and I was off again.

Almost frozen with fear—but the feeling was of a different kind now, it gave me an uncanny cunning—I went to a coffee shop on the outskirts of the town, and ordered breakfast. Again I thought of my family. Had the Japs taken revenge on my wife and aged parents? Or perhaps on my young brother? I felt sure that they must have arrested him. Sitting there in that coffee shop I tried to think of anything I could do to save him.

Then an idea struck me—I would inform his boss in Penang who had sent him down to Kuala Lumpur to buy those radio parts, and perhaps he would come to his aid. It meant walking about two miles to a post office to send a telegram, and I might easily be recognised by someone on the way. But I had to take the chance of that for my brother's sake. So I left the coffee-shop and started walking, just keeping my eyes open and avoiding any of my friends whom I happened to encounter. The post office was closely guarded, but I went boldly in and sent a telegram to my brother's boss in Penang, telling him of my brother's arrest whilst in possession of spare radio parts, and asking him to come at once.

From the post office I made my way to a deserted railway station, Pantai, on the line from Kuala Lumpur to Port Swettenham. I remained there all day, sleeping in fits and starts on the one bench on the platform. By evening my feet were swollen and inflamed where the barb-wire had deeply pierced the skin. My breathing was also disturbed, owing to the strain of running up hills during the night. But I planned my next move.

In the evening I left the station and trekked along the line until I reached a coffee-shop in the Bungsar Road. By this time I was limping and made progress with great difficulty. Thankfully I sat down in the shop and ordered coffee and bananas. Just as I was sipping my hot coffee and feeling more capable of forming plans for a complete getaway, a car load of Chinese detectives drove up and stopped in front of the shop. I promptly looked the other way, feeling like a trapped animal that doesn't know which way to turn. By their actions I knew that they were looking for someone. My heart thudded, and I felt strangely sick and numb. One of them stepped out of the car, walked into the shop and began to talk to the proprietor.

Once or twice he looked at me, thus increasing my nervousness. Then the proprietor went to the back of the house, returning in a short time with a bicycle. He handed it to the detective, who mounted and slowly cycled away in the direction from which I had come. The car with the other detectives still remained outside the shop.

Mustering up all that remained of my courage I called the proprietor to bring my bill. He walked over, and I casually asked him about the Chinese who had taken his bicycle. He said that the man was a Japanese Gestapo agent, and had insisted on taking it. As discreetly as possible I quickly left the shop.

By this time dusk was falling. Again I made my way towards my sister's home, where I had been that morning. I was determined to learn what I could about my family's fate. Before entering the house by the back door I made sure that it was not being watched. The first person I met was my small nephew, and I whispered to him to call his mother as quietly as possible from upstairs. When she came followed by my brother-in-law, she said, "I sent our grass-cutter to your house this morning under pretext that he was a gardener. There he saw your wife untying your youngest daughter from a tree infested with red ants, to which she had apparently been tied by the Japanese. The little one must have been beaten, too, for she was unconscious. It was a Sergeant Nishi who did it. Your wife was still attending to the child when he interrogated her. She couldn't answer his questions, so he pushed the child on one side and started kicking her, shouting, 'You're a Communist. If you don't tell me the truth I'll kill you. Now tell me—who came to the house to see your husband?' Crying with pain your poor wife kept on saying that she knew nothing."

"And the child—what happened to the child?" I interrupted.

"She lay on the ground unconscious while Nishi went on beating your wife for more than an hour. Then he called your father out of the house. Father, nearly ninety though he is, walked slowly up to him and was very diplomatic. Sternly he told him that none of the other members of his family knew what you were doing. At first Nishi didn't believe him; but

fortunately he didn't strike Father. Finally, he told him to get Mother and your wife ready, as he was going to take them away. It was here that Father showed how stubborn and brave he can still be. There he stood, and he wouldn't budge an inch. He just said that he wouldn't let them go; but that if Nishi thought they were guilty, he could shoot them all. Nishi said that three shots cost money, therefore he couldn't kill them. So Father offered to pay for the shots. Nishi laughed, and after some further argument agreed not to take them away, but said that they must find out where you were. Then about fifteen armed Japanese who apparently had been searching the hills, came to report to him. And Nishi turned to Father and said that he must go out to look for you."

"What happened to my wife and the child?" I asked.

"She took the child to the bathroom, washed her face and gave her some water. The little one's all right now. About midday they took Gurdial away, and a guard was posted in front of the house, which has been visited by many Japanese officials. They all came out with something in their hands. A lot of things have been taken away."

Turning to my brother-in-law I asked him whether he had been to my house himself. He said that he had paid it a brief visit. "The whole town has heard about you and your amazing escape," he added. "Everyone says that you must be *Singa* yourself. The Japanese are now going to the houses of all your friends."

This was all I wanted to know, and borrowing a blanket from my sister I went on my way. Walking cautiously along the side streets until outside the town and some distance down the Klang Road, at last I reached one of my family's small rubber estates, where I decided to remain at least for a time. An aged Chinese caretaker was living there in an old shack. He was extremely surprised to see me at such an hour and in such a condition, so I hastily invented a story that would not tell him too much. I said that I had had a quarrel with a Japanese soldier and unfortunately had struck him, whereupon I had been pursued by his friends. I casually mentioned that as this row had taken place in front of my own house, it would be watched and I could not return there. Although he shook his head wisely, saying, "It's not good to quarrel with

one's masters," I knew that he was delighted with my story. I slept like a log that night, but wakened early feeling stiff and sore in every joint. I was worried, too, by not having put more distance between myself and the Japs, who by now would have search parties out on all the roads. After a wash and a brief sun-bath I felt in better spirits, and giving the old man some loose cash asked him to take a bottle and buy me some bread and coffee. He toddled away at once, glad of the chance of doing even such a small thing which the Japs would consider wrong.

After eating I went round the estate, finding that the grass had grown very high since the Occupation, and that the undergrowth was rapidly reverting to towering jungle. No rubber trees had been tapped for three years or more. By concentrating on these minor problems I cleared my mind for a short time of all the worries that had mounted up in the last few hours. But the thought that perhaps the Japs would again torture my wife and children chilled my blood, and a frenzy of rage consumed me until I nearly returned to my home—for what, I did not know. After steadily prowling around the thick undergrowth for two hours I felt tired, so I climbed a small knoll, sat down and looked at the town in the distance, wishing that my house was in sight.

Again, although against my will, my thoughts returned to my family. None of them had known anything about my young brother's work obtaining radio parts; they were completely innocent of any charges brought against them by the Japanese. From bitter experience I knew that the Japs would probably drag them off to prison, if they did not shoot them on the spot and then fire the house. Too many of my acquaintances had been served thus for me to doubt what would happen in my case. At last the Japs had caught almost red-handed the hated *Singa*—the man who had had the audacity to mix freely with senior Japanese officers, who had been given passes to travel around the whole country unmolested! No, with bitterness in my heart I realised that my family would be made to pay now for what I had done. Then my bitterness melted, and I began to cry. I felt so utterly baffled at being whole and able-bodied, yet completely powerless to help those whom I loved more than anything on earth.

Those who speak so glibly of patriotism have never experienced such pangs as I felt then sitting on that hill in all the quiet beauty of a Malayan early morning. I knew that if I could escape my work would have to go on, and that it was quite impossible for me to see my family again at that moment. And I wondered if I would ever see them again. Perhaps it was this very feeling that everything was in the lap of the gods, or one God, that made me vow there and then to carry on my fight against this Fascism which was slowly but surely rotting Malaya—carry on to the end.

With that resolve, suddenly and inexplicably I felt lighter hearted. I concentrated my thoughts on how the Japs had learned enough to come to search my house. I recalled again the dinner-party which I had given that evening to the Sikh officer and his two friends. The brother-in-law of one of these men had held a high position in the British Government service before the war, but since then had collaborated with the Japanese, turning tail at the crucial hour when the British Army had started their retreat down the long coast roads of Malaya.

It was a well-known fact that this rat had sold to the Japs many British and Malayan secrets. He had soon earned the goodwill of all the principal Japanese officers, and was given a job as confidential adviser to the Jap Intelligence Bureau. One of his first acts had been to write reports on everyone ever suspected of any kind of political work—that is to say, on all anti-Fascists. He was rewarded for this work by a special recognition. Thus the Kempetei were soon able to arrest many people who might otherwise have been able to help us in our work against the Occupation authorities. On the Japs' arrival in Kuala Lumpur he had immediately been arrested, and as quickly released. It was this which had first made me suspect his future employment. So he was at the top of my list of possible traitors.

Then I recalled a certain incident which had occurred only two days before. There was a man whose duty it was to broadcast anti-Allied news on the radio every day. Part of his job seemed to be to denounce the Allies in the most filthy language. On that particular day I had met him in company of two of his Japanese Gestapo friends. He had boasted to me of having

been recently promoted for his work on behalf of the Japanese Empire. I asked him if he thought he was giving a true picture of the news to the people of Malaya, and he had replied that I had better be careful—obviously, I still believed in an Allied victory, which proved me to be a non-co-operator. He emphasised that most Asiatics were now convinced the Japanese would soon free them for ever from Western domination. Then we would all live happily together. I laughed and chaffed him for speaking of "co-prosperity".

"Yes, you're right," I said, ironically. "That's the word for the mutual benefits to be enjoyed by everyone in the future. Japan is fighting for her own prosperity, whilst the other Asiatics will have what remains at the core of the fruit which she's devoured."

Going even further, I asked him what he really thought about the outcome of the war. Speaking confidentially he told me that I could rest assured all three partners of the Axis would eventually win. Victory was theirs—and he was in a position to know. Thereupon, I had pointed out why I thought that he was wrong, asking him if he realised that the Allies were only five hundred miles from Tokyo, besides their advances on the other fronts. In my enthusiasm I became unusually careless. He had promptly asked me where I had got the news. I replied that I had seen a *Singa* pamphlet on the pillar outside Broadcasting House, where he had been working that morning. "And some of your staff were reading it at the same time," I added mischievously. "In fact, it was their excitement that made me cross the road to read it for myself." Warning me that I would get into serious trouble if I were rash enough to believe and spread such false news, he had quickly taken leave of me.

And perhaps that is how Jap agents set their traps for unsuspecting victims, I thought now, kicking myself for having fallen into it.*

* Since the defeat of Japan and the arrival of the British Military Administration, these two war-time collaborators with the Japanese have cunningly persuaded their new masters that they only acted thus to save their own lives; as a result, they have now been given important work in the Government service.

Perhaps there is some truth in the saying, "Set a thief to catch a thief". But the Malayan public has a long memory and will not forget. It is such incidents, however, which have hurt the feelings of many loyal citizens who

As I sat recalling every small incident that might have caused my arrest, I remembered a third possible suspect—Mohamed Noor, the Malay detective working for the Japanese who had been keeping my house under observation. He knew well enough that I was strongly anti-Japanese and had a radio. My neighbours had warned me that he had been asking questions about my set. Probably he had betrayed me in spite of the bribe which I had given him.

It seemed useless to go on puzzling about it—as a loyal citizen I had other more pressing duties. The Japs had already signed my death sentence, and would get me one day. But what could I do? First, I must give my public a swan song. How to print it, though? I decided to wait until darkness fell, when I would slip out for food and also buy paper, pen and ink.

This meant a long walk in the dark, but I was truly thankful that the moon was in its last quarter. I walked boldly into a shop and ordered dinner. After eating as much as I could—I was not sure when I might get another meal—I made my way to the house of one of my agents, a Siamese-Malay called Jaffar, who had not seen me since my escape.

There was no mistaking the happiness on his face when he recognised me, and realised that I was still safe. He gave me all the paper I needed, and I returned to my house on the rubber estate.

Next morning I visited the house of another agent, the railway guard, Bhag Singh, who should have returned from the north that morning. Shortly after my arrival he came in and was greatly surprised to see me. Why had I got up so early, he asked. Without troubling to reply I questioned him about the letters containing pamphlets which I had given him. Were they still concealed on his person, or had he delivered them? They had all been delivered. Then I told him everything that had happened since I had last seen him before his journey to Ipoh. He listened in silence, then threw back his

suffered so much under the Jap regime. They believed that a just government would investigate administrative inefficiencies and injustices. These ex-collaborators now working for the Government should be treated as such, otherwise the Malayan public will come to the conclusion that the guilty can escape justice far too easily. If it had not been for the amnesty declared by the British Government, they would never have escaped.

head laughing quietly to himself, and said, "So after all you are *Singa*?"

I could not deny it any more. What was my next move, he wanted to know. I asked him if he was brave enough to risk taking me with him on his train the next time he was detailed for Singapore. He carefully worked out his duty shift and told me that his next trip to Singapore would be on 10th March, but warned me to turn up on the previous evening so that we could make our final plans. As he was off duty for the day we spent many hours talking and plotting, also discussing *Singa's* swan song.

After dark I left his house and again returned to the rubber estate, where I decided to remain in hiding until 10th March. All next day I worked hard on my last communique, which I intended to issue in Kuala Lumpur that same evening. Finally I got it to my liking, and it read:

ALLIED H.Q. COMMUNIQUE No. 854 of 9th March, 1945
THE SWAN SONG

This is the last communique to be issued in Kuala Lumpur. To-morrow is the day. Do not go to work to-morrow, especially those of you who work in Government factories, the Railway Workshops, and the areas surrounding Brickfields Road, Travers Road, and Damansara Road. Tell the Japanese that you dare not risk it. Tell them that similar warnings were given to workers at the Sentul factories, where hundreds died at their benches. Thousands of relatives of those killed at Sentul regret not having taken my warning. If you go to work to-morrow it may well be your last day.

Here is another warning to all freedom-loving people of Kuala Lumpur. It is not long now that the time will come for the Axis to admit they are beaten. Till that time comes you will see many Allied planes around, the crews of which are risking their lives for your freedom and mine. In case they get into difficulties and parachute down it will be your duty to help them. Later you will be rewarded. It does not pay to betray, and those who do so will be found out. A parachutist may become a prisoner, but a revolver cartridge will be your just punishment.

The Last Warning

It is now clear that the Axis nations are fighting a losing battle and therefore the war has to end some day. Perhaps it will take longer that we should hope, but it will be finished in another six months from to-day. But you can help to make that day arrive more quickly by playing your part in sabotage and acts of non-co-operation. Just as in Germany, thousands have arisen to take their place in the final fight for Democracy, so you, too, are required to rally round and to play your part in this last effort.

SINGA.

This communique was handwritten, and it was the first time I had done so much at one shot in this manner. By evening I had prepared twenty-eight copies of it. After using a spare ration of tapioca flour to make some paste I wondered where I could scrounge a bicycle. I decided that stealing one would be no greater offence than some of my other crimes, at least in the eyes of the Japs.

By this time it was 7 p.m. A solitary Japanese soldier was cycling towards me, singing happily to himself. Spotlessly dressed in white duck he was obviously thinking of some pleasure in store. Looking hastily behind me I saw that the road was deserted; we seemed to be the only people around at that moment. As he passed by me I pounced on him, and he fell off his bike. With a smart punch to the jaw followed by two more on the chin he was soon half-conscious. I rolled him off the road, hastily mounted and rode away. Speed was a matter of life and death to me, there wasn't a minute to lose.

The next evening I cycled along and pursued my usual tactics of pasting-up my communiques, concentrating mainly on the factory district. I saw one of my old agents and managed to speak to him for a minute, telling him to meet my other brother-in-law, my wife's cousin, and ask him to come to see me next day at the rubber estate. Feeling justifiably proud of my last effort I returned to the deserted estate and slept much better.

Next morning I sat down at a point where I could observe my brother-in-law approaching at least ten minutes before he could reach me. I wanted to make sure that nobody was following him. When he arrived at the shack he looked around

for me, and five minutes later I went up to him. He brought some food for me. As I had had no breakfast and felt quite hungry, I enjoyed a delicious meal. Meanwhile, I asked him if he had been to my house since my escape.

"I've been going there regularly for the last three days in spite of the guard," he said.

"How is everything there?" I enquired.

"Your brother was released yesterday on condition that he would search for you. If he can't find you, he'll be arrested again. Since yesterday he's been going about with two detectives. He seems to be watched all the time. The Kempetei have warned him that it's his duty to help them in their search for you, and if possible to contact you and say that if you surrender they will grant you a pardon; but that if you refuse to give yourself up they will execute you. The Japanese have searched your house over and over again, and taken something away every time. They removed a box containing $11,000 in British Malayan currency; but twice overlooked a small box containing $7,500 in Japanese currency. It was eventually taken, however. They also overlooked another box containing your wife's jewellery and $200 in British currency, which she has now hidden in the cow shed."

"Are the Japanese still beating her?" I asked.

"There's one man called Nishi, whom the family have nicknamed 'The Butcher'. He beats her whenever he goes to the house."

That was enough to break my heart. I could not eat any more. My heart felt very heavy. For a moment I could not speak. Then turning to my brother-in-law I said, "Why are they beating her? What are they asking her?"

"Whenever they beat her they ask the names of the people who visited you. Then they tell her that this is the result of loving her husband."

"What does she say?"

"That she doesn't know the names of any people who visited you. That they had better shoot her at once as she can tell them nothing. Yesterday 'The Butcher' beat your son, too. Your wife fell at his feet, begging him not to; he just kicked her aside, but she still clung to his legs. Then he became fed-up and left."

"Does 'The Butcher' go there every day?" I asked.

"Yes, and also makes secret raids on the house in the middle of the night. Two nights ago when he and his men were on their way to the house at about 3 a.m., one of the cows got loose. Your mother was awakened by the noise. She switched on the light, went out and tied up the cow again, then returned to bed switching off the light. The Japanese, observing this light go on and off thought that you must have returned, and after hiding behind some bushes for a while surrounded the house and ordered the door to be opened. Your mother opened it, and then they ransacked the house. While doing so one of them threw a cigarette stump on the floor in your room. After searching for you everywhere in vain they left, but returned a few hours later. When one of them entered your room he found the cigarette stump, and quickly calling the others said that it proved you had spent the night there. 'The Butcher' showed it to your wife, whereupon she laughed. Enraged, he slapped her; but she told them that you don't smoke at all. With some difficulty she convinced them that no Sikh smokes, and that one of their own men must have dropped it. So realising their mistake they left her alone."

"By the way, what's happened to the two Australian sheep dogs?" I asked. "Don't they bark now when anyone approaches the house?"

"You'll be sorry to hear that they've both been poisoned," he said sympathetically. "You know how they used to bark when strangers got within fifty yards of the house, The Japanese thought them a menace, and therefore poisoned them. Both of them died within the hour."

That made me boil in hatred more than ever. The two dogs were my pets. I loved them so much; especially during my hours of listening to the radio they did yeoman service by keeping a lookout for anyone coming near the house.

For a while I was silent, thinking about all that he had told me. Then I said, "When next you go to my house, please tell my wife this: If the Japanese question her again, she must pretend that she had not been happy with me—she must explain that I had often ill-treated her and had not spoken to her for over two years. She must abuse me, and even mention another woman. In proof of all this she can say that it was

why she had not had another child since 1941, though before then in the six years of our marriage we had four children. It might help if she could make the Japanese believe such a story. Then tell my parents and my wife that you've seen me and that I'm all right; that they mustn't worry about me as I know how to take care of myself; that the war will soon be over and then I'll return to them."

In reply to more anxious questions from me my brother-in-law said that immediately after my escape the Japs had made my parents dress in preparation for being taken away; but my old father had saved the situation with his obstinacy. First, he had refused to get dressed. Then he had haughtily asked the Japs if they thought that he and his wife knew everything their sons did. As for himself he was an old man and would prefer to be shot at once rather than submit to such treatment at the hands of people unwilling to believe his words. He had made quite a speech, reminding them that he had lived peacefully in Malaya for over fifty years, and had never taken any interest in politics as he considered himself a guest in the country. He also told them that he had lost one son owing to the war, and now another one had been shot. At this last remark of his the Gestapo agent became very angry, threatening him with heavy punishment if he ever said again that his son had been shot, for they had not shot him. But the old man stood his ground, insisting that they had fired so many salvoes at me I must surely have been hit, and that either my body had been quietly taken away or that I had been left to die somewhere. And now they were trying to arrest the family in order to cover up their actions. Finally, he refused to budge an inch, challenging them to shoot him on the spot as they had done his son. Obviously surprised by such a tirade, they had tried to pacify him, and then went away leaving a few guards round the house and telling my father that as head of the house it was his duty to inform them if his son should try to visit him. My father had agreed that it was a fair proposition.

My brother-in-law also told me that there were rumours that I had been seen leaving the town the day after my escape, driving a car but almost unrecognisable as I had cut off my beard, moustache and hair. This, and the fact that I had been

seen without my turban, had convinced many people that I had already got clean away. I laughed heartily at the idea, though it was no surprise to me. I had already thought of cutting off my hair, I told my brother-in-law, Sajan Singh; but had not done so since I did not want to go against my religion. He strongly advised me to do it now, saying that in a case of life and death it was reality that mattered, not a few qualms about religion. He added an important point which I had overlooked: as it was under compulsion it would surely be forgiven. Moreover, he said that the Japs had removed from the house every photograph ever taken of me,

That came as an unpleasant surprise to me. There were four albums containing in all more than four hundred snapshots of me, some at school, some at sports since I had finished my school days. Even my letters from old friends written many years before had all been taken away.

I agreed that it would better for me to remove all trace of beard and growth from my face. So my brother-in-law went away to deliver my messages, after first giving me a hundred dollars.

On his departure I sat down and thought about this latest problem of shaving and cutting off my hair. My father is an ardent Sikh, and thus I had not wanted him to have the shock of hearing that I had shaved myself. Our Sikh religion forbids us to cut the hair or to shave. But obviously my best chance of survival was to get myself shaved as quickly as possible.

So I borrowed a pair of shears from the old Chinese caretaker, also a dirty mirror. With lots of cuts and gashes everywhere I managed to clip my beard until merely a stubble remained. Next my hair. I hacked and cut away until I thought it was short enough for me to visit a barber's shop without attracting too much attention. Next door to it there was a bicycle-repairing shop whose owner knew me. He was standing just outside as I passed, and thinking that he must have recognised me I wished him good evening. He returned the greeting but obviously without knowing who I was.

As I sat in the barber's chair I had another unpleasant shock. A policeman walked in and came right up to the chair in which I was sitting. My heart beat faster and faster—surely he must recognise me as I was well known to the police force.

I perspired and could not control my feelings. Plucking up courage I looked into the mirror opposite, as I heard the barber say, "No, I have no money, you must come back to-morrow." Just as my pulse was slowing down I heard him ask if Singa had yet been caught, "No," replied the policeman, "he's still at large in Kuala Lumpur." And he went on to that more *Singa* pamphlets had been stuck up during the night, warning the people of another air raid on Kuala Lumpur next day.

"But," protested the barber, "you told me yesterday that *Singa* had already gone to Ipoh, a town some hundred and fifty miles away, where he was caught and shot dead while attempting to escape."

"That's not true, two Chinese friends of mine saw him in town early this morning," explained the policeman. "Whilst he and his agents pasted-up the notices others kept watch. They were all armed. My friends dared not go too near him."

This made me laugh inwardly, though not at my present situation.

"Do you really think there's anything in the story that Kuala Lumpur is going to be bombed?" persisted the barber.

"Well, many people believe it because his last warning proved true enough," replied the policeman, and sat down in the chair next to mine.

I was afraid of fainting from the nervous strain. The barber took another few strokes at me with the razor, then continued his chat by enquiring where the policeman intended to shelter next day. The latter replied that whatever happened he was getting out of town. This seemed to give the barber a few nervous tremors, too, for his hand shook, causing me quite a lot of pain as the razor was scraped over my unaccustomed skin.

"Do you think that *Singa* will ever be arrested by you or the Japanese?" he asked, obviously eager to speak of something more interesting and forbidden than an air raid.

"I don't believe the Indian police would ever try to arrest him," said the policeman. "They'll probably help him to get away if they can; but as likely as not the Malay members would hand him over to the Japs, given the chance. *Singa* was working with me in the police before the war, and was

made a detective because of his influence with the people."

The barber began to wipe the soap off my face with a towel, and just then the policeman fortunately went out. So I asked the barber what he had meant by speaking of bombing expected next day. "What! Haven't you heard that there are notices all over the town giving us all fair warning?" he replied. I pretended to be surprised, and he assured me that if I walked up the road and through the town I would hear everyone talking of nothing but the forthcoming raid.

"But who has put up these notices?" I enquired.

"Some say it's an Indian known as *Singa*. He had a secret wireless station somewhere, and the British have directly informed him of their raids. They will surely come to-morrow."

"And do the Japs allow this sort of thing to go on?" I queried innocently.

"Well, sir, whatever *Singa* says is going to happen does happen. Last time he gave a warning about an air raid on Sentul, and the people over there who didn't believe him were unlucky."

"And where is this man *Singa* now?"

"In Kuala Lumpur, but they can't catch him because he always has with him a large gang of armed Chinese to protect him."

I handed the barber a ten dollar note, pocketed the change and left the saloon, cross with myself for having wasted so much time. I had an appointment to keep that night at the railway guard's house, and only a few hours in which to think over my coming trip to Singapore.

CHAPTER X

SINGAPORE BOUND

"Bhag, did you go to town this morning?"

I was talking to the railway guard, Bhag Singh, in his small sitting-room that evening after meeting him at his house at 7 p.m., and was curious to know whether there had been any reaction to "*Singa's* Swan Song" which the public should have seen that morning.

"Yes," he replied, "I met many of my friends, too, and they were all talking about you."

"What did they say?" I asked.

"Everyone seems happy about your escape, but there's a terrific manhunt going on in town, and all your friends and acquaintances are afraid of being arrested as your supposed agents. It seems to be generally believed that you've joined the guerrillas in the jungles up north. Some say that you've gone to Ipoh, however, because you used to live there."

"What about the 'Swan Song'? Are people talking about it?"

"I'd say they are! Everyone's discussing to-morrow's raid. You're going to be wrong there, you know. You shouldn't have mentioned an actual date or a target area. Anyway, I don't believe that there'll be any more Allied raids on Kuala Lumpur for some time to come."

"Is that what most people say?" I enquired.

"Oh, no, everyone expects a raid to-morrow, they're sure it will come off because of your correct warning of the Sentul raid. As for your 'Swan Song', they don't suspect you posted it up, but think your agents are carrying on your work. Why did you take such a risk? It won't do you any good. You've got a reputation now for telling the truth, people respect you for it and trust you; but it's not going to look so good when that raid doesn't come off to-morrow. When I helped you to make up that 'Swan Song' of yours, I thought you were fooling and just did it to make you forget your worries. I never imagined you'd be daring enough to go into the town like that and stick it up yourself."

Bhag Singh looked at me quite angrily, as though I had let him down personally, and I hastened to reassure him, saying, "Never mind—if Kuala Lumpur isn't bombed to-morrow we'll put up another notice somehow. The Japanese are always bluffing, can't we bluff for once? And you know once I've set my heart on a thing I must do it no matter what happens. Now tell me, have you heard any news of my brother?"

"Yes, it seems he's been released by the Japs and told to look for you," replied Bhag Singh, beginning to smile. "But I think he's doing a bit of bluffing, too. He's not really out to get you, but he's made the Japs believe he is."

"If you see him, don't tell him you've met me," I said. "Talk to him first and find out what he intends to do. He knows that you're one of my agents, so he's sure to talk to you frankly. You'd better sympathise with him in the suffering I've caused the family, and thus find out his attitude towards me. Then, if you think he's all right, tell him not to worry about me as you've seen me; but otherwise, don't tell him anything, you can even say that you're willing to help him to find me. By the way, have you seen the lady to whose house I went that morning of my escape, the one who gave me a shirt and a pair of trousers?"

"Oh yes, I met her the other day," replied Bhag Singh. "She's a very talkative lady, too, and might easily give you away by a slip of the tongue. She told me all about your visit that morning. The next time I meet her I'll give her a piece of my mind and tell her to keep her mouth shut, or she'll get you into trouble. She's even more foolhardy than you are, and the way you go on beats me. Aren't you afraid of being caught?"

"God has saved my life once and will do so again," I said. "He knows that I am fighting for a just cause. We can't give up our work when we've almost completed our task."

"You mean to say that all those helping the Allies are fighting for a just cause?" he asked, wrinkling his brows.

"Certainly I do."

"But why should they die then?" he said. "If God knows that they are fighting for what's right, He should save their lives."

"Are you a believer in destiny, Bhag?"

"Yes, why?"

"If you are, you should know that everyone's life has an appointed day for its end; if that day has not arrived, nobody can take that life; but if that day has arrived, nobody can lengthen it. That is how I see it. I must and will always do whatever I think it right, not caring what others think about it. In so doing, if my appointed day has not arrived I shall be successful; but if my day has arrived, well, that is the end of it."

"So that's why you're so reckless, is it?—why, you give them chance after chance to catch you, but they can't!"

"That's quite true," I said, "My day is not up yet, and therefore I have succeeded in what I do to this moment. I am destined to live longer, so nobody has been able to shorten my life. I have always taken chances, and will do so to the end. Do you know that this is my tenth life?"

"What, this is your tenth life?" he queried.

"Yes, I am living my tenth life now," I replied. "The first time I escaped death was when I was less than six months old, according to my mother. We were living at the time beside a river. There was a fresh breeze that day, and my mother put me to sleep on a small bed outside the house in the shade of a coconut tree. Leaving me there with our dog sitting beside my bed she went to tie up the cows in the fold. While she was away a moderate-sized alligator came out of the bushes on the riverbank towards my small bed. On seeing it the dog rushed at it barking loudly, and halted it for a moment. It was coming on again, however, when my mother, alarmed by the noise of the dog hurried back. On seeing her rushing towards it the alligator scurried into the bushes and thence to the river. That was my first escape from death."

"And the next time, when was that?" asked Bhag Singh.

"A few years later when I was about seven. We were still living in the same house beside the river where I was born. To cross it when it was in flood we had to use a bamboo raft. One day I was on the raft with many other people—I don't know who they all were except that one of them was Mr. L. S. Bul, now my agent in Singapore. I don't remember exactly what happened, but somehow or other I fell off the raft into the river. I can still see myself going down into that yellowish-brown water. Then Mr. L. S. Bul saved me. A few years later again—it was in 1924 when I was only ten—I was returning home from school and took a short cut from one road to another across a playing field. I had nearly reached the other road when I saw a wire lying within six inches of the ground. It had been brought down by a falling tree. I wanted to stamp on it, but something told me that I must not—not that I knew it was a live electric wire, but something told me not to do it. So instead of putting my bare foot on it I stepped over it. I had gone on but a few paces when a dog, trying to cross it touched it, and with a terrific yelp fell dead."

"And you had still further escapes?" said Bhag Singh, obviously impressed.

"There were no incidents for some years after that till 1933 when I joined the Mount Everest Expedition. I had three falls on overhanging rocks, which would have meant certain death each time if I had not managed to find hand and foot-holds. That makes seven times that I escaped death. So I was in my eighth life when war came. Then I was arrested, tortured and sentenced to death by the Japanese, but reprieved. My ninth life came to an end when I escaped from the Japs the other day, and from their bullets shot at almost point blank range. So this is my tenth life."

"I only hope I have so many lives," said Bhag Singh, scratching his head and smiling, "I'll live to a century then. God has truly been very kind to you. I wonder why He's spared you so many times? What's He keeping you for? For all I know He may not give you another chance, so don't take any risks."

Then we went on to talk of other things, and I asked Bhag Singh whether he had heard any other news in town. Had the Japanese made any fresh arrests?

"Oh yes," he replied, "they've arrested several people already, I believe."

"Have you any idea who they are?"

"Not much, but one of them is a friend of yours, I think."

"Who is it?" I enquired anxiously.

"You know that milkman I've often seen you speaking to—I don't know his name, but you introduced him to me once in Batu Road."

"You mean Bhagat Singh?"

"Yes, that's the man, and it seems he was arrested the same day they tried to catch you."

That made me think hard. Bhagat Singh was one of my agents. How could he have been arrested? The same day that the Japs had surprised me at my house at midnight, too. Could it possibly be that milkman, Bhagat Singh, who had given me away? It was a new idea, and I began to consider its possibilities.

"What's the matter?" interrupted Bhag Singh. "Don't tell me that he was one of your agents?"

"If it's really Bhagat Singh, indeed he was," I replied with a deep sigh. "Anyway, try to find out how he was arrested and when it happened."

I recalled an incident that had occurred some months before in December, 1944. Another agent of mine, Ganga Ramasamy, had seen Bhagat Singh with one of my communiques in a certain Malay girl's house. "Yesterday I went to a house in Hale Road," Ganga had said, "and there I met a milkman who showed us a copy of the same communique you gave me yesterday morning. I asked him where he got it, but he wouldn't say. Did you give it to him?" These words had made me boil within. I had warned my agents not to show the communiques to every Tom, Dick and Harry, but to pass them on to a small circle of trusted friends with similar instructions. And here was Bhagat Singh showing one to a complete stranger! I was furious. But I replied casually to Ganga, "I'm only getting one communique daily, and I'm giving it to you. That milkman must be getting them from someone else."

When I met Bhagat Singh next morning I refused to give him any more communiques, saying that it was a lucky thing for him the man who had seen him with one was a friend of mine and not a Gestapo agent. For a whole month I evaded him, then he came up to me begging me to let him have the communiques every day as before, and promising to be more careful in future. His friends, and their friends too, were making his life a burden by continually asking him for more communiques. He admitted that he had been careless in his eagerness to interest a wider public, but swore that he would never do it again. He also said that if he were caught he would take the inevitable Japanese punishment and torture without disclosing that he had got the communiques from me. I thought that I had punished him enough by withholding them for a month, and as I wanted as large a public as possible to read them I had resumed supplies to him from then onwards. And now he had been arrested. What could it mean?

I asked Bhag Singh if he was sure that the milkman had been caught with the pamphlets on his person on the same day as my own arrest. When he replied that he was quite certain, I began to see daylight about that sudden arrival of the Gestapo at my house, which at the time had puzzled me so

much. None of my previous suspects such as the Indian Army officers had betrayed me—it must have been Bhagat Singh. I could imagine only too well how he had been tortured by the Japs in order to make him tell who had given him the pamphlets. It was useless to worry about it any more, so we started discussing the next day's programme.

"I want to take my bicycle to Singapore, Bhag," I said. "Which is the best station for you to get me and it on board without any difficulty?"

"If you can ride to one of the small stations outside Kuala Lumpur, it will be all right," he replied.

"What about Bangi, that small station some twenty-three miles south on the Singapore line?"

"It will do nicely. If you can get there, I'll be able to take you aboard without any trouble."

The train would reach Bangi at about 4.30 p.m., and being a small station it would not be guarded by the Japs, nor would there be more than an odd policeman in the offing. It would thus be easy, we hoped, for the guard to get me and my bicycle on to the train. We could not think of a better plan, and I decided to leave Kuala Lumpur by dawn.

After a few more words with Bhag Singh I left him and went to the house of one of my latest agents, Ramasamy Pakri. I slept the night there, setting the alarm clock for 5 o'clock, so that I could get out of town before daybreak.

So at about 5.15 a.m. on 10th March, I left Kuala Lumpur on my bicycle. Everything went well until I reached a village seven miles outside the town. Across the road leading to it I saw a barricade guarded by three sentries, all Punjabi Mohammedan policemen now working for the Japanese, whom I recognised in a flash as close friends of mine before the outbreak of war. In 1935 we had all been police constables stationed at Ipoh and used to perform all sorts of duties together. I was with them for nearly three years before being promoted and transferred to another town. I felt sure that they would recognise me and would promptly arrest me. But what could I do? I pulled my hat well down over my face and as I passed them gave a deep Japanese bow. They returned my courtesy with the Mohammedan greeting of "Salaam malai kum."

I had to think rapidly, I ought to return their greeting, but feared I could not alter my voice at such short notice. So instead I gave another deep bow and walked on. As I did so I overheard one of them say to the others, "He's not a Mohammedan, he looks more like an Eurasian." I did not care what they took me for so long as I got safely past them. There was still a second barricade to pass before I was safe—and I did it.

It was now about six o'clock, and I cycled away towards Bangi, arriving there some two hours later. Bangi is a small timber village of only one street with the railway station at one end. The street is lined with shops, and away to the south a quarter of a mile down the line is the police station staffed by ten to fifteen policemen. The village has a population of about five hundred, which means that everyone knows each other and strangers are recognised at once. The villagers are mostly Malays and Chinese, whose main occupation is collecting timber from the jungly hills not far away.

This latter point gave me an idea. Contractors and house-builders would obviously come to Bangi from distant towns and villages to buy timber. I thus made up my mind that, if questioned about the purpose of my visit, I would pretend to have been sent there by a Japanese firm to obtain some timber quotations. Otherwise, it would be difficult for me to hang around in such a small village for several hours without arousing suspicion. In any case, by the time I left everyone would have noticed me.

Just as I entered the village I heard the air raid alarm sounding, and knew that once again Allied planes were over Malaya. Ten minutes later there was a distant explosion soon followed by several more. From the direction of the sound I guessed that Kuala Lumpur must be receiving further attention from the R.A.F. I could not be sure, however, and it seemed too good to be true for my forecast to prove correct once more not only regarding the date of the bombing but also as to the exact target area. I dared not expect such luck a second time.

I had been in the village for about an hour when I learned that the chief man appointed by the Japanese to maintain order there was a Chinese timber merchant. That gave me an idea. I decided to approach him, pretending that I had come

on behalf of a Japanese firm from Kuala Lumpur to get quotations for a large order which they would place with him if the prices were reasonable. So I called at his office and introduced myself, giving my firm's name as *Nanri Sangyo Kabushiki Kaisha,* and asking whether he could supply them with 10,000 pieces of six different varieties of timber. While he sat behind the counter he invited me to sit on a high stool and offered me a cigarette. In answer to my question he enquired whether my firm could get the timber transported when it was ready.

I told him that *Nanri Sangyo Kabushiki Kaisha* would do everything, the loading, transporting and unloading. All he had to do was to get the specified number of pieces of timber of each kind ready by a certain date. I also informed him that I was calling on the other timber merchants in Bangi to obtain their quotations, and that the one whose terms were most reasonable in my opinion would get the job.

Whereupon he became even more friendly and courteous, and gave me quotations for different sizes at different rates, obviously calculating his profits in hundreds of thousands of dollars. In reply I said, "I want to be quite frank with you. I don't like the Japanese any more than you. I know your prices are somewhat stiffer than those of other merchants; but all of us have to live, haven't we? In these times one can't live on one's salary—it's not enough even for a few days. Now if I get this contract for you, will you give me a certain percentage as commission?"

Believing that he would make huge profits, his mind worked fast and he started calculating on the abacus, the Chinese calculator.

Finally, he said that he would let me have ten per cent on whatever he received. With some hard bargaining I raised it to fifteen. Our talk had lasted about two hours, and then he took me out and gave me a fine lunch. I told him that I would return within a week and obtain an advance for him from my firm. He was very pleased.

"Do you know at what time the train for Seremban arrives here?" I enquired casually, adding that I was on my way to pay a visit to relations there. He told me that it would reach Bangi at about 4.30 p.m. "That means I must wait here for

nearly five hours," I complained. "I didn't think it would be so long."

"You can wait in my shop if you like," he replied.

I thanked him for his courtesy, but did not accept the invitation. As I strolled idly down the village street trying to mix freely with the people several policemen passed me, two of them being well known to me. I felt sure that they would recognise me if they looked in my direction. I dared not speak to anyone. I went into a coffee shop and wondered how best to justify my presence there if any questions were asked. I felt conscious of many enquiring looks which normally would not have caused me one moment's reflection. Each hour seemed to pass like a month. But somehow the time did pass and once again I cycled towards the railway station. I waited around for an hour and a half, but there was no sign of the train. Finally, afraid of attracting attention yet even more of remaining there doing nothing I asked the station master what had happened. He told me that the train was several hours late.

It was too risky to hang around there any longer, so I cycled six miles back along the line until I reached the town of Kajang, sixteen miles from Kuala Lumpur. I asked the station master there what time the train was expected to arrive. He stared at me with obvious surprise, saying, "What train do you expect to-day? Don't you know that Kuala Lumpur has had a very bad air raid? The main line was hit." I nearly shouted with delight. My luck had held after all. Sure enough Kuala Lumpur had been bombed on the very day and in the exact area which I had mentioned in *Singa's* Swan Song. I hoped Bhag Singh was all right. If so, he would have to acknowledge that my recklessness had been justified. But I began to wonder where I should sleep that night.

After a little consideration I decided to call at the house of one of my agents, a schoolmaster by the name of Chanan Singh. At great risk to himself and his friends he had constantly supported the Allied cause. After working for the Japanese for two months he had resigned his position, giving up a very handsome salary in order to fight against Fascism. In that area he was my most active agent, doing much work for me besides cycling over sixteen miles daily past alert

Japanese sentries with copies of the communiques. He had great faith in the eventual victory of the Allies, which inspired him with the determination to do his duty by spreading propaganda against the Japanese.

The news of my sensational escape on 4th March had been rapidly circulated by word of mouth everywhere, and as soon as he heard of it he had gone about asking everyone he could trust whether they had seen me or knew where I was. He had obtained no clue to my whereabouts. Thus when I stood on his doorstep and asked for him he was surprised to see me.

"So you've come at last," he said, his face lighting up with a smile of welcome. "I knew you would. I've been looking for you everywhere and making enquiries, but could learn nothing. Come in. I'm so happy to see you alive. You've been very lucky, very lucky indeed. The Japanese are looking for you everywhere in Kuala Lumpur, and your house is guarded."

"Never mind all that," I said. 'Tell me, have you been in Kuala Lumpur to-day?"

"Yes," he replied, looking as though he had something very important to tell me, something really big, "I had nearly reached the town when I saw Allied planes in the sky, and then they released their bombs. I also saw Japanese fighter planes trying to hide away from the Allied bombers."

"What place was bombed to-day?" I asked eagerly.

"I was just going to tell you. I really laughed within myself when I visited the scene. The target area was the very place you mentioned in your warning—between Brickfields Road, Travers Road, and Damansara Road. And now the whole town is talking about you. Did you actually get an Allied warning over the radio?"

"What do you think, Chanan?"

"I believe you did."

"No," I said shaking my head. "I got nothing over the radio. It was just a prophecy, and a fluke one at that!"

"What! A lucky stroke!" he exclaimed. "No, I can't believe that! You may have got one thing by a fluke, but not everything. You gave the date and specified the target as though you'd received detailed information from Allied Headquarters. Thousands of people have been saved by your

warning. They're all talking about you, and so are the Japanese."

"Tell me, Chanan, which buildings have been damaged?"

"The round-house where locomotives are kept, received two direct hits, and several engines have been destroyed. I saw two of them turned upside-down. Then the long sheds where coaches are stored when not in use also received a direct hit, besides the engine turntable. Then the museum was struck by a couple of stray bombs. You know that big cow elephant in the entrance with the model of "H.M.S. Malaya" behind it, that's where the bombs fell. They must have been heavy ones for the vibration brought down almost the whole building. And those bungalows near the museum used by the Japs as offices and store-rooms were also destroyed."

"They were big ones all right," I said, interrupting him. I could hear their blast twenty-three miles away."

Then he told me of the long list of Japanese casualties and the few deaths of civilians. It was now very late, and Chanan Singh and his wife had long since finished their supper, but he bade her prepare a meal for me at once. Meanwhile, he wanted to hear the full story of my escape and how my agents —as he thought—had posted-up my final communique. After telling him what had really happened I went into the bath-room, and while having a shower felt the same surge of happiness that I had had three weeks before when my forecast had proved correct. Now thousands of people in Kuala Lumpur had trusted my words, left the affected area and thereby escaped with their lives. I imagined them thanking God for my timely warning, and I was happy. The dinner I had then was more than delicious—it was care-free. For the first time since my escape six nights before I could eat without keeping a sharp look-out for whoever came or went.

Before I went to sleep that night I prayed to God, thanking Him for having kept His hand over me as I had marched through miles of fire without feeling even the heat of it. As I lay in bed I had a few more thoughts. I knew that if the Japs had not been hard on my track, I would have a wonderful opportunity now to spread further propaganda among the Malayan public. They were obviously convinced that I was in direct contact with the Allied Command, or, to be more accurate,

with Allied Headquarters in India. Though I had been forced to flee, these people believed that others were left to carry on with *Singa*'s work, never guessing that the printing and distribution of all the communiques had been a one-man show. I had to admit, however, that my 'Swan Song' was the last communique which could be seen in Kuala Lumpur for the time being.

Next morning after an early breakfast I was on my way to Seremban. Chanan Singh insisted on accompanying me. He was very influential in that area and commanded the respect of almost every citizen. By seeing me safely through the police barrier he did his last act of co-operation for me. Very few would have dared to do so much.

As we rode on he asked me whether there was anything I wanted him to convey to any of my friends who might be anxious about me. "Yes," I said, "will you contact Mr. Augustine Lye, the ex-science-teacher whom you know well. He's been a very active agent of mine, and a most loyal citizen, too, who never wanted to work for the Japs. Tell him that you've met me and I'm all right. Then there's another of my agents you probably know—Mr. Arunasalem, the well-known horse owner, the owner of Lynn Court and Favourite. Give him my regards, too."

Chanan Singh promised to deliver my messages.

We rode together for about ten miles before he returned to Kajang, whilst I went on to Seremban. As I entered the town I kept a careful look-out for one of my agents, Tan Beng Hock, whom before long I observed bicycling towards me. He was going to ride past me when I called out to him. He dismounted and stood there looking at me as though I were a stranger for more than a minute. Then pointing at me he said, "Gurchan Singh?" I shook my head with a smile. He examined my face more closely, then with a burst of laughter he caught hold of my right hand, saying, "Look, man, don't think you can fool me. You may be fooling the Japanese, but not me. Your hand betrays you. We've been together since childhood and that red hand of yours can't be forgotten."

My right hand and arm is blood-red. It is a birthmark.

"By Heaven, what are you doing here?" he continued. "I've heard so much about you since your escape, I've been

in terror myself. If you were caught I expected to be involved, too. I thought you'd be tortured and forced to confess the names of your agents. But come, let's go to a restaurant where we can talk without being observed by so many people."

Over our drinks I had to tell again the story of my escape. "Do you know how the Japanese found out about you?" he asked when I had finished. "No," I replied, "it's still a mystery to me, though I have a slight suspicion of one of my agents who I've heard was arrested earlier the same day."

"The first I heard of your arrest was from a bus driver," said Tan Beng Hock, "but he gave a very different account of it. He only mentioned vaguely that some Sikh who had a secret radio in his house and had warned the people of Sentul of that first raid, had been arrested. According to him before the Japanese arrived at your house you had a warning. Then you always had a tommy-gun in readiness under your pillow, and you began to fire madly at the Japanese as they approached your house on the crest of the hill. Two soldiers were killed instantly, and the others took shelter behind some trees. The firing went on for over half-an-hour till reinforcements arrived, when you leapt through a back window and fled to safety. And then, he said, the Japanese entered your house, arrested your whole family and burned your house down."

This funny story so unlike the truth made me laugh. Then he asked me, "When did you shave your beard and crop your hair?" "Just two days ago," I said. He looked at me carefully before remarking, "There's certainly a big change in your appearance, nobody would recognise you. But that right hand of yours—do the Japs know about it?" "I'm not sure," I replied, whereupon he advised me to buy a long-sleeved shirt which would keep my arm well covered.

"The local Chinese were most anxious to know that you'd got safely away," he went on. "They felt that they owed you a special debt of gratitude as you're one of the few Indians actively engaged in carrying on the fight against the Japanese, and trying to convince the people of Malaya that the British cause is the just one."

Tan Beng Hock also told me of another story that he had heard with regard to my escape. It was said that on the day of the Sentul air raid I had learned of a Japanese munition

train being loaded with various armaments for transit to Burma. So when the Allied planes had flown over Kuala Lumpur, I had wirelessed to them from my transmitter (which was always ready for use in my house), and given them the exact position of Sentul, thus enabling them to drop their bombs on the most effective target. Hearing of this the Japs had kept me under observation for several days. Finally, they had caught me red-handed on my rounds sticking up pamphlets, and had fired at me killing me on the spot.

I was somewhat puzzled as to how these stories about me could have been invented and so widely circulated. At least they had one advantage: I realised that by this time all my agents would have heard them and therefore believe in my supposed death.

I stayed with Tan Beng Hock in Seremban for a few days, and then it seemed wiser to move on. So I called at the house of another agent, Khem Singh, which was in the same neighbourhood but some miles away, and spent some days with him. I felt quite content, knowing that these agents were most trustworthy and would do their utmost to conceal my real identity. I mixed freely with the people in Seremban, safe in the knowledge that no one knew who I was apart from my agents and various old friends, who recognised me but were discreet enough not to ask any questions.

One day I was having a nap after lunch in the house where I was staying, when I heard the voices of two ladies in the next room, and then footsteps coming towards me. I pretended to close my eyes as though asleep. It was my agent's wife accompanied by an old lady whom I did not know. Finding me apparently asleep they returned to the other room, and I heard the old lady say, "I've known him since he was a child. I expect his mother's wondering where he is now. She'd never imagine that he's lying comfortably here." Then the younger lady remarked, "It's lucky no one around here knows who he is, otherwise there would be trouble." "Indeed there would," said the old lady. "In Kuala Lumpur the Gestapo have arrested several of his friends, hoping to learn of his whereabouts from them. But these innocents don't know anything about his past activities or where he is now."

Just then I turned over in bed, and the lady of the house called

out, "Gurchan Singh, Gurchan Singh!" I answered as though aroused from sleep, and both ladies returned. I could not think who the older one could be, but decided that she had a kind nature. She reminded me of my mother in my early years. Now she came up to me smiling, her face full of emotion. It worried me, for I had no wish to see anyone at the moment. The fewer people who learned where I was living the better.

"Don't be alarmed, son," she said in a reassuring voice, obviously guessing my thoughts. "Don't you remember me? I'm the mother of your pal, Gajjaan, who died two years ago. You've looked on me as your mother before, and I want you to do so again. Please trust me."

I did not know what to do. Now that she had seen me I thought I must trust her. Moreover, it gave me the chance of finding out more about what was happening in Kuala Lumpur, and especially about Bhagat Singh, the milkman, since I discovered that she lived near his house. So I asked her to tell me all she knew of his arrest.

"Some hours earlier in the evening before you were arrested at midnight," she said, "Bhagat Singh left his house with about six gallons of milk on his usual round. One of his customers was a Malay girl with an English education living in the Malay Settlement in Kuala Lumpur. He usually visited her twice a day—in the morning and evening. She professed to be interested in the Allied cause, and he used to give her an anti-Japanese newspaper."

"What's your source of information?" I asked. "Is it quite reliable?"

"I heard all this from two friends of mine who tried to help the milkman after his arrest," she said. "It seems he got that anti-Japanese newspaper from you. Is that true?" I nodded, and she went on. "Well, he used to pass it on to her, and did so for a long time. One day earlier this year her brother happened to see the milkman handing her the news bulletin. He became curious, stealthily crept up to his sister, snatched it out of her hand, and read it. Though he was a Gestapo agent she was not unduly worried, feeling quite sure that he would never report the matter as it might involve her, his own sister.

"Two months later the Japanese intensified their efforts to trace *Singa* and his organisation by increasing the reward for the informant. The girl's brother thought of the reward under his very nose. The temptation was too great, and he made his first move. He started observing the milkman's movements in the morning and evening.

"As often happens when there are common interests, the Malay girl and the milkman became fond of each other, which her brother much disliked. It spurred him on to use all his guile to try to find out where the milkman was getting the pamphlets. But Bhagat Singh was smart and shrewd enough to give him some fictitious name of a Chinese and a supposed place of meeting. For some days the boy tried to find the Chinese 'agent', but naturally, without success. So he shadowed the milkman on his rounds, and managed to discover two of his contacts who were very active agents themselves.

"For more than a month he lay low being unable to find any more clues. Then one day he had a new idea. He asked the milkman whether he would give him a job in his dairy, saying that he would feed the cows and do any odd jobs in the house for his food without any pay. Suspecting nothing, the milkman fell for it, and took the Malay youngster into his house. For a few days the boy worked there, but found out nothing except that the job was far too tedious for him. He tried hard to trap the milkman into telling him more about the pamphlets, but in vain.

"He became more impatient than ever, thinking all the time of that big reward offered by the Japanese and getting more eager to collect it as soon as possible. So he gave up his job with the milkman and returned home. Next day he reported everything to his Gestapo chief—a Burmese quack doctor whose office was in Princes Road on the top floor above a laundry shop run by a Chinese, saying that the milkman would be passing that way in the evening between the hours of four and six. So the Burmese doctor, accompanied by three of his agents waited in the street ready to grab him the moment he appeared. It was over an hour before he arrived on his bicycle. They stopped him, and three of them seized him and dragged him into the laundry shop whilst the fourth

attended to his bicycle and the large bucket of milk in the carrier.

"Taking him upstairs they searched him, and to their joy found two *Singa* pamphlets on his person. Happiest of them all was the Malay boy, already planning how he was going to spend his fat reward. When asked where he got the pamphlets the milkman replied that a Chinese whose house he did not know had given them to him. So they beat him with a knotted rope, but he would say no more.

"Then it struck them that he might be *Singa* himself. So they made him write the word on a piece of paper, and compared it with the signature on the pamphlets; but, of course, they did not agree. So they went on beating him for two hours, trying to make him confess the name of the man who had given him the pamphlets, yet still he said nothing. Then the Burmese doctor telephoned to the chief of the Gestapo to inform him that he had arrested a member of the *Singa* organisation. In no time the Japanese officers came racing along, and when the milkman refused to answer their questions they began beating him in their turn; and on that failing to make him speak they gave him the water torture again and again.

"The poor man endured all this for a long time, but finally became demoralised. More than his own sufferings it was the thought of his aged mother, a widow, and his unmarried sister, who were entirely dependent on him and his work as a dairyman. Besides, the strain of the interrogation was becoming too much for him, so he decided to tell something. He thus made a half-hearted attempt to tell them only a little; but on realising that at last they had made him talk they redoubled their efforts, and succeeded in extracting from him everything he knew. He told them that he had got the pamphlets from you, but said that he did not know who *Singa* actually was. When asked if he knew your house he admitted that he did.

"On that they mustered all their available men who piled into lorries and cars, and with the milkman's assistance made their way to your house. On reaching the end of the track at the bottom of the hill leading up to it, they leapt out of the lorries and fixed their arms as though going to surround a fort. They apparently expected some strong opposition.

While some armed men took up positions in the wooded, uneven country behind the house, others approached it from the front. You know what happened after that, for then you were arrested."

The old lady seemed to know so much that I asked her for news of my friends, and learned that immediately after my escape the Japs had arrested one of my agents, Dan Singh. Before the war he had been a police officer, and for a few months after the occupation he had worked in this capacity for the Japanese; but then he had resigned because his pro-Allied feelings made him too unhappy doing such work. He had started a paper factory as a livelihood, and at the same time volunteered to help me with the distribution of my pamphlets. The Japanese were informed that he had often been seen with me, and he was thus arrested.

This middle-aged man was convalescing from a bad bout of malaria at the time, and was still suffering from an enlarged spleen. While Dan was being interrogated by the Kempetei, his questioner had repeatedly punched him in the stomach with his fists, laughing gustily at the sight of his victim doubling up with pain. Suddenly Dan had collapsed, and within a short time had died from a ruptured spleen. I felt utterly sad at hearing of the tragic end of Dan Singh and of the torture of my agents who had helped me so courageously and endured so much for the Allied cause.

"I shall be returning to Kuala Lumpur in two days," said the old lady. "If you'd like me to deliver any message to your wife and parents, I'll gladly take it for you." I was too surprised to answer, so she went on, "I'm really very happy to see you—you must trust me and believe I'm not here to do you any harm." To convince me still further she spoke of my younger days when I was at school and often in mischief. I asked how she had learned of my hiding place, and she told me that the lady of the house where I was actually staying had revealed it to her. These words swept away all my doubts, and I bade her if she should see my family, just to tell them that I was well and would return to them before long.

Much as I felt I could trust this old lady I had been made extra cautious by recent events, and dared not tell her what she was longing to hear herself—how I had managed to escape

and my future plans. Suddenly it seemed unsafe for me to linger in Seremban, as quite innocently the old lady might mention my whereabouts to one of her friends, which could harm those harbouring and helping me. So I decided to leave at once. Since my arrival in Seremban I had been going to the railway station almost daily to meet the Kuala Lumpur—Singapore train, hoping that I might see the guard, Bhag Singh, who could then arrange to take me to Singapore. So I went there again that day determined to make an extra effort to find him, but again I was unlucky. And I had not the courage to buy a ticket without being able to produce a passport. Yet another day passed, and I was beginning to feel rather nervous about getting away at all.

On the following day I made up my mind that I would board the train no matter who was the guard. Fortunately, the train was four hours late and by the time of its arrival it was raining heavily. This seemed to be a good sign. The Gestapo were not likely to turn out in pouring rain at nine o'clock in the evening. A few minutes before the train was scheduled to leave I approached the clerk from the parcel office, who was a friend of mine, and also knew that I was wanted by the Japanese. I begged him to ask the guard if I could travel with him to Singapore. He agreed to see what he could do, and also to take my bicycle and hand it over to Bhag Singh whenever he passed that way. For the next few minutes I hid in a dark corner, not daring to take any more risks at the last moment. Before long the parcel clerk called me over and introduced me to the guard on the train. To my great relief he agreed—for a small consideration—to let me accompany him. I felt reasonably safe, knowing that in case of a search on the journey he would have to help me to escape if only to save his own skin. At last the train pulled out, and I was glad to get away without having got any of my loyal helpers into trouble.

Early next morning the guard came along to ask how I was going to get past the sentries in Singapore, and how much money I intended to give him in recompense for all the risks he had taken. I gave him ten dollars, which seemed to satisfy him; but he was still curious how I proposed to make my way past the sentries without any sort of passport. So I offered

him another thirty dollars if he would help me; he refused, saying that the money was not worth the risk.

Left once again to my own resources I decided that safety lay in jumping off the train at the small station of Bukit Timah about five miles outside Singapore, and then walking the remaining distance. At that time the train would be travelling quite slowly, and I counted on people being too busy with their luggage to notice me.

As we drew into the station of Bukit Timah I made my way into the corridor on the far side away from the platform, which was crowded with waiting passengers and several Jap Security Officers. None were in sight on my side, however. So I jumped off the train and quickly ran away from the siding into the back yard of a house belonging to an Indian station master. I was carrying a small bag, and was noticed by a man who turned out to be the station master's cook. Very politely I asked him if he would allow me to change my dirty clothes in his kitchen. He agreed; and, as I changed, I had the pleasure of watching the train rolling slowly out of the station.

With somewhat a strange look on his face, however, the cook asked me why I was changing my clothes. "I've had a long journey," I replied as casually as I could, "and my clothes are all dirty, I can't call on my friends here without changing them." It seemed to satisfy him, especially when I tipped him with a dollar.

Feeling suddenly refreshed and very happy I set off on the road to Singapore only six miles away. It was with a light heart that I walked those six miles. For the moment I was a free man.

CHAPTER XI

PLANNING THE GREAT TREK NORTH

In the month that I spent at Singapore I managed to study fairly closely the Japanese land, sea and air defences of Malaya. I decided that somehow I must contact the Allies in order to give them the information I had collected—it might

prove invaluable to them if they intended to invade Malaya now. The only way of reaching them would be to cross the front line in Burma. But could I do it? It would not be easy. And then there was the further question as to how I was to get to Burma. It meant a very careful study of a possible route by means of maps.

I could try to reach Burma on one of the coasting sailing vessels plying between Penang and Rangoon; but it would be highly dangerous. The Indian Ocean—especially the route betwen Singapore and Rangoon—was a hunting ground for Allied submarines, and I had heard much about their activities in that area. Nevertheless, a few sailing vessels owned by Chinese and Indians were running between Moulmein and Rangoon with cargoes of rice and other commodities. I tried in vain to get in touch with one of them, and finally discovered that their service on this route had been suspended owing to the monsoon due shortly. So I abandoned the idea of going by boat.

The land journey was none the less hazardous. It demanded detailed knowledge of every stage of the route. I should have to march through the densest jungles of Siam and Burma, which are infested by wild beasts and poisonous snakes and insects, the worst of all being the malaria mosquito. It took me a full week to complete my plans for leaving the Straits, and I pored over every available map I could lay hands on with especial study of the coastline. So far as the route was concerned I had one main idea, which was to hug the coastline as much as possible. It seemed to me to have one big advantage —I could always catch fish for food. But it would mean walking all the way—a march of about a thousand miles up to Moulmein, and then across the mouth of the Salween River to Martaban and thence to Rangoon by rail. While pondering on all that this involved suddenly I had a brainwave. Why shouldn't I take the train route—the Death Railroad—from Siam to Burma? From Japanese propaganda I knew that the railway had already been connected with Moulmein in Burma, so I decided to take that course. Even if I failed to get a train I could walk more safely there than along the coast.

I knew that besides the prisoners-of-war many Indian labourers had been working on the construction of that railway,

and that some of them had returned to Malaya owing to ill-health. So I thought it a good idea to make enquiries among the labouring classes to see if by some lucky chance I could meet anyone who had been there, and thus gain valuable information about the route.

Within two days I was introduced to a labourer who had been right from the point where the railway begins to the terminus. What more could I ask for? From him I learnt two main essentials. First, that the railroad ran through Nompladuck in Siam forty miles south of Bangkok to Moulmein. If you were lucky you might get a ride on the train which was only used by the Japanese military, otherwise you could easily walk. Then he told me that every twenty to fifty miles there were camps in which lived besides the Japanese the Malayan labourers employed on the upkeep of the railroad.

So once again I had to spend two days figuring out this route, having definitely decided upon it instead of my original plan of walking along the coastline. After making my plans I told my agents about my intention of leaving Singapore and going north to Burma. Some thought I might succeed in reaching my journey's end, others warned me that I would most probably contract some dreadful disease on the way, and then there was always the possibility of being shot by chance whilst trying to cross the front lines. They failed to discourage me, however. I had taken risks all my life, and believed that once again I might be allowed to help the Allies. It was my duty, and I intended to go on doing it until I could be of no further use to the Allied cause. I knew that it was not going to be easy; but I was beginning to be something of a fatalist so far as my mission was concerned.

My friends remained convinced that it was a foolhardy venture which I was about to undertake, especially as there was already a price on my head. They reminded me of my shortage of funds. They spoke of the wild animals roving about in the area I would have to cross, all this territory being virgin forest. Incidentally, it was there that the Allied prisoners-of-war were forced to labour. Another problem which I could not ignore was the difficulty of crossing several frontiers; but it was of minor importance compared to the other hazards of life.

For more than three hours we discussed these questions, and then I gave my final decision. I was determined to go, no matter what happened. I pointed out to my friends that I should have been killed on escaping from my house when the Japanese fired at me at point blank range. By rights I should be dead now, I had ceased to fear death. Let it come whenever it liked. Finally, they agreed that I knew best what I was doing, and solemnly promised on oath that under no circumstances would they divulge my plans to anyone.

Leaving them, I returned to my room and did not see them again till the following evening, when we met at our usual place in Serangoon Road. To my surprise one of them was triumphantly carrying a bottle of Japanese liquor.

"What's that for?" I demanded.

Back came the joyous reply, "To celebrate our trip to Burma."

"What do you mean by 'we'?" I asked. "Don't tell me you're all thinking of coming with me?"

"You've guessed right, boss. And this is probably our last chance of a party before we leave Singapore," replied one of them. As I gazed at them in silent amazement thinking quite honestly that they had been drinking, he went on, "We've decided to come with you. No matter if we have to die, anyhow we'd have helped you and the cause we've all been working for to the end." Whereupon the other interrupted, saying, "That's why we've brought this bottle so we can celebrate this occasion together, and we've been waiting for you quite a time."

"You must be all drunk," I said. "This bottle will bring us luck, of course. But putting all jokes aside, how can you leave your families, your work and all the rest of it? This plan of mine may be yet another too optimistic campaign. You can't just come with me for company's sake. And then there are all the people dependent on you."

"We've made up our minds and nothing can stop us," said G. S. Bul, the son of my old doctor friend and the most enthusiastic of the lot. "We've no wives or children dependent on us. As for our parents, they've taken care of themselves and us too all this time, so they can get on all right now. And as for us, this is the chance we've been waiting for ever since we

came to our senses and knew there was a world like adventure. For it is an adventure, you know, and the spirit of adventure has entered our souls."

Then Balakrishnan, the youngest of the gang and always known to us a Bala, spoke, saying, "With you as our leader we have no fear. You mustn't stop us from coming with you. This expedition is nothing compared to what you've done since you were a schoolboy like us. If someone had tried to stop you, how would you have felt? It's the same with us, too. We know we'll be quite safe with you."

"I'm not thinking so much of your safety as of your dependants," I said. "Almost all of you have people depending on you, and it would be a sin to take you away from them. There's a war on, this is no pleasure trip I'm going on. But it's my duty to go, and there's less chance of my being captured by the Japs if I quit Malaya."

"I've got no one depending on me," said M. Thirunalan, better-known to us all as Kitchey. "My two older brothers can look after my mother."

"But they want to come, too," I protested. "And who's left to take care of her then? As for you Bul, I know you're a loyal citizen eager to carry on the fight for freedom, but you mustn't forget that your father has put you in charge of his dispensary and is counting on your help. Your parents have treated me as their own son—what will they think of me if I take you away from them? I could never explain it away. They'd blame me, and say that I should have known better because I'm older than you. I know they think a lot of me now, and I want it to continue. If you join me on this dangerous trip, you'll break their hearts. Then they'd have to close the dispensary, which has been built up largely for your sake. No, I won't let you come with me."

"That's all very well," said G. S. Bul, taking a sip from his glass. "But for a long time I've been wanting to get out of the dispensary and leave Singapore for good. I'm fed up with everything here. I'm old enough to know what's right or wrong. If you won't take me with you, I'm still going somewhere. I simply can't stay here. Now do you understand? You know I'm heart and soul with you in this fight for freedom. Haven't you neglected your wife and family for it?

What were your thoughts when you started on this work? You must have taken an oath like a marriage one—'For better or for worse until death do us part', that you would carry on with your work whatever the consequences for your family. You knew well enough the sufferings it would cause them, and at best that they would be neglected as they have been. You love your parents as much as I love mine, yet you've sacrificed them and given them the heartbreak. Why did you do it? Because you knew what's right. So do I now. You've stood by your ideals, I'm going to stand by mine."

The others sipped their drinks waiting for me to speak, thinking that Bul must have convinced me I had no right to stop them; but I replied, "Do whatever you think is right, but I believe you're wrong and therefore I can't take you with me. As for you, Kitchey and Shanmugam, you're both mad. You've got good jobs, and your widowed mother is dependent on you. Also, she worships you and would surely die of a broken heart or even try to commit suicide if you left her. No, I won't help you to do it. You can't go with me."

"Whatever happens I'm going," retorted Kitchey obstinately. "As for my mother, it's Shanmugam's duty to look after her, he's the elder. He can do as he likes, but I've quite made up my mind."

Shanmugam said nothing, and we were all silent for a while till Bala broke the ice by saying laughingly, "You all know how badly my brother bullies me at home, and often tells me to get out of the house. I'm unemployed, so I'm free to go anywhere." It was obviously useless for me to say anything more to Bala, but I began to wonder how I could possibly deal with so persuasive an enthusiastic group of colleagues as the others.

Quite apart from consideration for their families I felt it would be impossible to include them on what might be foolhardy plans. I was sorry to see the looks of deep disappointment on their faces when I gave them a last flat refusal which they had not expected. I began to regret having revealed my plans. I should have mysteriously quitted Singapore leaving my friends guessing what could have happened. But it would have been difficult at a time when brother could not trust brother. In such circumstances how could I have left Singapore without telling them?

When I went back to my room I again pondered over the pros and cons of taking one or two of them along with me. The latter definitely outweighed the former, although in fairness to my friends I must admit that it was chiefly on account of their families that I demurred at the thought of their accompanying me. The next day we met again and discussed the trip once more. I repeated my objections but somewhat weakly. As a last effort I told them that whoever accompanied me would have to put up $500, hoping that this would deter them; but on meeting again two days later three of them had finally decided to go with me. Our departure was fixed for 23rd April, 1945. They had already obtained passports from the police enabling them to travel north on the pretext of wanting to visit sick relatives there.

About three days before we were due to leave we were discussing our plans in detail when Bul turned round to me saying, "What about your money? You said we must each have $500, and we've got ours; but what about yours? Do you want us to raise it for you, too?" "No, that's all right," I replied. They all looked at me with astonishment, and Bul exclaimed, "What! You mean to say you have $500 on you?"

"Yes," I said. "Don't think that because I've been getting money from you all from time to time I'm flat broke. There's my money right in front of you. Don't you realise that I can raise several thousand dollars by the sale of that bicycle?" They all laughed, for such an idea had not occurred to them.

Bhag Singh had safely delivered my bicycle to me in Singapore. Two days later I offered it for sale, and found a purchaser who paid me $3,500 for it. I decided to send some of the money to my family, which presented me with a fresh problem of how to do it. I could not send it by money order as it would inevitably get into the hands of the Japanese who were bound to confiscate it. Nor could I think of anyone daring enough to go straight to my wife and simply hand it to her. After much thought I decided to send it through the railway guard, Bhag Singh. Either he could take it to her personally or find some means of forwarding it safely. My wife should have $2,000, I thought; the balance would suffice for my own expenses at least for some time.

Of our party of four I was the only one without a passport. but I felt confident that by watching my step I could get along as well as the others. As the time for our departure drew near I became somewhat nervous, however. We expected Bhag Singh to be in Singapore on that date, much depending on his being on the train then. Meanwhile, I gave my companions their final instructions.

I told them never to disobey their leader under any circumstances, and always to carry out his instructions to the smallest detail. Moreover, they must realise that I was a wanted man hunted in every nook and corner of Malaya by the Japanese Gestapo and hundreds of informers all eager to do their duty and even more to win the large reward placed on my head. So they must keep their eyes and ears ever on the alert and never come near me unless I invited them to do so. If anything should happen on the train journey, they must alight at once and wait for me at the nearest station till they heard from me. If I were caught, I told them that I should make a desperate attempt to escape; if I did not show up before long, they must abandon everything presuming either that I was dead or without any chance of escape. I suggested that they should wait for me three days, during which if asked who they were they must all say the same thing—that they were business men in search of marketable goods.

With regard to boarding the train I advised them to do so at Bukit Timah railway station, where they would not need any tickets as Bhag Singh should be in charge of the train. They could not get into the train at the station in Singapore, as passengers there had to buy tickets at least twelve hours before a train was due to leave. We would only know about eight hours beforehand whether Bhag Singh was going to be in charge of the train or not. In that time the three of them could easily reach Bukit Timah by bus.

Kitchey was well known to the station master there as a member of the Japanese Intelligence Service, so they would have no difficulty in getting on to the platform. He could pretend that he was looking for a culprit, and take the others with him as the persons able to identify him. Once on the platform they could wait for the train and get into it without arousing any suspicion. As for myself, I intended to board the

train at Singapore itself, and would thus join them at Bukit Timah.

On the morning of 23rd April, my one thought was to find out whether Bhag Singh had come to Singapore. To my joy he had done so. When I met him I enquired whether he could possibly take me aboard the train without either being searched or asked for a passport. His reply was somewhat faltering, and I knew that it would be difficult, perhaps even impossible for him. I suspected that he did not want to incriminate himself further. I told him to cut out all excuses, but merely to take with him my small bundle of clothes; somehow or other I would get on to the train and meet him there. Then I left him to have a final word with my three musketeers who were going with me.

Later that morning I went to see Mr. L. S. Bul, the father of Gurnam Singh Bul, to thank him for all he had done for me. He made me promise to keep in constant touch with him. He also said that if I needed any money, I could send him a letter mentioning pills instead of dollars for the amount required. He would understand and send it at once, He did not know that his son, Gurnam, was accompanying me, and thought that he was only going to Penang for a short holiday. With a heavy heart I left Mr. L. S. Bul and went to the station to entrain for the north.

CHAPTER XII

TRAIN JUMPING

THE train was due to leave in the afternoon, and I arrived at the station about half an hour beforehand. But I walked on without entering it, scheming how to get nearer the railway track. As I strolled slowly along I noticed some improvised latrines built by the Japanese within a few yards of the track on the other side of the fence. So I quickly made up my mind to jump over the fence and hide in one of the latrines. If observed I had the very good excuse that an urgent call of nature had obliged me to do it; if no one came up to question me it would be all to the good.

Once behind the closed door of one of the latrines I felt quite safe. Through one of the holes in the door I had a fine view of everything that was happening in the station. By the time of the clock there the train was due to leave Singapore in a quarter of an hour. For the moment no passengers were allowed on the platform, and for the second time their passports were being checked behind the closed gates. Five minutes later the locomotive steamed up to the waiting train. After it had been attached, the crowd was permitted to pass one by one through the gates towards the coaches. At the same time I slipped out of the latrine and walked up to the train, looking more like one of the station staff than a passenger. I found a seat in one of the coaches, and reserved others for my three companions.

Before long the whole train was packed to capacity with all seats occupied and people standing everywhere as well. I was forced to give up my reserved seats to two friends of mine whom I noticed standing close by. I had known these two brothers in Ipoh before the war, but felt sure that they would not recognise me now. They were obviously surprised when I called to them by name, and their faces showed that they were doing their best to recollect who I was. Knowing them so well—and not knowing that they were now working as informers for the Japanese Gestapo—I told them my name, and they expressed surprise at my change in appearance but gave no sign that they intended to 'squeal' as soon as we reached Ipoh, their destination. Unwittingly I had been somewhat foolish.

Meanwhile, the train started prompt on time, and my mind was set on the next station where my three companions were going to board the train. At a bend in the line about a mile outside the station I leaned out of the window so that I could see the guard's van at the end. And there was Bhag Singh looking out of a window towards the engine. I waved my hand to him, and he waved back. But I knew that the corridors were far too jammed with people for him to be able to reach me easily at the moment.

My two Ipoh friends sitting opposite me began to chat with me, and we talked freely. They knew that I was a wanted man, but never referred to it. By now the train was

approaching Bukit Timah where my companions were waiting. We stopped at the station, and I saw them get into the last coach near the guard's van, where Bhag Singh told them that he had seen me on the train, so they had no need to worry.

After passing the Johore causeway the train halted as usual at the Johore railway station. I had previously been warned that it was a hot place for me, where passports and identity cards were always strictly checked. Yet somehow or other I became rather careless—dangerously so. I thought it better to remain in my seat, but my companions got out on to the platform to watch the proceedings from there. It seemed to me unlikely that the passport and ticket inspectors would wade through that dense mob into every carriage. So I sat still, and my two Ipoh friends opposite me did likewise. They were both Philippinos by nationality. As I sat there the passport examiner, a Japanese, came along. I noticed that he was not examining everybody, but just selected a few here and there.

He was quite close before I began to feel really nervous. Then he approached our seats, and demanded the passports of my Ipoh friends. They produced them with a letter, which I presume was given them by the Gestapo. After reading it carefully the examiner handed it back with the two passports, and then passed on to another passenger without speaking to me. Outside on the platform my three companions were watching the proceedings, and I saw them shaking their heads in relief as they wiped the sweat off their faces. But all danger was not yet over.

A minute after the Japanese examiner had gone on to the next coach, another examiner entered ours. He was a Chinese dressed in Japanese uniform. Something must have been the matter with me that day, for again it slipped my mind that I had still time to get out of the coach on to the platform and thus escape the passport examination. On the contrary, there I sat staring at the examiner and watching him as he passed from one passenger to another coming ever closer to me. It was too late now. I would never have escaped his eye if I had tried to get out of the coach. Anyway I sat fast, and now he was on us. In my heart I prayed that the guard would

blow his whistle for the train to start. Tense and breathless I waited, while he demanded the passports of my Ipoh friends and they wasted a few seconds in producing them. He examined them one after another, and handed them back; and still nothing had happened as I wished. Then it was my turn. My friends watching from the platform must have thought the game was up this time.

As he asked to see my papers I observed the first examiner returning from the other coaches having completed his work there. Trying to delay matters I rose slowly, took off my hat, then my goggles, and put them both on the seat. Next I began to feel in my pockets as though searching for my papers. After wasting several seconds thus I told the Chinese examiner that my ticket and also my papers must be with my friends sitting in another coach. In the rush for seats in Singapore we had become separated. At my last words the Japanese examiner reached us and asked what was up. So I began to tell him the same yarn, and luckily for me just then the whistle went for the train to start. Looking somewhat fed up with checking so many peoples' passports the Japanese told me to sit down with a wave of his hand. I did so, feeling rather sick as I realised my narrow escape.

As the train moved out of Johore station my three musketeers who all this time had been watching the proceedings from the platform, jumped into my coach to laugh at me for having been put in such a nasty corner by the examiners. They wanted to know why I had not left the compartment when I saw them approaching, and for the life of me I could not tell them what had made me stick fast to my seat.

Travelling through the night we reached Kuala Lumpur at 4.30 a.m. At that early hour I did not expect to encounter any Gestapo agents at the station, but I was very careful. It was here that Bhag Singh alighted, handing over the train to another guard who was in charge for the next twelve hours. Before leaving he introduced us to the new guard, telling him to look after us as we were poor people. I had already given Bhag Singh the money for my wife, and now I warned him again to be very careful how he approached her. If he sent it through anyone else he must make sure that the person was absolutely trustworthy. If only he had carried out my

instructions to the letter, much trouble for him would have been avoided.

Nothing eventful occurred till the afternoon. It was hot and sunny then when we reached Ipoh at about 3 p.m. and our Ipoh friends left us with the usual good wishes. The next stop was Tanjong Rambutan, where I was hoping to meet one of my agents, Teja Singh. Two days before I had wired to him, telling him that I was coming and asking him to meet me at the station with food for four persons. Usually trains stop there for only a few seconds, but that day we stopped for about a quarter-of-an-hour. I looked for my agent everywhere in vain, and my friends began to suggest that he could not have received my wire. But I still had hopes of meeting him at the next station, Chemor, about five miles away. By rail Chemor is fifteen miles from Ipoh, but by road only ten.

As our train steamed into Chemor I popped my head out of the window and saw a large crowd on the platform. I was looking for a man with a pink turban, which Teja should be wearing. I told Kitchey to keep a look-out on the other side. We were still about a quarter of a mile away, and Bul went to the toilet. Almost at the same moment Kitchey shouted to me that he could see a man with a pink turban. I crossed over to his side and recognised Teja Singh all right. As we came to a standstill I shouted out his name, and he hurried up to our coach. Instead of giving us the usual greetings, however, he told me in a trembling voice to jump out of the train at once and run for my life. His words paralysed me with astonishment, while Kitchey and Bala gazed spellbound at Teja Singh who was glancing over his shoulder as though expecting someone to come at any moment.

"Quick," he repeated, "jump out and run to the hills for all you're worth. Don't ask questions. There's no time. They know you're on this train, and they're coming to arrest you."

"Who?" I asked. "Listen to me, I must tell you——"

" Don't explain or tell me anything. The Japanese and their informers are coming. There, I can see them now at that coach. Jump out and run, run——"

I was so upset I didn't know what to say to Kitchey and Bala. And I couldn't see Bul anywhere, I forgot he was in the toilet. As I jumped out of the train, however, I managed

to tell Kitchey to get out too and wait for me there. Then I ran away as fast as I could. The whole area was well known to me, and I knew the way to the jungles about two miles from the station. I had not gone more than a few hundred yards before two packets of notes each amounting to one hundred dollars fell out of my pocket, but I didn't stop to pick them up. On and on I ran feeling that someone was following me, though I could see no one. At last I reached the jungly hills, and there I sat down on a log.

Resting there I recalled that night of 4th March when I escaped from my house, and how I ran that night too. Then I began to wonder what had really happened. How could the Japanese have learned that I was on that train? And why try to arrest me at Chemor and not at Ipoh? I began to worry too about my three musketeers. Had they alighted at Chemor? And if so, what had happened to them? If the Japanese knew of my presence on the train, they might also know about my companions. I was deep in these thoughts when a young Chinese silently came out of a thicket and stood in front of me smiling. Quietly he gave me the usual courteous greeting, then asked my name and what I was doing there. I soon noticed that he carried some kind of fire-arm tucked away inside his shirt, carefully placed under his armpit. I felt sure that he was not any ordinary Jap agent, whose methods of approach I had learnt to recognise. Moreover, neither the Japanese nor their agents would dare to go near the spot where I was seated, for it was an area haunted by the guerrillas of the anti-Japanese Army.

I soon recalled having seen the boy some time before, and told him that I recognised him for what he was. He took it coolly enough, though he must have been a little surprised. Realising that he was an anti-Japanese fighter I told him briefly what had happened. It seemed to please him, and he went away, soon returning from a nearby cottage with a small quantity of boiled tapioca. The root of this plant is full of starch like potatoes, and formed the staple food of most Malayans during the Occupation. If it had not been for tapioca there would have been a general famine.

What he brought me then did much to help me to recover from the shock at the station and my long run. When I had

finished eating he asked me where I intended to go next, and where I thought of spending the night. I had to confess that I had not yet had time to make any plans. He asked me to meet him somewhere next day. I knew that meanwhile he wanted to consult his chief about me and whether I could be allowed to stay with them. Naturally, he could not be absolutely certain then whether I was one of them or a Japanese agent. I had decided, however, to make my way to Ipoh through the hills and try to discover what had happened to my three friends whom I had left at Chemor.

Through jungly hills and valleys, through rubber estates, mining lands and tapioca plantations I made my way to Ipoh without incident, reaching the town when it was already dark. There I went to the house of one of my agents, Kehar Singh, who knowing nothing of what had happened could not be aware of my presence in the neighbourhood. As I have previously mentioned, Kehar Singh was a detective in the Malayan Police and my assistant when war broke out, and had now been promoted to Inspector by the Japanese owing to the shortage of officers. Very few people knew then that though working thus for the Japanese he was acting for the Allies behind the scenes. Since my escape from the Japanese two months earlier he had heard nothing from me, though rumours about me had reached him in plenty even to the extent that I had been shot dead. Like many others he had reconciled himself to the fact that I had been killed whilst trying to escape from the Japs.

On reaching his house I could see him through the open door in his sitting-room gossiping with a friend. I called him by name, and he came out to me without in the least knowing who I was. Nor did he recognise me then, for it was dark and I was wearing my hat and goggles. "And what can I do for you?" he asked. I did not answer, but looked into his face. Again he asked. "Who are you, and what do you want?" Still staring into his face I said, "Kehar Singh, have you forgotten me so soon? Can't you make me out?"

"No, I can't make you out," he replied quickly, then hesitated, and peered into my face for to some extent he must have recognised my voice, saying, "Why, it isn't you, Gurchan?" I smiled, and he clasped my hand, adding in a

low voice, "A police sergeant is here. You'd better wait about fifty yards away, I'll soon get rid of him, and then join you there."

Five minutes later he returned to me, and again clasped my hand as though he had found a long lost brother whom he had thought dead. Naturally he began questioning me about all that had happened to me since my escape and what I was doing in Ipoh. I told him nothing of that day's incident, because in spite of his obvious happiness at seeing me again he looked frightened at the idea of my staying with him. But he agreed to put me up at least for the night in his house. He told me that he was afraid because since my escape from Kuala Lumpur he had been questioned several times by Japanese officials, who had discovered that he and I were good friends. Then he took me to his house. At first sight his wife could not make out who I was, but when she was told she was both surprised and happy to see me. Like her husband she began questioning me about my escape. So for an hour all three of us sat in the sitting-room discussing it, what could have happened to my family in Kuala Lumpur, and many other things.

Kehar Singh told me that all my friends in Ipoh who possessed any photographs of me dared no longer keep them. They had burnt them in fear that they might involve them in trouble with the Japanese or their informers. Meanwhile, his wife went to the kitchen and prepared a meal for me, which I enjoyed very much.

Early next morning I left Kehar Singh's house and made my way to the house of another agent living in a more secluded part of the town, where the neighbours were unlikely to be surprised at seeing a strange lodger and want to know who he was. It belonged to Yeoh Chai Lye, one of my most active agents and a man whom I knew I could trust. When I arrived there I saw him just getting up to wash.

At first sight he failed to recognise me, but did so as soon as I spoke to him. He told me that the Japs had raided his house three times searching for me, and had taken away an old pre-war photograph of me. Each time they had thoroughly cross-questioned him about my present whereabouts. On recognising my voice his homely wife then joined us and seemed very

pleased to see me. She quickly prepared one of the most delicious breakfasts I had tasted for some time. While we ate together with his wife, his sons and daughters, he asked me whether I would like him to deliver any messages to my other agents in Ipoh. I promptly asked him to contact Teja Singh, whom he knew well, and tell him to come to see me at once. I also told Chai Lye to get in touch with a member of the Traffic Police, Yap Ghim Leong, and tell him that I wanted to see him as soon as possible. And I warned Chai Lye not to mention to anyone else however good a friend that I was in Ipoh.

After breakfast I stayed in the house whilst he went out. At about 10 a.m. I was lying in an easy chair reading when I saw Yap Ghim Leong some distance away bicycling towards me. A young Chinese in his middle twenties, throughout the Occupation he worked loyally for the Allies distributing the *Singa* pamphlets to all whom he could trust. When he entered the sitting-room, his smiling face was more full of happiness than I had ever seen it in the dozen years I had known him. As I rose he rushed at me, and we clasped hands with a joy that was boundless.

"I never thought to see you again," he said, shaking his head. "I believed you were gone to the next world. Since I heard that you were alive and here in Ipoh I have been so happy. No sooner did Mr. Chai Lye tell me than I left work and rushed here."

"I, too, never expected that we should meet again," I said, "and am indeed glad to see you. Now tell me how you've been keeping, and whether the Japanese have given you much trouble. I feared they would, since they must have found almost all your letters to me on my table after my escape, though I supposed there was nothing incriminating in them as otherwise I would never have kept them."

"That explains everything," he explained. "I wondered how the Japs could have known that I was your friend. They asked me many questions about you, and even threatened me and my family with death if I didn't tell them the truth. But two days before Kehar Singh had fortunately warned me of your arrest and escape, so I was prepared for them. I told them that we had been friends before the war, but denied all

knowledge of your activities since the Occupation. Then they asked me who were your usual contacts whenever you came to Ipoh. I told them—just the members of the local police and Intelligence Service."

"That's the smartest bit of work you've ever done," I said, interrupting him. "I'd never have thought of such a sensible reply. Did they interrogate the Police?"

"Yes, many of them, but only found out that you were a friend of theirs, nothing more. A week or so later one of the Gestapo agents, a young Chinese named Bong, came to see me enquiring about you. For the next two days he trailed me wherever I went. Then when he realised that I knew what he was doing, he told me the truth and said that he wished to stay in my house for the few days he was on duty in Ipoh. So I let him stay with me for a week after that. It made my folks at home worry about you all the more. They think the way all these agents are running about they'll get you in the end."

I told him not to let his family gossip about me, and then gave him the names of our "Whispering Gallery" so that he could inform them I was all right. I wanted to see two of them very urgently, and indicated a place on the Kinta River bund where I would meet them. After discussing business matters for a while we relaxed and began to talk of other things.

"Do you remember when I came to your house with some friends and stayed the night, Gurchan?" he said later, staring hard at me. "You insisted on our going to bed early as you said that we must be tired. But I didn't go to sleep right away. I saw you go downstairs, and soon afterwards heard the radio going in your room. I listened to you moving about in there, but of course I didn't know what you were doing, nor when you went to bed though it must have been pretty late. Then early next morning you handed me a news-sheet, telling me that your wife had received it during the night. That was when I first began to suspect that you were Singa, and was all the more certain when I compared your handwriting with the signature at the end of the pamphlets. When I heard of your escape I felt quite sure."

I smiled, and before he left me asked him to get in touch with Sergeant Bughar of the Ipoh Police, who was yet another active agent of mine, and to tell him to meet me on the river

bund that night at 8 p.m. Promising to return later he went on his errands. In the afternoon he brought one of my other agents to see me, saying that he had delivered my message to the police officer.

That same evening I went to our appointed meeting place down by the river. From some distance away Sergeant Bughar Singh's white turban was clearly visible in the bright moonlight. I was eager to meet him as he was one of my ablest agents in Ipoh. After the usual greetings and exchange of news I begged him to tell me about the activities of the local police and what they thought of me. He said that they had all been ordered to arrest me at sight, but added that he doubted whether any of my former comrades wanted me to be caught. Once again I was warned of the number of Japanese agents who were all hot on my track, or at least believed that they were.

He mentioned the names of two men previously well known to me who were now working for the Japanese. Neither of us would have believed in their treachery if it had not been proved beyond all doubt. It seemed that many old acquaintances were doing likewise, and I thought of their fate when the Allies returned to Malaya. Bughar Singh warned me repeatedly that I must keep a constant look-out for these agents who were pressing hard on my trail. Another false rumour had been circulated amongst the public that I had been re-arrested. The story went that I had been seen under escort in a train at Batu Gajah.

"On hearing that rumour," continued Bughar Singh, "I 'phoned up all local police stations enquiring about it, and later concluded that it was false. Then a few days ago two anti-Japanese workers were arrested some fifty miles away at Telok Anson, and I rushed to the town thinking it might be you and one of your agents. They proved to be Malay lads, however, almost unrecognisable because they'd been so badly beaten up before being questioned."

"That's the whole trouble with the Jap way of administration," I said, shaking my head. "They kill you first and make enquiries afterwards. Only then do they realise they've done away with the wrong person obviously innocent."

"You're the right person, anyhow," he replied very

seriously. "And all the police officers and constables who've been given orders to arrest you know you only too well. They were certainly surprised to hear that you're a wanted person, and some of them sympathise with your case; but there are others who are doing their best to catch you and win the reward of $100,000* that the Japanese have offered for your capture."

"That's why I made straight for Singapore," I said. "Few people know me there, and the most densely-populated city in all Malaya seemed my best hide-out. Moreover, the Japs would least expect me to go there. So the man-hunt was not so hot in Singapore as in the North. Tell me, where do the police think I've gone?"

"Most of them believe you've joined the guerrillas in the jungles and are living with them. Others think you must be dead, killed by those shots when you were escaping from your house. As for the Indian members of the police, I doubt if they'd arrest you, but I'm not sure what the Malays will do. For the last two days the Gestapo have been searching for you in that twelve miles between Sungei Siput and Kuala Kangsar. They think you made for Sungei Siput after escaping from the train. I've been on the 'phone to the sergeants in charge of the police stations at Chemor, Sungei Siput and Kuala Kangsar, and they all say that the Japs and their agents are still hunting for you in that area. You're known to be travelling north, so they don't suspect that you've made your way back to Ipoh."

I asked him how long this search was likely to last. Not more than a day or two, he thought ; meanwhile I must stay in Ipoh until advised by him. He would keep in touch with the various police stations and try to find out when the search was abandoned. I felt in luck's way again, for I could not have a more reliable source of information. Before we parted I asked him to telephone to Teja Singh at Tanjong Rambutan and tell him to meet me the next evening at this same time and place.

I returned to Chai Lye's house where I spent a peaceful and restful night, which was more than Chai Lye did himself. Apparently he had scarcely slept a wink, being greatly worried

* Nearly £12,000 sterling.

lest someone should have discovered my hiding place and his whole family would suffer for it. He tried to conceal it all from me, but I read it in his face. When I persuaded him to speak, he told me that he feared someone would betray me. I replied that only two persons outside his family knew that I was living with him—Yap Ghim Leong and Toh Chin Guan, both good friends of mine who would prefer death to betrayal. Though Bughar Singh was just as trustworthy I had not told him where I was living. Chai Lye seemed somewhat relieved, for he had imagined that I was telling everyone I met that I was staying with him. But I told him that I could not see him suffer such mental agony, and would leave his house at once. He would not let me do so, however.

That afternoon I was reading a newspaper in the sitting-room when I saw a Malay lad bicycling towards the house. I had known him in Ipoh before the war, and of recent months had seen him in the company of Japanese in Kuala Lumpur. After a few hurried words with Chai Lye I concealed myself in another room from where I could watch the proceedings.

Mat, the Malay lad, was well acquainted with Chai Lye and his family and greeted them in a friendly fashion. Then they all sat down on two long benches outside the house. Miss Yeoh Hong Hoon, Chai Lye's eldest daughter, then about twenty, did most of the talking. "How is Kuala Lumpur getting on now, Mat?" she asked. "Well, it's all right now," he said, "but you must have heard about the terrifying air raids we had recently for about three weeks." "Oh, yes, the planes passed over this way," replied Miss Hong Hoon. "Tell us what places in Kuala Lumpur were bombed by those B.29s."

"The central workshops were very badly hit, and about three thousand people were killed. Most of them were Indians, though quite a lot of Japanese were killed, too. But have you heard that everyone living in that area was warned beforehand by one of the Allied agents whom we all know as a friend?"

"Who is he?" said Miss Hong Hoon quickly.

"Gurchan Singh, whom we all knew well when he was in Ipoh before the war."

"You mean our Gurchan Singh who used to organise cycling races here?"

"Yes, and I've got a photo of him, too," replied Mat, pulling a photograph out of his trousers pocket and showing it to them. It undoubtedly came from one of my four albums which the Japanese had taken from my house, and showed me at a picnic with Mr. Chai Lye and Miss Hong Hoon. On seeing it Chai Lye immediately asked him where he had got it. He said that a Japanese had given it to him to help him look for me.

"But how is Gurchan Singh connected with the raid?" asked Chai Lye, holding the photograph in his hand. "Did the Japs catch him signalling to the planes?"

"Gurchan Singh is really *Singa*, at least that's the name he's assumed," replied the Malay lad. "And he's responsible for those anti-Japanese pamphlets you must have seen in Ipoh."

"Yes, I've heard of them, and think I've even seen them stuck up somewhere," said Chai Lye quietly. "But I can't believe that Gurchan Singh has anything to do with them."

"Yet it's true," retorted Mat. "He's the man who published all those pamphlets. There's a $100,000 reward for his arrest, or for information leading to it. That's why I've come to see you. Have you seen him about anywhere here? It's said that he's been living in Ipoh since his escape over a month ago."

"If I get any news of him I'll let you know," said Chai Lye. "Leave me your address so I can communicate with you if need be. But if I'm able to send you any information about him, can I be assured of some money, too?"

"Certainly, we'll share the reward," replied Mat. "You can always find me at the Café Malaya, or if I'm not there they'll tell you where I'm to be found."

Chai Lye laughed, saying, "I know the place, and I hope we'll soon be enjoying some of that money."

After a few more questions the Malay lad went away, leaving Chai Lye's family more nervous than ever at the sight of my photograph in his hands. They all expected to be arrested at any moment. Chai Lye tried to comfort them by saying that it was quite usual for Jap agents to check up on anyone found in a photograph with the wanted man.

Soon afterwards Miss Hong Hoon came into the room where I was concealed and told me I could come out. They all

laughed when I did so, especially on hearing that I had been listening to their conversation with Mat. All the same his visit made me feel more nervous myself. I feared that he might have been sent there by someone who had seen me in the house, though it seemed obvious that he had come quite casually. Chai Lye and his family agreed that he had called on the off-chance of getting some useful information. "And he'll feel consoled in his heart," said Chai Lye laughing, "that he's found yet another friend in me to inform against you."

That evening after dinner I promptly headed for the rendezvous which I had made with Sergeant Bughar Singh and Teja Singh. The moon was just up, and at first I could see no one by the large palm tree. Then Bughar stepped out of the shadows alone.

"Where's Teja?" I asked anxiously.

"It's all right," he replied. So we sat down by the river and waited. Still Teja did not come, and I became more uneasy. I was eager to hear news of my pals whom I had left at Chemor, and who were presumably waiting for me there. I had also been trying to figure out what slip or blunder I could have made for the Japanese to pursue me at Chemor of all places. How had they picked up a clue? Perhaps Teja could help me there, too. It was unlike him to keep me waiting. Something must have happened. But what?

Meanwhile Bughar talked of many things. He said that he had been 'phoning to the police stations at Chemor, Sungei Siput and Kuala Kangsar all day, adding, "You'll be glad to hear that after combing that area for you the Gestapo have abandoned the search. They arrived in Ipoh just over two hours ago. If you want to get clear, to-night's the night for it. They're not likely to look for you just now, they must be tired."

For two hours we sat talking, waiting for Teja Singh. Then I suggested that we should make a move, and we walked towards the police station where I wanted to meet another contact of mine, Sergeant-Major (now Sub-Inspector) Behara Singh. I waited outside in the dark whilst Bughar went in to fetch him. On seeing me Behara took me to his house which was in the police compound itself, and there we talked whilst Bughar went out to look for Teja, also to find out the exact

time the train was leaving Ipoh. In the midst of my conversation with Sergeant-Major Behara I went to sleep in the easy-chair in which I was lying. I had been asleep about half an hour when Bughar Singh woke me up, saying that Teja had arrived. At once I jumped up, hurriedly said good-bye to Behara and went out.

"My eyes have been starving to see you, Teja," I cried, clasping his hand, "And now you're here at last."

"I'm happy to see you, too," he replied. "That same evening when you escaped from the train I went to the hills to look for you. There I remained till darkness made me give up the search. I wondered where you could have gone. Your friends who were with you alighted from the train, and they're still waiting for you at Chemor. At least I think they are. But after getting your message to meet you here, I went to their lodgings this evening but they weren't there. They'd left their belongings behind, however, so probably they'd just gone out for a walk. Then on my way here I had a puncture, all the repair shops were closed, so I left my bicycle at a friend's house and walked the last five miles. That's why I'm so late."

"I knew you wouldn't let me down, and that something must have gone wrong," I said. "Now tell me, how did you come to know that the Japs were going to arrest me in the train that afternoon at Chemor?"

"I got the telegram you sent before leaving Singapore, telling me to meet you at Tanjong Rambutan station," he replied. "I had a big business deal to put through at Chemor that day, so I went there in the morning thinking I'd be back in time to meet your train, but as luck would have it I was delayed there. So instead of rushing back to Tanjong Rambutan I thought I might as well meet you a few minutes later at Chemor."

"Was it in Chemor then that you learnt I was going to be arrested?"

"Yes. A few weeks before a young Indian called Joseph had come up to me making enquiries about you. I soon realised that he was a Jap agent, and pretended that I too would like to win that big reward for your arrest. He said that he hoped to do so himself very shortly, which somewhat alarmed

me. I suggested therefore that two heads being better than one we might work together and share the reward with more chance of success. He agreed, and from then onwards I had to neglect my private business and spend most of my time with him. For three weeks I went about with him, and found out that he was in the pay of the Japs and could go wherever he liked.

"Apparently Joseph knows you well, and your friends too, for he was always pointing them out to me. I also learnt of some of the other fellows who are working for the Japs. And I was more than surprised to discover how much Joseph knew of your movements and suspected whereabouts.

"All this happened just before I got your wire telling me to meet your train. That afternoon I went to the station at Chemor a quarter of an hour before it was due to arrive, and was strolling up and down the platform when I saw three big motor-cars drive up and stop just outside the station. Then some armed Japanese got out and rushed on to the platform. Among them was Joseph. I became very suspicious, for it was obviously the Gestapo. So I ventured up to Joseph and asked him what all this hurry-burry was about. 'You'll be surprised when I tell you that I've got my bird at last,' he said. 'Gurchan Singh is on this train that's coming now. We'd have got him at Ipoh only the train moved out a few seconds too soon. For fear of missing him here we've rung them up at Kuala Kangsar and told them to search the train on its arrival there and arrest him. But we've got here in time.' I pretended to be overjoyed at his forthcoming success, saying that we would have to celebrate it that night. Then I asked him how he'd discovered that you were on the train.

" 'It all happened at the Ipoh railway station,' he said. 'I was standing outside the gates when Johnson, our boxer friend who was returning from Singapore after a fight there, told me that Gurchan Singh—the much wanted *Singa*—was on the train. I laughed, for I thought he was joking. But he declared he'd actually been sitting next to him. Realising he was quite serious, I asked him to point the man out to me. It took us some time to find the right carriage as the train was so crowded, and then it was almost ready to go. I rang up Headquarters at once asking them to have the train delayed, but before I could contact the boss it had started. Anyway, once I'd got

hold of the boss he 'phoned Kuala Kangsar, telling them to delay the train there. Within five minutes the Gestapo picked me up, and we raced for Kuala Kangsar; but on passing Chemor we saw the crowd still thick on the platform, so knowing the train hadn't arrived yet we stopped here instead.'

" 'Then we're going to have a gala party to-night?' I said. 'Yes, with plenty of girls, too,' he replied grinning. 'Maybe I can help now,' I suggested. 'Tell me, is he in the front coaches or the hind ones?' Suspecting nothing he replied, 'He's in one of the front coaches, either the third or fourth. I'll tell you what you can do. Get on the other side of the platform and watch that side.'

" Agreeing with him I crossed over to the other side, and waited there feeling very impatient and nervous. I wasn't so sure that I could make you understand your danger in a hurry."

I patted Teja warmly on the back, saying, "If you hadn't been so much on the alert, I'd never have got away then. But tell me what happened after I ran off. Did you see Joseph again?"

"Yes, in that train about ten minutes after your escape. As it steamed into the station the Gestapo had divided into two groups, one entering the second coach and the other the fourth. Then they joined hands in the third, and much to their surprise hadn't found you. They wondered where I was for a moment, too. But I was with them all right. Someone suggested that you must be in one of the toilets, so they were all searched; but still there was no trace of you. Becoming impatient, the Gestapo chief turned to Joseph, saying, 'Are you quite sure he was on this train?' Somewhat excitedly Joseph replied that he knew for certain that you'd been there. They began to suspect that you'd made off on seeing them, and started asking all the passengers if they'd seen an Indian wearing a felt hat and dark goggles suddenly jump off the train. I felt very uneasy when a Chinese told them that he'd seen an Indian running with all his might towards the hills, but could not say whether it was the wanted man. My pulse beat fast as he spoke, for fear of what further he might reveal. Had he seen me approach you? Did he know that you'd left your friends behind you on the train? But it proved all right, and

before long they drove off in their cars. Next morning I met Joseph once again, and asked him if he'd had any success. Apparently not; they'd searched the whole area for you all night without finding a trace of you. He added, however, that the Japs were going on with their search and hoped to pounce on you soon."

"And my three friends still supposed to be in Chemor—tell me what you know about them, Teja."

"I found them a place to stay and some food, and they're still there, I'm sure."

"How can I thank you for all you've done for them and for me? Do you know when the train leaves for Chemor, as I'm going there to join them now?"

He told me that it was due to leave at 1.30 a.m., so we went on talking for a while sitting there on the steps of the cenotaph. Shortly before 1 a.m. we made our way to the station which was close by. Teja left me there, saying that he would meet me on the platform a few minutes before the train started. Having nothing to do till then I went on to the platform and sat down on a bench facing the waiting goods train. I had not been there long before a young Tamil strolled up and seated himself on the bench behind me, so that we were back to back. A few minutes later Teja returned. Instead of coming up and sitting down beside me he walked past waving his hand towards the far end of the platform. Realising that something must be wrong somewhere, I looked around but could see no one save this young Tamil. Anyway, obeying his command I rose and started following him. As soon as I caught up with him to my surprise he asked me at once in a trembling voice, "Do you know who that was sitting just behind you on the bench?"

"No," I said, "I've no idea. I've never seen him before."

"That was Joseph, the Indian in the pay of the Gestapo who's looking for you."

I smiled, though it gave me an unpleasant jolt, saying, "And I very nearly spoke to him! Lucky I didn't, wasn't it?"

When Teja told me that he was also travelling to Chemor by that same train, I decided that it would be safer for me to walk there. It was only ten miles away, which I could easily cover in three hours without hurrying. Still it was long past

midnight, and I felt very sleepy. I dared not travel by daylight, however, so despite my weariness I set off. I had gone only two miles when on turning a bend in the road I saw a barricade drawn across it with several Japanese sentries standing by. One of them shouted to me to stand still and put up my hands. Then I had to walk slowly up to the barricade under cover of their rifles. After searching me they asked me who I was. I told them that my name was Nathan, and that I had come from Singapore where I worked as a clerk in the Public Works Department. Then I was asked for my identity card. Naturally, I had none. But on the spur of the moment an idea struck me.

I told them that I was living with friends in the temple about half a mile further up the road. My papers were there, and if one of them could come along with me I could get them. Somehow or other they realised that I was not the criminal type, and told me that I could carry on, with a warning always to carry my papers with me in future. Thanking them in Japanese and bowing deeply I set off up the road.

On approaching the temple I heard some bullock-carters talking as they prepared to take their carts out of some sheds: these carters usually go to work at a very early hour. They were Sikhs and therefore spoke Punjabi, which I also speak, so I understood that they were going to Chemor. I asked one of them if he would give me a ride in his empty cart, and he readily agreed. By daybreak we arrived in Chemor, where at once I went to look for my friends. I searched till midday without finding a trace of them or of Teja. It seemed hopeless, and I presumed that they had returned to Singapore by the night mail. Knowing that Joseph was around I dared not wander about Chemor longer than was necessary. I decided to leave that same evening for the north, heading towards Penang. Besides Joseph there were several policemen in Chemor who knew me well, and I could not take any more risks. The next train for Penang was due at 4.30 p.m., which meant that I had three hours to wait. Even that short delay was quite a strain on my head. Moreover, I was worried about Teja and my friends. I began to wonder whether he had misunderstood my instructions at Ipoh station. Why had they not all turned up at the appointed place that morning?

At last the train steamed into the station and I boarded it without glancing at my fellow travellers, only feeling very sorry to be leaving such good friends behind me. As luck would have it, however, soon after the train had started I saw Teja in one of the other coaches, I knew that he would soon join me, as he was selling newspapers through the train. He had previously told me that he travelled thus between Ipoh and Kuala Kangsar almost daily. Down the corridor he came towards me with a bundle of newspapers under his arm. On seeing me he started and with difficulty hid his surprise. From him I learned that I had just missed my three companions at Chemor. They had gone to Ipoh for the day and returned by the very train we were now on. At Chemor they must have alighted from the train on one side while I boarded it from the other. I told Teja to go back to Chemor at once and ask them to catch the night train that would reach Bukit Mertajam by morning. I would wait for them at the temple there. It is the only one in Bukit Mertajam, so they could not miss me this time. Waving goodbye to me Teja jumped off at the next station, whilst I carried on to Bukit Mertajam. Since I was travelling without a ticket I had to bribe the ticket collector to get through the barrier.

It was now about 8.30 p.m., so I had dinner at a wayside stall where the food was fairly good, Then I made my way to the temple and persuaded its keeper to let me spend the night there. Before long I was sound asleep. Next morning I hung around, but still they did not turn up. Evening came, and very disconsolately I walked towards the town to buy an evening meal. I was strolling slowly along when suddenly I was hailed from a roadside coffee-shop. I turned round, and there were Bala, Kitchey and G. S. Bul sitting at one of the tables. We were soon all laughing heartily at what Kitchey called our long game of catch-me-if-you-can.

I was in luck's way again. While we sat there talking, eating and drinking I noticed an Indian entering the shop. From his clothes I recognised him as an engine driver. As the railway line to the Siam border branched from Bukit Mertajam, I thought I might get some useful information from him. So I managed to get into conversation with him, and asked him whether he was working on the main line to Ipoh or the branch

line to Pedang Besar, which is the station on the Malaya-Siam boundary. In reply he said that for the last three months he had been on the branch line going as far as Alor Star on alternate days.

"And what are the requirements if one wishes to get to Alor Star?" I asked.

"Before the Japanese handed over the State of Kedah to the Siamese Government it was very easy," he replied. "But now Sungei Patani has become the border town between Malaya and Siam. So anyone going to Alor Star must have a passport and produce it before he can buy a ticket. On arrival at Sungei Patani all passengers must get out of the train and go into a sort of pen where they're examined one by one."

After obtaining some more useful information from him about the route to the border we finished our drinks and left the shop. On our way to the temple where we intended to pass the night we discussed our plans. I told my friends that somehow or other we must jump off the train before it reached Sungei Patani, and then walk to Alor Star.

CHAPTER XIII

WORKING FOR THE JAPS

NEXT morning we left Bukit Mertajam by bus for Prai, about six miles away, since all trains running up to Sungei Patani started from there. On arrival I went to the house of an agent of mine, a railway fireman called Sohan Singh who lived near the station. I told him everything including my future plans. His mother made us some tea, and as we sat in his small sitting-room drinking it I asked him if he would help us by getting us tickets as far as Alor Star.

"It's quite impossible without passports, Gurchan," he replied, looking very worried. "And even if you had them, you'd get stuck at Sungei Patani. No, all I can suggest is that you take the train to Pinang Tunggal the previous station and walk from there. About a mile outside Sungei Patani there's a rubber estate on the right. You can branch off there for

half a mile, and then proceed north through some plantations and a small jungle till you reach Alor Star. That's the only way of evading the passport examiners. But even if you reach Pinang Tunggal, you must keep a sharp lookout for them even there. They're easily recognisable by their khaki uniforms. There's only one passenger train a week, but one leaves tomorrow if you want to go."

I agreed with his suggestion, and he promised to get all four of us tickets to Pinang Tunggal.

Next morning we reached the station half an hour before the train was due to start. I asked Sohan Singh to find out if the engine driver was a friend of his, and if so to inquire whether he would take a bribe to slow down the train to fifteen miles per hour about half-a-mile outside Sungei Patani. Sohan Singh returned shortly saying that he knew the man well. He was a Malay named Ali. But before promising to do such a thing he wanted to know how much I was prepared to pay. I thought carefully for a moment. It was a matter of life and death for us, for if we jumped from a fast-moving train we might easily be killed or at least seriously injured. So I said I would give him $50 just for slowing down the train. Whereupon Sohan Singh took me along to introduce me to Ali, and I gave him the money. Ali advised me to remind him of what he was to do well in advance, as otherwise he might forget about it. I agreed, and returned to where my friends were seated. As the train steamed out of Prai railway station we waved a thankful goodbye to Sohan Singh.

The journey was quite peaceful until we reached Pinang Tunggal, the station before Sungei Patani. The train drew up there for a brief halt, and I went along to the driver to remind him of what he was to do about a mile before the next stop. On the way back to my seat I noticed several Japanese passport officials boarding the train and beginning to check up on the passengers. Immediately I suggested to my companions that we should all go to Ali and tell him what was happening. On finding him again I asked if he would let us travel on the engine itself, hanging on in front. Just then the whistle was blown for the train to start, and Ali told us to jump into the cab with him. This kind gesture was more than we ever expected.

Once again we congratulated ourselves on having outwitted the Japs so easily. Better still, we could now tell the driver the exact spot where we wanted him to slow down. With a mile to go to Sungei Patani I told him to do it, and he brought the speed down to less than fifteen miles per hour. I jumped out first, and the three others soon followed.

Using our jungle instinct we promptly took to jungle paths, and walked parallel to the main road for about ten miles before daring to come out of cover on to it. Then, after going along the road for fifteen miles we took to the railway track, and walked on all night only stopping occasionally for a short respite. By dint of sticking to it we reached Alor Star before noon.

We had walked for about twenty-four hours. Our legs were stiff and tired, the muscles felt as though they would never recover their elasticity. To make our plight still worse we had nowhere to go. By common consent we divided into two groups. Kitchey and Bala decided to go to the Tamil Hindu temple and put up there, while Bul and I preferred to try the Sikh temple. We proved the more fortunate, as we found a priest who accepted the story I told him without questioning me too closely. I was deceiving him, of course. But what else could I do? I could not very well tell him that my friend and I wanted shelter because we had escaped from the Gestapo in Kuala Lumpur, or that there was a reward of $100,000 for my head. I told him that we were hospital dressers from Malaya who had been sent to Siam to attend to the hundreds of Malayans dying there, as was generally known. I added that a Japanese military officer of high rank was coming to pick us up in Alor Star in a few days, maybe two or three or even four. The priest was very kind to us, and gave us good charpoys to sleep on. It was exactly what we wanted, and he made us very comfortable.

Kitchey and Bala were not so lucky. The Tamil priest would not help them at all, and they had to sleep on a cement floor. After that arduous journey on foot which had been much further than they had ever walked before, it was particularly unpleasant for them. On hearing of their discomfort I persuaded our Sikh priest to let them join us, convincing him that they were two more dressers like us with nowhere to go in

Alor Star. So he took pity on them and gave them each a charpoy.

Though it was already past noon we were too tired to go out in search of food, but slept like logs throughout the rest of the day and following night. Next morning when we woke up we were aching in every part of our bodies. The balls of our feet were so painful that we could not put them to the ground. At least so it seemed, but we had to do it despite the pain in order to search for food in Alor Star. Our agonising walk was at last rewarded by finding a plentiful supply there. It was quite cheap compared to Kuala Lumpur or Singapore, since Alor Star is the capital of the rice-producing state of Kedah, and rice is the staple food of Asiatics.

It was a few days before we could walk normally again. Meanwhile, I learned that Padang Besar, the border town between Malaya and Siam, was only fifty miles away but that it was almost impossible to get past the passport authorities without a passport. I could not afford to take such a risk, since the border police would doubtless have been informed that I was a wanted man, and if I were caught there it would be the end of me. So I suggested that we should remain in or around Alor Star till we could find some means of smuggling our way through Padang Besar. My friends agreed, and we decided that we must get some sort of a job somewhere in the neighbourhood.

I had already let my trusted agents know where I was, and kept in contact with them. One day my companions happened to have gone out for a stroll leaving me behind in the temple. I was sitting on my charpoy when to my surprise I saw Teja approaching on his motor-cycle. I knew at once that something must be wrong. I rushed towards him, and as soon as he had put his machine away we walked to a lonely part of the road outside.

"You know Mr. Black, that man from Kuala Lumpur?" he asked hurriedly. I nodded, and he went on. "Well, he's after you. I met him first in Ipoh and then in Taiping. When in Ipoh I overheard him mention your name to another Indian. I became interested, and soon found out that he was in the pay of the Japanese and was looking for you there. He'd got a photo of you in a turban and was showing it to everyone. Of

all the Jap agents searching for you I've never met a more ardent supporter of the Japanese cause. He's determined to get you."

"I know the whole Black family, and he's the one black sheep in it," I said. "Though the British Government had given him an honourable job, he was one of the first to denounce them after their surrender, soon he was embracing the Japanese and before long became one of their pimps. I'm not in the least surprised he's after me. But tell me, did you have a chance of talking to him? Is he still in Ipoh?"

"I had a long conversation with him in Ipoh," replied Teja. "He knows all about you, that you're *Singa* and everything. Yesterday I met him in Taiping. He told me that he'd heard from someone in Kuala Lumpur you'd been seen there, so he'd dashed there at once. After a hectic search he returned to Kuala Lumpur. But I've come to warn you to be careful of that man. He's in the pay of the Kempetei, and is going all out to get you. You've been quite friendly with him, I believe, and on seeing him you might greet him as usual. It would be your end."

"Why are you so sure he's after me? And how do you know he's got the Kempetei behind him?" I asked.

"When he told me he was looking for you, I pretended to be so, too," said Teja. "So after a while he took a paper out of his wallet and showed it to me. Since I can't read Nippon-go he pointed to the seal on it, and explained that it was the seal of the biggest Japanese military chief in Malaya to-day. He did all this to prove he wasn't bluffing and really meant business. Then he said it was only fellows like me who could help him arrest you, and he didn't mind sharing the reward as a hundred thousand dollars was big money. Even a fifty-fifty share would be more than one ever gets out of the local lotteries. Moreover, he'd be killing two birds with one stone—making money and proving to the Japs by catching you how devoted he was to their cause. So he invited me to work with him, adding that he was sure you were somewhere in Perak. I questioned him about that, and it proved to be only a guess. But before returning to Kuala Lumpur he said he'd be back in a couple of days. And remember, Gurchan, he's thirsty for your blood."

After many more warnings of the same kind Teja left Alor Star later in the afternoon.

Shortly afterwards, I met another friend from Ipoh, a Chinese named Kee Siang, whom I had known as a cashier to a business concern. Now he had become the manager of a cinema run by the Japanese. I approached him, and he was very surprised to see me so changed. I knew I could trust him to some extent, and therefore told him that I had had a fight with the Japanese who were looking for me. But I did not mention that I was wanted for a political offence. I asked him whether he could give one of us a job in his cinema for a time. He had none available, but remarked that a Japanese firm of rice merchants, Daimaru by name, had recently advertised on the cinema screen for clerks of whom they seemed in great need. He could not say whether these vacancies had been filled, however.

On leaving Kee Siang, I returned to the temple where I told my three musketeers what I had just heard. "Did we come here to get a job or to proceed north?" said Bul at once.

"We're very short of cash," I replied. "If we got work here it would be easier for us to make our way to Padang Besar on the Siam border about fifty miles to the north. You all know we'll never cross the border without passports, and our only chance of getting them is by finding employment here."

"That's all very well," objected Kitchey, "but how are we going to get a job when we don't know a word of Nippon-go?"

"I'll do the talking," I replied. "I'll go and see the boss and tell him I'm an estate conductor and you've all been clerks under me."

"And if he asks where and on what estate, what then?" queried Bala.

"You remember that estate through which we walked just outside Sungei Patani?—it was called the Bedong Estate according to the notice board we saw. I'll say that we had been working there. Everyone knows that no estates in Malaya are working these days, and that all labourers and staff not taken to work on the Death Railway to Burma are idle. That'll explain why we're unemployed. Then we'll say that a few days ago someone from Alor Star told us that he'd seen their advertisement for clerks in the cinema. As for not knowing

The author's house—the window in front is the room where he was arrested.

Where the author was kept while a search of the house was carried out.

Up this slope the author escaped, the Japs firing at him.

Chanan Singh

Yeoh Chat Lye.

Mr. L. S. Bul.

Yap Ghim Leong.

Ariel Gunasekera.

Inside one of the Moulmein Pagodas.

KING'S HOUSE
KUALA LUMPUR.

To: *Detective Police Constable*
Gurchan Singh

The good service which you rendered during the war to the cause of the Allies and the liberation of Malaya is well appreciated by the Government. In conditions of danger and hardships you worked steadfastly for the good of the country, and it gives me the greatest pleasure to express to you the thanks and commendation of the Government.

Governor.

The Author's 'Commendation Card'

The author receiving his 'Commendation Card from Sir Edward Gent

Nippon-go, I'll say that you had no chance of picking it up on that estate."

They all agreed, and we had a hearty laugh as we said to each other, "We hail from Bedong Estate."

That same afternoon I called on the manager of the firm. A young Malay lad took me to his office on the first floor of the building. He was a Japanese, but he spoke Malay as leaning back in his chair smoking a cigarette he asked me what I wanted. With a deep bow and all the courtesy I could muster I said, " Master, I understand you have vacancies for clerks in your office, and I wish to apply for the post. And I have three friends waiting downstairs who'd also like to work if there's any job."

"Who are you? What are you? And where have you worked before?" he inquired.

"I was conductor at the Bedong Estate, and the others worked with me as clerks. As the estate has closed down we're unemployed, and now the prices of everything are soaring we're forced to seek jobs. Someone from Alor Star told us that you had vacancies for clerks, so we came along."

He told me to call again next morning with my pals and that all four of us should write out our applications in our own handwriting and give them to him next morning. In quite a happy mood I returned to my friends and told them that there was some chance of a job, otherwise he would have rejected me flatly at once. We bought some writing paper in the town, borrowed a pen and a bottle of ink from the priest, and wrote out our applications.

Next morning like brave men we went straight up to the manager's office. He was out, but one of his clerks told us to sit down as he was expected shortly. Though I felt very nervous myself as we waited there I said to my companions, "Boys, don't be nervous. Remember Pandit Nehru's words and keep them deep in your thoughts—'Success often comes to those who dare and act but seldom to the timid'. So you see, you mustn't fear what the manager may think of you. And don't forget that we must all stick to the same story." We were still rehearsing our parts when the manager arrived.

We all stood up and gave him a deep bow. He returned the salutation and then called us into his office. As the spokesman

I handed him our applications, and he went through them as though he could read English which later we found to be the case. Picking out one of the four he asked whose it was, and on my saying that it was mine he remarked in English "Good writing." Then he muttered, "Are you married or single?" I told him that I was a bachelor as were my friends also.

"I have no more vacancies here," he said, "but there are some in my Perlis office. Have any of you been there before?"

On my negative reply he stood up and pointed to a big map of Malaya hanging on the wall behind him. "Look, there's the State of Perlis to the north of Kedah and Alor Star. And here's the small town of Arau where our Perlis office is. I have some vacancies if you're willing to go."

My heart gave a jump. We should be twenty-eight miles nearer the Siam border there, which meant that it lay only twenty-two miles beyond Arau. Thinking quickly I guessed that he was short of clerks there and needed us. Reading his thoughts I could see that he imagined he had found suitable men, too. I could thus play the game my own way, and get whatever wages I liked, at least much more than we could have hoped from jobs in Alor Star. Furthermore, it meant jobs for all four of us. What better luck could we have hoped for? I could have jumped for joy, but tried hard to look non-commital.

"Well, are you all prepared to go up there?" asked the manager.

"It's a long way off," I replied very seriously, "a lonely place where we can't get many things. But I've heard much of your firm's good reputation and how well you treat your employees. I think we might accept the jobs if the pay's big enough and we could have a house to live in as we don't know the place."

"You'll be paid well and have a house," he said, interrupting me. "And we'll give you plenty of fish, rice and cigarettes which are never supplied anywhere else."

"All right, in that case we'll take the jobs," I said. "When and how do we go?"

"Come here to-morrow morning and I'll have transport ready for you," he replied, obviously chuckling to himself.

We gave that manager the lowest bow we had ever accorded

a Japanese, and then returned to the temple where we began to build castles in the air about our good fortune in securing such jobs so near to the Siam border.

Next morning we arrived at the manager's office with all our belongings and there was a car waiting to take us to Arau. Immediately on arrival there we reported to the deputy manager of the Daimaru office, and handed him a letter written in Japanese.

"So you're the four gentlemen the manager has appointed," he said, speaking quite good Malay.

"Yes," I replied, "and could you please tell us what are our jobs and where we are to stay?"

"What's your name?" he asked, pointing to me.

"Charlie Thamboo,"

"You're to be the General Overseer here" he said, looking at the letter in his hand. "Your job will be to look after the affairs of the rice mills about half a mile from here. You must make a daily report to me concerning the attendance of labourers, and also supervise the work of these three other overseers who will each be in charge of a certain branch. Which is Thrunalan? You're to be the store-keeper. Bala-Krishanan? You're to take charge of the transport department. G. S. Bul? You're to be overseer of the rice go-down. As for where you're going to stay, you must share a room upstairs till we can find you each a separate house."

Having got our assignments we went round the rice mills, go-downs and stores. I had the easiest job as I could go where I liked whenever I pleased. Bala was lucky, too. His job was to look after about twenty lorries used to convey paddy and rice from Kuala Perlis, and to see that none of them went astray. Of course, whether they did or not mattered not to us in the least. Bul and Kitchey had somewhat stiffer jobs. Bul had to keep a record of every sack of paddy or rice brought into the go-downs, whilst Kitchey had to remain all the time in his store in case some lorry driver should need a spare part or such like.

Within two days we knew all the inhabitants of the place, and they seemed to have taken a liking to us though somewhat puzzled by our common friendship. When off duty we always went about together. The capital of Perlis was Kangar, some

six miles away. So almost every night we took one of the company's lorries and spent our leisure there. Although a small town it had a good amusement park with many side-shows and gambling stalls which have endless fascination for all Orientals,

Every morning we began work at 7.30 a.m., breaking off for tiffin at about 11 a.m., and finishing by 4.30 p.m. I spent most of my time with Bala and Bul in one of the go-downs discussing our next move, when and where we should go and how it should be done. We had been closely studying an old map which we had found in the office. According to it the coast-line and harbour were only twelve miles away to the west, the aerodrome a mere eighteen miles distant and the Indian National Army Camp fifteen miles away at a place called Jitra. Our lorries frequently went to Kuala Perlis to fetch paddy and rice, and I would accompany them just to see the coastline and harbour area. This is where the main metalled road running from North Malaya to the South as far as Singapore starts. I soon found out that not a single Japanese was living in Kuala Perlis. The nearest Japanese stationed in the neighbourhood of this harbour were our branch manager, his two assistants and about ten members of the Military Police. It seemed to me that Kuala Perlis would be an ideal spot for landing purposes. Furthermore, I discovered that all the inhabitants were strongly anti-Japanese.

From time to time I visited Jitra where I had become friendly with the colonel in charge of the Indian National Army camp there. He, too, emphasised how pro-Allied were the local population, and added that most of his men were of the same opinion, After several meetings he told me that he and his entire company were only waiting for Allied landings on the coast of Malaya to turn the tables completely on the Japanese.

This struck me as such good news that somehow or other I must find a way of passing it on to the Allies as quickly as possible. My easiest means of communication with them would be to signal to the Allied planes sometimes passing overhead; but that required a knowledge of Morse which I did not then possess.

In my Scouting days I had known semaphore, and still remembered enough to use it when need be. Morse, however,

was a subject I had never had occasion to learn. So I borrowed a book on it from a Scouting friend of mine in Kangar. Within ten days I had mastered it and was able to send messages to my friends and receive them, too.

These two States of Kedah and Perlis are famous for their paddy fields. Many thousands of acres of land are covered with paddy, which provided an excellent area for sending messages to the R.A.F. planes as they passed overhead. I bought a small mirror, and daily made my way to these fields in the hope of seeing some Allied planes. On three occasions I saw two planes in the sky and tried hard to attract the attention of their crews, but without success. Either they were too high up or my flashes were not sufficiently distinct. The third time I even sent up some smoke signals, but they proved as useless.

A fortnight after our arrival at Arau another Indian employed as a paddy inspector returned from leave. Just before we began work there he had gone to visit his family in Kuala Lumpur. As he and I had both been born and bred there I much feared that this lad would immediately recognise me. Our first meeting took place soon after his return, as he was naturally curious to see the four new charge-hands who had been signed on during his absence. To my surprise he gave no sign of having recognised me. I asked him how he had enjoyed his leave, and he replied that he had had a good time but that Kuala Lumpur was now full of spies and Fifth Columnists. "And one of them was Gurchan Singh, a good friend of mine since my childhood, who later took part in the expedition to Mount Everest. He'd been in touch with the Allies and also helped the Communists."

"Is he still in Kuala Lumpur?" I asked.

"No, he's no more in this world now."

"What, dead?" I queried.

"Yes, he's dead."

"But how did he die?" I enquired, as though merely curious in a casual sort of way.

"The Japanese found out he was working against them and arrested him," replied my former friend very solemnly. "He managed to escape, was re-arrested and in trying to escape again he was shot."

"When and where did this happen?"

"Quite recently in Ipoh," he replied.

I felt much relieved. If he was so sure that I was dead he would never suspect that he was talking to Gurchan Singh, or have any doubts about my present identity.

Meanwhile I never ceased to think of how we could continue our journey north. I made two trips to the border to investigate conditions there and find out if we had any chance of slipping across the frontier without passports. It seemed even more difficult than I had expected. Any such attempt was almost certain to end in our being arrested. And we had not even got any identity cards.

For long I puzzled over the problem, and began to wonder whether we could enter Siam by sea. It could easily be done from Kuala Perlis which was very close to the border. Once our feet were on Siamese soil we could walk the remaining distance. Couldn't we hire a small boat from some fisherman in Kuala Perlis and ask him to drop us at some deserted spot in Siam a few miles beyond the border? I went twice to Kuala Perlis but failed to find anyone who would take us. Despite the reward I offered it was far too risky for their liking. I did, however, manage to obtain two promises to take us along on on the next fishing trip which was expected to be within the next two weeks.

I still kept a few of my most trusted agents informed of my activities and movements, which proved of great help to me later. It was now the middle of May, 1945, and we heard rumours that Rangoon had been recaptured by the Allies but the report could not be confirmed. One day we managed to get a copy of a newspaper from Penang, and discovered that the Japanese were advertising for labourers to work in Siam. It seemed a most timely advertisement, and to provide our best chance of getting out of Malaya. Not only would we thus save our precious money, but also time. Moreover, it would be much safer than trying to smuggle our way in illegally. We saw that applications were to be made at the Labour Office in Penang on any day. For hours we discussed the matter, and were not unaware of the funny side of it. Who would have expected the much wanted *Singa* to appear at a Labour Office in search of employment from the Japs? On second thoughts,

however, we doubted whether we would be accepted as labourers. We knew that the labour force would have to pass through Arau towards the end of May. So we decided to watch all the evening trains bound for Siam at that time, and to slip on to a train with the other labourers.

One day towards the end of May I had an unexpected visit from Teja Singh, my agent from Tanjong Rambutan. He asked me at once where the others were, and I told him that they were on duty. He wanted to talk to me in private: if was urgent as he must hurry back, so we went to a coffee-shop where I ordered cold drinks on account of the intense heat. It was deserted, and we could thus talk more freely.

"You must collect your friends and leave this place at once," he said. "The iron cordon of the Japanese is closing in on you every day. They've learned that you're around Alor Star. I met Black again yesterday afternoon at Ipoh station. He told me that he was on his way to Alor Star, as he'd heard that you were about there. I don't think he knows you're all here in Arau, but he may pick up a clue that might lead him to this place. He must have reached Alor Star to-day. So I borrowed a motor-cycle and rushed here to warn you."

"Did he tell you how he'd discovered I was in Alor Star?" I asked.

"Yes," replied Teja. "He told me that he'd managed to catch one of your agents—someone on the railway, a guard, I think, and the Japanese tortured him till he admitted that you'd gone to Alor Star. Then the Japs sent Black up here to see if it were true."

"So that skunk's after my blood," I exclaimed. "He's forgotten that we lived together like brothers in our young days. Though he used to be my friend I knew I couldn't trust that bird. He told me once that the British were gone for good, and the Japs were his masters, But apart from the reward—which he'd be lucky to get out of the Japanese—what good will it do him to have me arrested?"

"He thinks he'll get it all right," replied Teja. "A hundred thousand dollars is big money—he's got it in front of his eyes all the time, that's why he's hunting you."

"And he said it was a railway guard he'd arrested who told him where I was bound?" I asked.

"Yes, I think so. He even mentioned a name, but I can't remember it."

"Was it a Sikh?"

"Yes, something Singh ; but all our Sikh names end in Singh."

"Did he say Bhag Singh?"

"That's the name I've been trying to remember. Yes, it was Bhag Singh, he said, who'd told them that you were in Alor Star."

Bhag Singh! So it was Bhag Singh who had been arrested. But how could Black have learned that the railway guard had any connection with me? Nobody knew except Bul's family in Singapore. Could it be that Bhag Singh had got himself arrested when taking the $2,000 to my wife.

Whatever had happened, I had another worry now. If Bhag Singh had told them—after being tortured, of course—that I was in Alor Star, he might also have been forced to reveal that I was on my way to Siam and Burma. It would mean a stricter check on all travellers at Padang Besar, as the authorities there would already have been informed about me.

Having given me this disturbing news Teja Singh left without meeting my other friends. As I saw him off I had no thought that I would not be seeing him again. I never realised that I was not going to hear his voice any more—that I was listening to that voice for the last time. It never occurred to either of us that I would live, and that he would die. It never occurred to him that way. He was running about trying to save my life, and it never entered his head that he was going to die so soon. I can picture him now hurrying up to the train at Chemor and urging me to get out and run for my life. And then he comes all the way to Alor Star to warn me about Black, and again to-day he arrives with yet another timely warning that Black is knocking at my door.

Soon after I had said good-bye to Teja Singh, my Japanese boss called me into his office to tell me that all workers were to be paid that day, and that I must inform everyone. It was just the stroke of luck for which I had been hoping. Not only did I inform all workers that they were going to be paid, but also my three friends that we were leaving Arau that night for Penang by the military train starting at about midnight.

It often had some empty wagons, and we must get into one of them and keep the door closed till we reached Penang.

My sudden decision to leave Arau greatly surprised my companions. For certain reasons, I did not mention to them the news I had just received from Teja, but simply told them that I had been advised to make a move at once otherwise it would be too late. "What is the lightest and most costly article you have in your store?" I then asked Kitchey. He thought for a moment, and finally said that the best and easiest to carry would be some motor-car plugs, especially as he had seventeen new ones. "Go straight to your store," I said, "and take as many as you can if not all. We can sell them in Siam." He returned with eleven, which I agreed would be enough.

Luck again favoured us that evening when rain fell heavily. It came down in torrents and lasted for several hours. Such a downpour would keep the Japanese indoors. Moreover, there would be nobody hanging around the railway station just before the train started. Shortly after ten we walked through the rain to the station unobserved except by the station master with whom we had become quite friendly. On seeing us he asked me where we were going. I replied casually that we were off to Alor Star on leave, returning next day, and no more questions were asked.

Just before midnight the goods train arrived, and we hurriedly climbed into an empty covered wagon and closed the door. Tense with anxiety we waited for the train to move, and sighed with relief when it did. But trouble was not yet over. There was still another barrier to pass at Sungei Patani, where we had previously jumped out of the train, but we did not want to do so now. We knew that we should reach Sungei Patani at about four in the morning when everybody would be fast asleep. Moreover, since ours was an empty wagon the authorities were unlikely to check up on it. We began to sweat, however, when the train arrived at Sungei Patani, and we crouched down in a far corner of the wagon. We could hear Japanese and other voices outside, and see through a hole in the woodwork someone with a hurricane lamp examining the wagons one after another. Then suddenly with a slam someone opened our door. We thought the game was up, but still hoped by keeping still to escape detection. Slowly the man closed the

door, why we could not imagine. But with nerves on edge we remained in the corner till the train started. Then, oh! what joy! We jumped up and shook hands. Once again we had successfully passed the border.

By daybreak we were back in Prai, and went straight to Sohan Singh's house where we had a wash and then a good breakfast. Sohan Singh was out on duty, but his mother made us very welcome. Later we walked to the Labour Office where we saw the clerk in charge of labour for Siam. He was quite shocked to see us volunteering for such a job, and asked us why we wished to become labourers.

"The cost of living is so high here, Mister," I replied, "if we don't go we'll soon be committing suicide. We've been trying in vain to get good jobs so we could make both ends meet. At least as labourers we'll be drawing $3 a day, and that too in Siamese currency plus food and lodging. We'll be better off, anyway."

The clerk agreed with what I said, but seemed to suspect us of being deserters from the Indian National Army and asked many questions about it. However, he took down our names and other necessary particulars, and told us to call back two days later when Japanese officers would have arrived from Siam to receive us. With that hope we left the office and strolled along the seashore. I had to keep my eyes and ears wide open in case Black should have returned to Prai from Alor Star.

As my younger brother, Gurdial, who had been arrested after my escape in Kuala Lumpur and later released, was in Penang, I decided to try to get in touch with him. Not only would I get first-hand news of my family, but also I could send a message to my wife and parents through him. On impulse I went into the Post Office and telephoned to him. When he answered I gave a fictitious name, that of Teja Singh, and told him that I had news of his brother Gurcharn. Then I asked him to meet me at the junction of Penang and Dato Kramat Roads. He agreed to come immediately, for he knew that Teja was one of my agents.

I went there at once myself, and stood waiting with my hat on and wearing strong sun glasses. He came by car with a friend sitting beside him, and drove straight past without recognising

me. His mind was obviously concentrated on Teja Singh, who would be wearing a turban. Then they stopped their car and waited for fifteen minutes, looking around. I dared not approach for fear of the other man, and had to let them go when they drove off.

Ten minutes later I 'phoned to him again, saying that I had waited for him at the appointed place without seeing him. He replied that he had been there, too, but failed to see me. So we arranged to try again. This time he had two friends with him, which made it even more difficult for me to approach him. As before he was obviously looking for Teja, but now all three got out of the car and went to make enquiries at the hotel where I had said on the 'phone that I was staying. From the opposite side of the road I watched all their movements. Then his two friends walked away, and my brother was alone. I went up to him, took off my glasses and dragged him behind a pillar, but only said, "Go back with your friends now, but return alone at seven o'clock—two hours hence. We'll meet here, but be sure you come alone."

Despite his amazement he obeyed me without a word. At the appointed time he returned in a borrowed car, and we drove miles out of the town and stopped by the seashore where we could talk freely without any chance of being overheard. It was then that I heard for the first time exactly what had happened after my escape from my house in Kuala Lumpur.

"You were really very observant to catch those soldiers off their guard," said Gurdial. "There I sat figuring out what they would do with you. I was thinking they'd chop you slice by slice, when suddenly I saw you knock down all three of them and within a split second run out of the house. It was a miracle you didn't get hit by any of the shots they fired after you. They chased after you for some distance, but knew they couldn't keep up your speed being unfamiliar with the place. So they returned to the house and started guarding me all the more closely. Then they made me accompany them on their search for you. They went to all the neighbouring houses not knowing they were inhabited only by Japanese, and woke them up thinking you were hiding there. For three days I was kept in the lock-up by the Gestapo, then released and told to look for you.

"All the time I pretended to search for you I was shadowed by Gestapo agents, who thought I'd be fool enough to contact you to give you money and other things. Sorry as I was at all that had happened, I was very happy you'd managed to escape. And I had some fun fooling the agents shadowing me. I'd cycle about at random from street to lane and back again, entering a house by the front door and going out by the back. Then I'd watch them running round in circles trying to find me.

"After doing this for over a month I wrote to my boss in Penang asking him to get me recalled here, and finally he got me back. To-day, at least I know you're alive, and not shot dead by the Japs as has been strongly rumoured. Most of your friends believe you're dead.

"After your escape the Japs or rather their agents removed all our money and valuables from the house: under pretence of searching it they took whatever they fancied. Of course, we couldn't object. It would have been useless, anyway."

As soon as Gurdial had told me all this I asked him impatiently for the latest war news. He confirmed that Rangoon had been recaptured by the Allies, and that it was only a matter of time for the Japanese to collapse.

Then he took me to the house of a friend, Harbak Singh, who had been most helpful in getting my brother his job in a school where they taught radio transmission and reception. I stayed the night with him, and next morning asked if he knew of any way by which I could leave Penang without a passport. Fortunately, the Japanese Military Police trusted him implicitly, which he said would enable him to borrow an official car and take me past the passport officials. They willingly lent him one when he told them that he wanted to send his wife to hospital to see a doctor.

So I said good-bye to my brother, and Harbak Singh drove me to the pier past the gate where passports and permits were checked, and left me in the launch. Then I crossed over to Prai on the other side, where my three friends were waiting for me at the house of Sohan Singh. After learning that all was well I told them that I was a happier man, for I had met my brother for the first time since my escape three months

before, and at least he could console my family by telling them that I was not dead but alive and well.

In the forenoon we reported at the Labour Office, where about a hundred people were waiting, having volunteered to become labourers. Though we had purposely put on our dirtiest and shabbiest clothes we nevertheless looked better-dressed than the others, who included Chinese, Indians, were brought over from Penang, too. When we were all lined Eurasians, Malays, and Indonesians. Another fifty labourers up we could still have been picked out as a cut above the rest of that motley crowd. I was soon chosen to head the detachment because of my bigger build, and I was allowed to choose four assistants. Naturally, I selected my three friends, and no one ever guessed that we were in any way connected. The other labourers thought that we had only met at the office. Seeing us so united greatly inspired them, and they felt much respect for us,

Standing at the head of the detachment my friends and I had a long hearty laugh. One thing was certain, our work would not be hard. Acting as sort of overseers over the labourers we would not have to do any manual labour ourselves. Our luck seemed to be holding for a change. We began to wonder what our future Japanese bosses would be like, and also what our late Japanese employers at Arau were thinking of us.

The journey to Siam with this labour force meant that we would have to pass once again through Alor Star and Arau, both very dangerous places for us. The problem of disguise was far from easy, especially at Arau where everyone knew us, and the train stopped there for a few minutes. What could we say if caught? We could only think of covering our heads and going to sleep; but feared that our fellow labourers would consider it rather funny if we suddenly did so. We thus left everything till the time came. To add to our discomfort our schedule was ignored, and we did not leave Penang until the afternoon of 30th May, 1945.

Again we had to travel by goods train, a mode of transport to which we were becoming somewhat accustomed. Three covered wagons were allotted to us, and into them climbed one hundred and thirty people including several women. We felt as though we were in huge cans of sardines.

As the clock struck one in the afternoon the train left Prai. All went well until we reached Alor Star where the train halted for an hour-and-a-half. There we stood hiding as best we could, not daring to utter a word being full of fear lest someone saw us, and sweating as though we had been out in the rain. I kept a careful look-out for Black, expecting him to pop up at the station at any moment. Luckily he did not. We took our first breath of relief as the train steamed out of the station. But all was not yet over. We were still in the danger zone. Each minute we were approaching nearer to Arau, and with every turn of the wheels we became more nervous. Besides deserting we had stolen the plugs there, and were more worried about that offence. We hoped that the Japs had not yet discovered their loss; but it was now three days since our theft. At last the train steamed into Arau station. I told my three companions to lie down flat, not to cover their faces but to keep them well down so that no one could recognise them. With every second my breath and pulse quickened, and every minute seemed an hour. Usually the train stopped there for only two minutes, but that evening it waited five. My one thought was of those plugs and how the Japanese punished thieves. I had almost forgotten that I was still the much-wanted *Singa*. But we had thoroughly discussed our late employers most probable course of action, and felt sure that they would have notified the police, who would thus be very much on the alert for "The Four Musketeers" as we had been called during our short stay in Arau.

The minutes passed at snail-like speed. Then at last we were off again. And only then did we feel able to relax and look forward to the next part of our journey.

CHAPTER XIV

A MERRY BONFIRE

A FEW MILES after leaving Arau we felt ninety per cent free. The remaining ten per cent depended on passing Padang Besar. But to feel so near freedom was a great thing for the time being.

At the next stop I slipped off the train and walked up and down the platform. I noticed that behind our wagon petrol was leaking from six wagons each carrying forty drums of petrol destined for Burma. If anyone were careless enough to throw a cigarette stump towards the wagons, I thought, it might easily ignite one of them. On returning to our wagon as the train steamed out of the station I mentioned the matter to my musketeers. All sorts of ideas began pouring out of our heads. The best seemed to be to use the same method adopted by me to ignite petrol in the early part of 1942. We had some coconut fibre string with us, for it tied our clothes together. I cut off about a yard, and divided it into three pieces.

At the next station all four of us alighted and strolled towards the rear of the train, where Bala lit our cigarettes and also the ends of the string which we others held. Then we three slipped between the trucks and tied the bits of string to iron rods close to the holes in the planks through which the petrol was leaking. Quickly we went back to our wagon with our hearts beating fast. Had we been seen? Almost at once the train started again.

A few minutes later our fears had left us, and we hung our heads curiously out of the one door in the wagon hoping for immediate results. Then darkness fell, and we could no longer see the trucks. At one station before reaching the border I got out and went along to see if the fuse was still burning. I could only see the faintest gleam, but as the train was stopping for only a moment I had to return to our wagon. Eagerly as we awaited the result of our fusing we began to wonder whether we were far enough away from the explosion that might occur at any minute. It might be safer for us if we reached the border town of Padang Besar before the trucks exploded. Still nothing happened.

On arrival there we were told that the train would remain all night and next day in the station, and that we would have to sleep in our wagon. Meanwhile, the engine was detached and returned to Alor Star, leaving the train standing at the platform in front of the two stations. Padang Besar is the only place on the entire Malayan railway system where there are two stations, one belonging to the Malayan Railways whilst

the other about twenty yards away on the same platform belongs to the Siamese Railway.

Since we had to spend the night and most of the next day there, we decided to go into the small town to look for some food. Passing the trucks to which we had tied the fuses we tried to see if they were still burning, but some Japanese were leaning against them talking. To our disgust we could not approach near enough to see anything. The smell of the flowing petrol was very strong, however. Thinking our job was a failure we walked into the town where we found an eating-shop nearby. After buying some food I was just paying the shopkeeper when there came the noise of a terrific explosion followed by a deafening "Zoom." Hurrying to the door we saw one of the trucks in flames.

Eagerly we awaited the sound of a second and third explosion, but it did not come. The flames from the one truck were rising high and spreading all round it. The Japanese were frantically striving to stop the conflagration by throwing sand into the truck, but in vain. The fire had got hold of the whole pool of petrol inside the truck. The Japanese hastily mustered all available hands to detach the neighbouring trucks and push them to a safe distance, but they could not shift the burning truck without an engine. The flames and heat were far too great for anyone to get near it. So there it stood blazing away between the two stations with the flames getting bigger every minute.

It seemed time to have a look at the other trucks to see if the fuses were still smouldering. If not, they must be detached as otherwise the Japanese would discover the cause of the fire. So I told Bala and Kitchey to stroll over to them as though in search of a better viewpoint. On returning they told me that the fuses had simply burnt out, apparently not being near enough to the flow of petrol.

By this time the entire woodwork of the wagon had been destroyed, though only one of the petrol drums had exploded. We realised that soon the others would begin to burst and probably cause casualties. Shortly afterwards another drum exploded, casting burning petrol on to the Malayan station and setting it alight. The Japanese tried to prevent the fire from spreading, but almost immediately more drums exploded

and two hours later both stations were on fire. At intervals there was a frightful blast as another huge metal container was flung high into the air. And higher still rose the flames. Though both stations were obviously doomed the Japanese went on fighting the fire for a long time. By daybreak all that could be seen was the steel framework of two stations with the twisted metal parts of a truck.

As for us we woke up next morning with a happy feeling that our job had been successful, and went for a swim in a nearby fresh water lake. Despite our satisfaction we still dreaded lest the Japanese at Arau should have discovered that we were in Pedang Besar, and contact the police. Did the local police know already that we had deserted at Arau, and committed theft there, too? Despite all our success so far I was not happy. As the day drew closer for the train to leave for Siam I felt increasingly nervous. I could not call myself safe until I was well out of Pedang Besar.

At last we were in that train, and then in Siam proper. There was nothing more to worry about. My safety was assured, Very soon we reached Haadyai, a small junction town in Southern Siam, and remained there for the rest of the night. Next morning after a wash at a nearby tap and a good breakfast we decided to take a walk round the town. As we strolled slowly up one of the streets I thought of the plugs which we wanted to sell, and sent Kitchey back to the train to fetch two of them. Then we found a Chinese shop dealing in motor-car spare parts, and I asked the manager if he would like to buy two plugs. "Are they new ones?" he asked. "Yes," I said, "and a well-known brand, too." He examined them carefully, and asked how much I wanted for them. I said a hundred ticals each, which was about £4. "That's too dear, I can only offer you forty ticals." "That's too little," I said, and went out of the shop. We had not gone far when an Indian approached us, saying that he could take us to another dealer who might buy them. Again I quoted the same price, and this man offered fifty ticals. Finally, we sold all the plugs to him and realised a sum of 550 ticals, which was a large amount in Siam where money was not inflated as in Malaya and other Japanese-occupied territories.

We began to feel very rich, and instead of living on the food

supplied by the Japanese which was quite good, we foolishly bought high-class Siamese food at various stations on the way, which cost a lot. The Japanese officials in charge of us and the other labourers were astonished to see us spending money so lavishly and turning up our noses at the good food provided. Sometimes we invited the Japanese officials to dine with us, which they did very gladly. We thus gained more freedom to move about, and were the only labourers allowed to leave the train and go wherever we liked so long as we returned in time. We also became very popular with the other labourers because we always took their side in any dispute with the Japanese. Most of them had joined the gang with the sole purpose of entering Siam and getting employment with the Siamese. So we were always encouraging them to desert.

The journey north from Haadyai was expected to take from ten to twelve days, and we began to realise how hellish the trip was going to be. On that first evening we stopped at a small station for about two hours, and once again had a good feed in the town. When we returned to the station we saw that some more trucks had been attached to the train. Somewhat to our surprise they proved to be petroleum trucks, and petrol was dripping through holes in the sides as we passed by. My friends immediately suggested another attack. "Why not?" I replied. "We might at least see what happens. Better bell the cat now she's asleep." Bul looked curiously around, saying, "Which cat?" But I went on, "It's getting dark, we must see exactly where we're going to tie the fuses now."

An hour later we tied fuses to three alternate trucks. At midnight we arrived at a station called Surattani, and the train could not proceed further as a mile away there was a long bridge whose spans had all fallen into the deep river as a result of bombing by the Eastern Bomber Command. Shortly after midnight the first fuse ignited the petrol in one of the trucks. There was a big explosion, and it was soon covered in flames. Five minutes later the other fuses took effect, and all three trucks were now ablaze. When the first truck exploded the whole train was drawn away to about half-a-mile outside the station, and the Japanese were thinking of detaching the trucks on either side of it. But then the others caught fire, and the job was far more difficult. Six trucks were burning before

the others could be detached, and there was little the Japanese could do about it. They had to leave them to burn to ashes. It made the biggest bonfire I have ever seen. The 12,000 gallons or more of petrol destined for the Japanese front in Burma had gone with the wind.

The Japanese officials accompanying us began to wonder how seven petrol trucks could have been destroyed within two days, and declared that it must be the work of Fifth Columnists. They suspected about twenty Chinese amongst the labourers. Being Indians we were considered above suspicion, and were even asked to keep an eye on the Chinese labourers, which we promised to do.

From Surattani onwards trains were only run at night; during the day they were not only stopped but also camouflaged. To their disgust the Japanese acknowledged that Allied planes were over Siam in daytime, and never spared any train they spotted. This was why it took us some twelve days to reach Nompladuck from Penang. Moreover, no less than four big bridges between Surattani and Nompladuck had been partially destroyed by bombing. We had to spend one full day and night at each of these bridges, where we came across gangs of prisoners-of-war busily engaged on reconstruction.

In one prisoner-of-war camp full of Australians we spent two nights, and I made it my business to tell them of the German surrender and how the Allied Forces were almost on the mainland of Japan. They seemed very surprised at the idea of an attack on Japan itself. We also told them of the recapture of Rangoon. Obviously their liberation was near at hand, and their joy was good to see. I found out that most of these prisoners-of-war had worked on the "Death Railway", and thus I asked them about our chances of getting through to Burma. They assured me that it was easy going now, but advised us to be very careful at Nikkay near the Siam-Burma border, which they said was well guarded by the Japanese.

The day after leaving this camp we reached Chumpourn, the most bombed town in Siam. No less than three hundred goods wagons and half-a-dozen engines were lying disabled in the station yards, and the Japanese had suffered very heavy casualties there.

At last we reached Nompladuck about forty miles south of

Bangkok, which had also received severe punishment from Allied bombing. From here the "Death Railway" branched off, and went straight to Moulmein in Burma without a break.

CHAPTER XV

THE RAILROAD OF DEATH

At Nompladuck we were told to alight and wait for another train to take us to Kanburi. Nothing remained of the station there and an area of about a mile around it had been completely devastated. At every few feet there were bomb craters, fallen trees, withered trees, and trees stripped of their branches. Though the marshalling yards had been repaired it was obvious that the Japs had sustained very heavy damage here, especially as it was a place which they and the Indian National Army used for the concentration of troops.

Two hours later a goods train arrived and we were allotted two open trucks. At about midnight we reached Kanburi, but the night was so dark we could see little except the numerous hurricane lamps carried by the Japanese and other labourers who had come to receive us. From the station we had to march nearly two miles over a rough, stony road, each carrying his personal belongings. It was, nevertheless, a relief to escape from those horrible goods wagons in which it had been a torture to sit with the sun beating down on the roofs and steel structures. Those two miles seemed as though they would never come to an end, On both sides of the road it looked like jungle, but it wasn't. We stumbled on through the darkness and at last reached our journey's end.

We found that we had been taken to a quarantine camp made up of a collection of thatched bamboo huts. They were built entirely of bamboo except for the roofs of palm leaves, and rattan strings had been used instead of nails, On either side of a central passage there were benches of split bamboo about two feet from the ground, which served as beds. In our hut they were covered thickly with dust. We were so tired, however, that after dusting them as quickly as possible we lay down for the night.

As I lay there I began to think of the many labourers whom we had persuaded to abscond at various stations on the journey. When the officials checked up on the labour force next morning, would they ask us for an explanation of the shortage? We had decided to say that we had done our best to look after them, and that they must have escaped just as the train was starting at various stations, or at the long delays caused by broken bridges. If the Japanese officials accompanying us from Prai knew that labourers were running away and could do nothing about it, how could we?

At daybreak muster was called by means of a long blast on a whistle, and everyone left the huts and lined up in front of three Japanese officials, one of whom had come with us from Prai. I noted with pleasure that of the one hundred and thirty labourers that had entrained there, only eighty were left, thanks to us. When the Japanese discovered that so many had deserted they angrily asked us what had happened. We all gave the same explanation, adding that the Siamese had approached us at various halts and invited us to join them as they would pay us more than the Japanese. We had declined, but doubtless the others had accepted the invitation. As I had expected the Japanese could no nothing about it and merely said, "You are all good people, but those who have run away are bad."

Then we were taken to another hut, which was the dispensary, where we were all inoculated and our blood was tested. We four were very pleased to get a free inoculation. After that we were lined up once more and warned that we could expect no mercy from the sons of the Land of the Rising Sun if any of us tried to run away. We were also warned not to indulge in any Fifth Column or spying activities.

During the twelve days we stayed there we had hardly any work to do except to keep the camp tidy. We found that there were some still interested in escaping and making for Bangkok. I advised them on their best chances of success. First, they could run off when I was taking them to swim in the Minam River about a mile from the camp. On the way there we had to cross the main road leading to Banpong and Bangkok, on which there were some buses running to those places. Or they could slip out of the back of the camp on to the railway line

in the early morning, and join the main road a few miles down the track. Some preferred the first course, others the latter. Within three days several had escaped, and the Japanese asked me for an explanation. I replied that I could do nothing about the escapes as they took place at night when I was fast asleep, and told them that the men must have gone to the town of Kanburi or the neighbouring camps to get better paid jobs. I suggested that if we went out to look for them we might catch them, which made the Japanese suspicious of me. They thought that I might be planning to escape too, and said that one of them would accompany us on the search.

So one Japanese went with a Chinese, Kitchey and me to Kanburi. It had obviously received a terrible pasting from the Allied bombers. Just outside the railway station an area of about six square miles, which had been used for military and prisoner-of-war camps, was covered with debris and bomb craters. Nothing else remained. I asked the Japanese what had happened. He said quite frankly that it had been bombed by the Allies in the latter part of 1944. We searched the whole town for the missing labourers, but naturally found no trace of them. Then we went to the various camps in the neighbourhood with the same result. So in the afternoon we returned to our own camp and had tiffin. Later, the Chinese who had accompanied us told me that he intended to abscond that night. I said that it was a most wise thing for him to do. Next morning when we woke up we discovered that he and another Chinese had made off. I did not report it to a Japanese official till the afternoon, so as to give them more than eight hours' start. He was furious as it was my duty to report all absentees at once, and was on the point of beating me but on second thoughts did not do so.

Some of the overseers and medical orderlies in the camp had been to Moulmein, and they told us that Nikkay was the last station in Siam before the railway crossed the Burma frontier. They thought that we might be sent there, though for all they knew we might remain within a few miles of Kanburi. My friends and I hoped that the Japanese would send us to Nikkay, which would bring us near Moulmein, our destination. We also heard that everyone going south was being checked at every station, but that there was no check on any-

one going north because no labourer was likely to go towards the war zone. Some had run away because of the bad treatment which they had received from the Japanese. Most of them had managed to make their way back to Malaya, but the unlucky few had been tortured so terribly that some had died, while the survivors had finally been sent back to the camps from which they had escaped.

One morning just as we were preparing to go for a swim we heard that three Jap officials had come from Korenkurai, and that we would be leaving two days later. When I inquired where Korenkurai was I was told that it was thirty miles south of Nikkay, and that the journey would take about three days. The news made us so happy that we sang and chuckled with laughter on our way to the river. After all we were being sent towards Burma.

It was not until two days later, however, that the Japanese officials told us anything about our forthcoming journey. At muster that morning it was announced that we would be leaving for Korenkurai in the evening. Soon after our arrival at that camp the Japanese had entertained us with an orchestral concert, and now the same band playing Japanese and English marching tunes led us to the station, or rather half-way there; then it turned back. But at first we walked behind the band like the mourners at a funeral procession, only we were carrying our belongings on our heads.

After travelling all night we reached Wangpoe in the early morning, when the train was shunted about two miles away from the station into the nearby jungle where it remained all day camouflaged from the Allied planes constantly hovering around. From there the railway wound round the tops of mountains, and seemed to run almost on top of the mountain range. It was surprising that the Japanese engineers had attempted to construct a railway in such a mountainous district at all, especially as they had no time to cut tunnels. Instead, they preferred to go the long way round, however steep the climb. The way a gentle gradient was made so that a single engine could draw a long train was in itself a remarkable feat of engineering.

Next morning we reached another big camp station, where we remained in our wagons as it was raining heavily. While

we halted there another train came in from the north, and I noticed several wagons full of soldiers of the Indian National Army. They were coming from Moulmein and were on their way to Bangkok, where the headquarters had moved after the fall of Rangoon. It struck me that if I made friends with some of them I might obtain some useful information. So Bul and I jumped out of the wagon and ran through the drizzle to a hut where some of the soldiers were standing. One man smiled at us, and we were soon chatting to him. Later, Kitchey joined us, saying that there was a small restaurant on the river bank where we could buy a good breakfast. So I invited the soldier to accompany us as we could talk more freely there.

"Are there any more I.N.A. troops left in Moulmein?" I asked him.

"Yes, a detachment of about twenty men is remaining to guard Indian property from the dacoits who are mainly Burmese," he replied. "Then there are about thirty soldiers in hospital who've just come out of the jungles off the Mandalay-Rangoon road, where they've been for two months or more. Many died there of hunger and disease. These losses have completely disorganised the Indian National Army in Burma. We've also been very short of supplies in this campaign which was why we lost the battle for Imphal. We might have won it, but the supplies meant for us were seized by the Japanese. The monsoons set in too early, and the transports got bogged in the mud while some of those in low-lying areas were washed away by the floods. On our retreat from Imphal we saw all those transports stuck in the mud. Some of the Japanese drivers were still in their seats as grim skeletons."

Then I asked him if there was any rail service beyond Martaban, and he replied that there was, but that it was strictly reserved for the Japanese military.

"Please, can you tell me where I can get some Siamese money in exchange for Burmese?" he asked.

"Have you got any Burmese money?" I said.

"Yes, and so have my friends. They want to exchange it, too, if possible."

"Didn't you try to exchange it at Nikkay?"

"Some of us did, and we got one tical for every ten rupees. I thought I would exchange mine at the next station, but

couldn't find anyone to do it there. So I'm wanting some Siamese money very badly."

"How many ticals do you require?" I asked, knowing that he had spoken the truth in saying that the exchange was one to ten.

After examining his purse he said that he had five thousand rupees, and would like to exchange them all as he was not returning to Burma. I told him that it could be done, and we exchanged the whole lot for him. Then he asked what we were going to do with the rupees as we could not use them here. I told him that many people passing through on their way to Burma would require rupees. He sighed, as though he thought me a very foolish person, for who would want to go to Burma when everything was being evacuated from there? After receiving the money he returned to his truck leaving me and my friends at the restaurant.

"We're dealing in thousands to-day," I said, and they all laughed. "To-night we'll reach Korekunta. The train is going straight on to Nikkay. What are we going to do when we reach Korekunta? Shall we alight there or carry on?"

"I think it would be better for us to jump off the train as soon as it starts this evening," said Kitchey.

"But if we get off here we'll still have to walk to Korekunta," I replied. "And if the Japs spotted us there they wouldn't spare us. They'd give us a terrific beating and then set us to work there. I think we'd better work for a week at Korekunta and after drawing our pay make a bolt for it."

My companions agreed to this plan. After tiffin, however, the Japanese told me that they were dividing the entire group into two. One group was to go to Korekunta, the other to Korenkurai six miles away. According to the list that was given to me I was to remain at Korekunta with Kitchey as my assistant, whilst Bul and Bala were to go to Korenkurai. We were all sorry to be parted thus, but agreed to meet on pay-day and decide then the day of our escape.

By midnight, the train reached Korekunta and my party alighted there. While Bul and Bala went on with their gang to Korenkurai we were led by some Japanese to the huts where we were to live. They were made of bamboo in the same style as those at Kanburi. Men and women lived together, but as

daikorefo or head labourer I was allowed one small room to myself. Next to it there was a coffee shop run by a Chinese, the head labourer of another gang. It was quite usual for head labourers working on the "Death Railway" to run such shops and thus make a little profit for themselves. Though Kitchey was supposed by the Japanese to sleep with the other labourers I managed to arrange for him to sleep with me.

At about 1 a.m. that night three Japanese came into my room. One of them had accompanied us from Kanburi, and he introduced me to the others telling them that I was the daikoreto. They ordered some Siamese liquor and insisted on my joining them. Two of them spoke a little English, which enabled us to talk quite freely with them; but I was careful not to exceed the limit which I always set myself when drinking with the Japanese.

"You no learn Nippon-go?" one of them asked me.

"Master, I learn plenty plenty," I replied, "but Nippon-go no enter my head. Nippon-go very hard. I cannot learn. I think if Master teach me Nippon-go maybe I can learn."

"Buggaro," he said, laughing. "Nippon-go no hard. You no like Nippon you no learn Nippon-go."

"No, Master, I like Nippon," I said, as though unaware of the full meaning of my words. "Nippon good people. But learn Nippon-go I cannot. Drink *saké* I can, Master."

"You no wife?"

"No, Master, I no wife. I no like kunniang (girls)."

"Dammy na, why wife no good? Kunniang always good."

"No, kunniang no good," I insisted as though I were a woman-hater. "No kunniang no good. I no like kunniang, *saké* very good."

After a few drinks they wished me sayonara (good-bye) and went away. Whereupon I went to bed and had a good sleep.

At muster early next morning we were all told that since leaving Penang we had done no work, but that from now onwards we would have to work hard. About a mile away a bridge was being repaired. Apart from those too sick to work, the labourers were sent to the bridge under the care of Kitchey, while I remained in my room. Having had little sleep that night I slept till Kitchey woke me up for lunch. Afterwards as I lay resting I began to think of my family and parents

whom I had left behind. I tried not to think of them, but it was impossible. Whatever I was doing and wherever I went they were always in my heart. I wondered if they were all right, and hoped that we would see each other again one day. But second thoughts reminded me of the dangers of my journey, and that it might easily end in my death.

That evening as Kitchey and I were sitting in my room talking, the three Japs came in and ordered some Siamese liquor. By midnight they looked on the drunken side, as they had had many more drinks than either Kitchey or I. Saying that he felt sleepy Kitchey went out to the other hut to sleep, while I went on drinking with the Japanese. Shortly afterwards a Siamese lad passed by on his way to the canteen. The Jap who could not speak English called out to him, saying "Kurrah" and some other words which I could not understand. Then he caught hold of his hand and asked him to sit down beside him.

At that time the Japanese in Siam were beginning to hate the Siamese because they were looting their trains and turning against them. One thing the Japanese had been unable to do in Siam was to disarm the Siamese and make the carrying of arms illegal. Anyone could possess arms in Siam. It was mainly because of this that the Siamese resorted to looting and robbery.

When the Japanese in my room began to mock the Siamese and give him more and more drink I smelt trouble. Then they told him to fetch some Siamese girls, and he refused. Despite their increasing anger he kept on saying that he could not get any. Then they told him to bring the Siamese girl who was running a small shop just across the railway line. He said that she was his elder sister and that he could not do it. Moreover, her husband was at home. They persisted, however, and he became very angry. Soon hot words were exchanged, ending in a free fight. I tried to stop them, but one of the Japs thinking that I was coming to the assistance of the Siamese said to me in English, "Do not help Siamese. They bad men. You help Nippon."

"I no help Siamese," I replied. "I no like Nippon and Siamese fight. We all friends." And I went on trying to pull one of the Japs away from the Siamese. So the other pounced

upon me from behind, and I fell to the ground with him on top of me. Struggling to my feet with him still on my back I threw him to the ground. Another Jap, armed with a stick rushed at me, but I ducked as he aimed a blow at me and, grappling with him, threw him on top of the Jap already on the ground. A blow to the jaw kept him there, giving me time to separate the Japanese and the Siamese who were still fighting. I interfered in the nick of time to prevent murder.

The Siamese was pulling out a long dagger and was about to charge at the Jap when I wrestled with him and disarmed him. I had barely succeeded in doing so when the Japanese whose life I had saved pounced upon me. With my remaining strength I managed to get him on the ground and sit on him, while I told the Siamese to run away. Then some labourers who had heard the shouts and cries rushed in, just in time to stop the Siamese from attacking me. They were soon followed by some Japanese, who, on seeing their comrades lying apparently unconscious on the ground, asked me what had happened. I explained that they were drunk and had started fighting with the Siamese, and that I had stopped the fight. One of them kicked the three bodies on the ground and told the labourers to carry them back to their camp. The Siamese slipped away, and I never saw him again during the few days I remained there.

When everyone had gone I found two wallets lying on the floor in my room, which apparently belonged to the Japanese who had been fighting. On examining them I found that one contained a hundred-and-ten ticals and the other about fifty-five. I decided not to return the money, and disposed of the wallets by burning them in the kitchen fire. Before muster next morning I gave each labourer five ticals, telling them where I had got them and asking them not to mention it to anyone. Already they liked me and would do anything for me. To them five ticals was a big sum and I knew that they would keep their mouths shut.

As muster was going on I saw one of the Japanese whom I had struck coming towards me. The labourers saw him, too. All of a sudden there was not a sound except for my voice calling the numbers, the men replying "hadjir" (present), and the approaching footsteps of the Jap. My back was towards him,

while they were facing him. The way they answered "hadjir" told me that they were a bit nervous, too. I knew that I must steel my own nerves not to show a trace of the fear within me. I was not so much worried about the fight as by my theft of the money. I had done it because of my hatred of the Japs; but I had committed a crime and if discovered would have to pay the penalty for it.

The Japanese was now standing just behind me, whilst I pretended not to have seen him. When I had finished calling out all the numbers I realised that the labourers had come out in full strength. So I congratulated them on having put up a good show, and told them that we must work hard not only because we were paid for it but also to help to win the war for Japan. As I finished speaking the Japanese gave me a hearty clap on the back. I turned round as though seeing him for the first time, gave a deep bow and said "Ohiho Gozaimaz" (good morning). After acknowledging my greeting he made a speech to the labourers, telling them to work hard and do as I told them. They must not report sick even if they were sick. According to him work was the best cure for sickness. Just as I was wondering what he was going to say next, whether he would mention the fight or the stolen money, he dismissed them to their various places of work, and went away asking me to call at his office at 11 a.m.

When I called there I fully expected him to mention the night's affair, but he merely showed me how to keep a daily roster and how to compile the pay-sheet at the end of every week. That evening, however, all three Japanese came to my room whilst Kitchey and I were preparing to have dinner. I asked them to join us, but thanking us politely they said that they had already had their dinner. Then one of them said to me in English, "You see my money bag last night? I lost my money bag. My friend also lost his. We think we ask you if you see them." "I no see any money bag here," I replied. "Did you leave your bag here?" "No, we no leave it here," he said. "We just ask you if you got see it anywhere." I advised them to ask the labourers if they had seen their money bags anywhere, and after a few more drinks they went away.

Every night at about midnight a military train on its way to Nikkay arrived at the station near our camp. Kitchey and

I made a point of calling there at the same time to study the possibilities of reaching Nikkay by train. If we had the chance it seemed better to go by train which would only take two hours, than to walk the thirty miles to Nikkay which would mean walking all day. We decided that we would have to climb on to the roof of one of the wagons if we could do so unobserved. We decided that we could do so unobserved.

With the week-end came pay-day, when the diakoreta had to walk six miles to Korenkurai to collect the pay-roll. I was glad to go there because I wanted to meet my two friends Bul and Bala so as to make arrangements with them to skip away in a day or two. After drawing my own pay besides that for all the labourers I went to the camp where they were living. On meeting them I discovered that the daikoreto there was another Indian, who oddly enough happened to be Bala's uncle. Taking my two friends aside I explained my plans for escaping.

"To-morrow there's a holiday for everyone," I said. "I want you both to get leave to visit us in Korekunta. They'll never refuse you a day's leave. You can remain with us till midnight, when we can all go down to the station and board the train for Nikkay."

"That's a good idea," said Bul. "We'll be there in the evening."

On returning to Korekunta I called all the labourers together and paid them. I was glad to find that I had to pay no one out of my own pocket, as often happens when paymasters carelessly give someone more than is due to him. As a daikoreto I was really having a fine time with the handsome pay of ten ticals a day, especially as I was a wanted man. Even my pals agreed that to work there in the jungles was paradise enough under such circumstances. The Japs had treated us much better than we had ever expected. Nevertheless I insisted that however pleasant it might be we must push on in a day or two.

Next morning the Japanese announced a working day for us instead of the expected holiday, and the gang was sent to work on a bridge about half a mile away. It was a flimsy bridge running over a valley about two hundred feet deep. Having nothing to do I decided to go on to the bridge and

watch the men at work. I noticed that one of the labourers was unable to work as hard as the others owing to a wound on his leg which was badly swollen. As the morning wore on the Japanese kicked him repeatedly to make him work harder. All day he struggled on in increasing agony. Then he happened to knock the hand of one of the Japanese with a pole that he was carrying. The Jap flew into a raging temper, and the other workmen thought that he was going to slap the labourer's face as he rushed towards him. The man was now sitting on the edge of the bridge resting his wounded leg with his back towards the advancing Jap, who on reaching him kicked him savagely. The man rolled over and fell into the deep ravine below after first striking a log some hundred feet from the ground. The onlookers turned cold and pale at the gruesome sight, which made them feel that there could be no God, as otherwise He would have implanted in the ruthless Japs some human sympathy.

That evening Kitchey and I waited for Bul and Bala, but they failed to turn up. I was very annoyed, because I believed that everything must be carried out according to pre-arranged plan if success was to be achieved. The disappointment coupled with the afternoon's tragedy of a fellow labourer gave me a restless night. I could hardly close my eyes to go to sleep, for I could not forget the sight of that poor man hurtling to his death and the laughing face of the Japanese as he watched him fall on to the rocks below. Nor the way he boasted of what he had done afterwards, saying that such would be the fate of the next person who malingered. I swore silently that I would teach that bastard a lesson if I remained there long enough.

I was also worried about Bul and Bala, and could not understand why they had not come as we had arranged. "I wonder what's the matter," I said to Kitchey next morning at breakfast. He suggested that they might have been unable to get leave or perhaps they wanted to remain behind. "Then they should have told me so frankly," I said. "They can stay here if they like, but they ought to have said so instead of wasting my time like this." In the evening I saw Bul walking alone along the railway line from Korenkurai towards our hut. "Bala isn't coming," he said as soon as he reached me. "He wanted

to, but his uncle wouldn't let him. And Bala thought it a good job and easy at that with very good pay so he decided to remain there." "Very well, we'll have to leave him behind," I said. "I'm sorry, because we've been together since Singapore. But we must catch that train to-night. You're just in time to join us for dinner, and first of all we'll have a drink."

After dinner I began to feel rather nervous. I told Kitchey that if anyone asked us where we were going, he was to say that we were seeing our pal Bul off at the station. We all agreed to stick to that story. Then we lay on my bed resting as there were still two hours to go before the train was due to arrive. Kitchey and Bul fell asleep, but I remained awake. At last I heard the toot of the train not far off. "Come on, boys, the train's here," I cried, and we hurried down to the railway line near the station. When the train halted the truck in front of us was an open one full of timber. I climbed on to the top of it and then helped up my two companions, and ordered them to lie flat on the timber. The other covered wagons were all full of military. If it had not been for that truck of timber we should have had no chance of boarding the train. It had been drizzling slightly, but as the train left Korekunta the rain stopped and the clouds became thinner till we could see the moon appearing above us. All through the moonlit morning the train travelled till daybreak when it reached its destination, Nikkay.

Nikkay, well known to many prisoners of war as the Death Valley, is very near the Siamese-Burma border. It is the last outpost on the Siamese side, though there is another one known as the Three Pagodas but it is much smaller. It was at Nikkay that thousands of prisoners of war died from starvation or from cholera. There was a greater loss of human life there than in any one camp on the entire length of the "Death Railway" from Nompladuck to Thanbuzayat.

When the train stopped we alighted happily, yet I was still afraid, for I knew that we were not out of danger. The Japanese at Korekunta might already have telephoned to their officials at Nikkay to tell them to look for three Indians who had absconded. The train moved off to remain, as usual, concealed in the jungle for the rest of the day. We did not know which way to go. Where was the village, if there was one?

Then we saw some Siamese girls walking towards the station carrying something on their heads. We went up to them and asked them the way to the village. They told us to walk straight on. Before long we reached a tiny lake of clear water, so we washed and had a good breakfast. Then we went on for about a mile when we came to a narrow gorge guarded by Japanese sentries, though we did not realise it, nor that it was the prisoner-of-war camp of which we had been told at Takko to be very careful. We walked past the sentries without being stopped, and then saw in the distance the usual camp of huts for labourers on the "Death Railway". Meeting an Indian we asked him if he could tell us where the village was. He told us to carry straight on. A little later we saw a huge cross somewhat overgrown by jungle. At once I realised that it was the cross which some Australian prisoners of war had mentioned when we had spent a couple of nights with them.

On going up to it we saw that it was inscribed to the memory of the British, American, Dutch, Australian and Indian prisoners of war who had died there owing to Japanese neglect. And it went on to say that such a stain would not be blotted out for a long time, nor would the memory of their atrocities be allowed to wither.

"How in the world did the Japanese allow the prisoners of war to put up this memorial?" Kitchey asked.

"That's just what I'm thinking right now," I said. "And I figure it out like this. The Japanese must have realised that these men died mainly because of their negligence. They knew that they hadn't got enough doctors to cope with such an outbreak of disease, and felt sorry at the loss of so many human beings. It touched the hearts of the Japanese, who still thought of them as human beings though prisoners of war. So in an attempt to console the survivors they let them put up that epitaph."

"Yes, it must have been something like that," said Bul.

"Nobody seems to take much care of the place now," I said. "See how overgrown it is. Before we go let us stand in silence for two minutes for the brave who died here and sacrificed their lives for the sake of freedom and democracy for which the Allies are fighting."

We stood in silence for two minutes then went on our way.

Two miles further on we seemed to be getting deep into the jungle and thought that we must have taken the wrong path. So we turned back and found a side path which we had previously overlooked. Taking it we soon came to the village of Nikkay. There we went into a small restaurant belonging to a young Siamese woman in the middle twenties. She was unmarried but had a fiancé, a Siamese lad much younger than herself. To our surprise both of them spoke perfect Malay. After hearing these details I asked her how she had learnt it.

"Everybody in this village speaks Malay besides Siamese," she replied.

"How has that come about?" I said in astonishment. "You are about a thousand miles from Malaya and three hundred from the main route from Malay to Bangkok. And Nikkay is cut off by thick virgin jungle! I simply can't understand it."

"Funny, isn't it? But there it is," she said laughing. "Many Malayan labourers who have come to Nikkay since the Japanese opened up the railway have remarked the same thing, too."

We became very friendly with her, and she let us stay in her house while we remained in Nikkay. While the others were fast asleep that night I lay awake, thinking of the rest of our journey. Though Nikkay was well guarded by the Japanese we were comparatively safe there, for we had already crossed the dangerous frontier zone. But we still had about one-hundred-and-twenty miles to go to reach Moulmein. We had planned to leave Nikkay the following morning, but unfortunately a very heavy shower of rain fell lasting several hours. So we decided to delay our departure, and went for a stroll down the valley. There we met an Indian locomotive driver from Malaya. He took us to his camp in the caves, and told us that Allied planes came over almost every day. The Allies had blasted the station area so heavily that the Japanese had made their railway yards in the caves. I asked him if there was any chance of getting a train from Nikkay to Aperon. He replied that though a train ran there every evening the Japanese Military Police would prevent us from boarding it. So I decided that we must walk.

Leaving Nikkay the following morning we struck out into

the jungle. We had walked for little more than an hour when it started raining, at times in torrents. On and on we marched, and it never stopped all day. It was terrible walking through the jungle and thick undergrowth in that rain. The huge trees were so tall that we were in semi-darkness. The ground was very marshy because of the monsoon weather, and there were hundreds of leeches. By noon we reached the rail track that went on to Burma. We kept up a steady pace of about two miles an hour then, and in the evening passed Three Pagodas on the boundary between Siam and Burma. At about nine o'clock we reached Aperon. We were so tired that we looked at once for somewhere to sleep, and at last found some empty goods wagons in a siding, climbed into one and slept.

There were swarms of mosquitoes around us, but we did not care. We slept like logs. It was torture to spend the night in that truck, but at least it gave us some shelter from the drenching rain. By morning we were all so stiff that we could hardly move, and above all felt very hungry. We knew that as Aperon was the place where the Japanese concentrated their reinforcements for the Burma front, there would be a canteen at the station. So we looked out for any Japanese soldiers, carrying pots for food, trying to cross the line. At last we saw some and followed them. Sure enough they were on their way to the cook-house.

There we met the major in charge. Bowing deeply we told him that we were hospital dressers on our way to Moulmein, adding that the Japanese officer accompanying us had missed the train at Nikkay. It took us about half an hour to make him understand our simple story by means of signs, as he hardly knew a word of English. I feared that we were in for trouble, for he spoke roughly to us, but at last told his assistant to give us some food. After a hearty meal of rice and fish we returned to the wagon and lay down for another day's rest.

At about ten in the morning, however, we decided to plod on to the next station, Annaquin, which was only a few miles away. It was yet another transit camp for the Japanese, where they stored all sorts of ammunition and other armaments for their defence of Burma. Here again, we found some empty trucks in the yard where we spent the night quite peacefully.

Next morning we were so tired that we decided to spend

the day there. It was also drizzling slightly. Once again the pangs of hunger assailed us, and nothing could be done about it, for there was no Burmese village or shop nearby. We dozed on and off, saying a few words to each other every hour or so. But there was little in our talk to cheer anyone. Only one thought was in our minds—when would we reach Moulmein?

"We wanted to get to Burma, and we have," said Bul. "We might even go back now if we liked, for we've done what we wanted to do."

"Burma? Yes, we've reached Burma," I said. "But our object is really to cross the front lines. They're not far off now, we've only got about two hundred miles to go."

"That's true enough," said Kitchey, "but those two hundred miles are the hardest."

"Don't worry, we'll make it soon," I said. "We're in the war zone now, and I can't understand why we don't see some planes flying about. We haven't seen even one yet."

It seemed curious that there was no sign of air activity. We talked about it for a while and then dozed off again. It was nearing midday and the rain had ceased. I had not fallen asleep myself but was just lying down with my eyes open. Suddenly, from a distance there came the steady drone of aeroplane engines. Popping my head out of the truck I scanned the horizon beyond the hills trying to see from where the planes were coming. A few minutes passed. Nothing was to be seen though the drone of the planes was definitely getting nearer.

Then, all of a sudden, two American B-25s appeared diving straight towards the trucks. My last clear thought was that we had had it. I shouted to my pals. They were soon on their feet and were about to jump out of the truck when I told them that it would be better to lie flat where we were. We had barely done so when salvo after salvo of machine-gun fire was directed straight at the trucks. We thought that it was the end of us all and left everything to Fate. I could not figure out how we had got caught in such a tight corner. My heart beat faster and every second I expected a terrific explosion. Compared to the bombs which I thought would soon explode the machine-gun fire did not seem to matter very much.

The Japanese put up a thunderous ack-ack barrage. If we

had jumped out of the trucks we should have been machine-gunned. The rattle of machine-gun fire continued for some times after the planes had passed us—presumably it was the tail gunners missing no chances. I kept my head between my hands and only thought of God. Then, as the droning sound died away, the firing stopped. But I wondered if the planes would turn back or be followed by another wave. Quickly I got up and popped my head out of the truck.

I looked into the distance where the planes had gone. I could see them, and they were turning. I shouted to my friends who were still lying speechless on the floor, telling them to jump out of the truck and make for some nearby hole.

"Look, they nearly got us," said Bul as they got up. "See those bullet holes."

"Never mind about them," I said, "we must bolt as they'll soon be over us again." We jumped out and ran to an old bomb crater about fifty yards away. Two minutes later the planes came back. Again there was a heavy ack-ack barrage, and before long I heard the whistle of falling bombs. I lay flat with my head in my hands. Fortunately it was a deep crater. Then the bombs burst with deafening thunder. The blast shook us, but the showers of mud and earth that came afterwards were even more terrifying. A few seconds later more bombs fell. Then all was quiet except for the drone of the planes flying away. I cautiously raised my head and saw dust and smoke rising from the direction of the trucks, and the planes disappearing in the distance.

We waited for a while to make sure that they would not return again, then painfully climbed out of the crater. The trucks in which we had taken shelter were blown to bits and lying in pieces off the track. The railway lines were torn and bent, some stood on end. A few minutes later about a dozen Japanese were crawling amongst the wreckage. Despite the heavy ack-ack fire I knew that both bombers had got safely away. I looked at Bul and Kitchey and saw how pale they were.

"Lucky we got out of that truck," I said, "otherwise our bones would be lying there now with no one to identify them. Nobody in Malaya would ever have known what had happened to us."

We went and sat on some logs piled in the shade of a tree. After resting there for a while we strolled on and saw about fifty Javanese labourers all naked. The Japanese had brought them from Java for forced labour on the "Death Railway." They were a pitiable sight. Many of them were suffering from scabies all over their bodies. In the evening I met one of them alone. He was quite naked, too. I called him over to have a chat with us, and asked him how long he had been there. "Nearly two years now," he said. Then I asked him why he and his comrades were wearing no clothes. "What can we do?" he replied. "We have nothing to wear, so we have to go about like this. And I don't know when we'll have a chance of going back to Java. My parents and my wife are there. My wife was expecting a baby when I was taken by the Japanese in the street on my way home after shopping. I haven't seen them since. Death would be better than such a life as this." The tears ran down his cheeks as he spoke. There was little we could do to comfort him except to tell him that the Allies had landed in Java.

We left Annaquin the next afternoon, making for Thanbuzayat, a small village junction forty miles from Moulmein. It was there that the Japanese started to build the infamous "Death Railway", forming a base camp for the thousands of prisoners of war whom they used as labourers for its construction. Thousands died from malnutrition and disease, including many civilian Asiatics, Chinese, Indians, Siamese, Burmese and Javanese. But it was immaterial to the Japanese whether this railroad cost thousands or hundreds of thousands of lives. Their one ambition was to build it in quick time so that supplies might flow in a steady stream to their forces fighting on the Burma Front. Their sea supply route through the Straits of Malacca and the Bay of Bengal was too dangerous because of Allied submarines. Their only way of supplying their forces was by this overland route.

To open it up more than a 130,000 Burmese were conscripted into what was known as the "Sweat Army", which worked on this railway until it was completed. Less than 10,000 of this huge army of labourers returned to their homes at the end of the war. All the rest had died. It is a common saying in Burma and Siam that every sleeper laid for the rails from

Nompladuck to Moulmein cost one life. The little village of Thanbuzayat was unknown to the outside world until it was the scene of a touching ceremony in December, 1946, a ceremony unparalleled in the whole history of Burma. Christians and Bhuddists alike gathered there in vast multitudes to pay homage to the memory of the thousands who had died whilst engaged on this inhuman work.

We reached Thanbuzayat in pouring monsoon rain in the early hours of the morning when everyone was asleep. By that time we had ceased to care about the gnawing pain of the hunger inside us and our sore and swollen feet. We were only worried as to whether we were on the right road. And at least we were out of the jungles, now going from one hamlet to another. We paused for a moment on the verandah of a house as it was raining heavily, stretched ourselves out on the floor and were soon fast asleep. Our rest was not broken till late in the day when the Burmese inhabitants of the house warned us that Allied planes were overhead. We rushed into a huge shelter full of mud and remained there till the all-clear was sounded by the beating of a gong. Meanwhile we had met six Tamil Indians who were working as labourers for the Japanese. They told us that they came from Seramban in Malaya, and we soon became good friends. On leaving the shelter they took us to the house of a pointsman on the railway and arranged for us to stay there, and then gave us a meal of beautifully cooked Burmese rice, curry mixed with vegetables and fried fish, in their billet a mile away.

We rested in Thanbuzayat for a few days until we felt sufficiently recuperated. Then one fine morning—it only remained fine for an hour or so—we left for Moulmein, walking along the railway track. Before long there was a heavy storm, but we walked on through it. The rain that started then lasted for the next thirty hours. On and on we walked, all that day and through the night, and just before dawn reached Moulmein. It was still dark, and we did not know where to go. We could see many trees with shattered tops and broken branches, and devastated buildings on each side of the road. The rain had become a steady drizzle now.

"It looks a big town," said Bul, "but it's been bombed very badly."

"I wonder what's happened to the people," said Kitchey. "These buildings look quite deserted."

"I don't think anyone can be living here," I said. "If there were some dogs would surely be about. Or at least we'd hear them barking somewhere."

We walked straight on without taking any side road. After a time Bul said in a whisper, " Could this town be haunted? There's nothing to be heard but the drip-drip of the rain in those broken-down houses."

"We'd better shelter in one of them till day breaks, anyhow," suggested Kitchey.

"That's not a bad idea," I said. "But don't forget, these buildings look as though they've been disused for some time, and we may well be greeted by a full-grown python instead of a human being. Burma is a land of rice-fields, and snakes are always to be found near them."

"Look, that building has a roof, let's rest there," said Bul.

We had reached Moulmein and badly needed a rest. Without caring about any snakes we went in, lay down and were soon asleep. We really were dead tired.

CHAPTER XVI

THE REWARD OF GOD

A SLIGHT drizzle was falling in the early light of that monsoon morning in July, 1945, when we came out of that bombed building after a few hours' rest. We gazed ahead and saw Moulmein by daylight for the first time. No one was in sight. We walked on until we saw two short figures approaching us. They looked like Burmese, for they were wearing white shirts tucked in red sarongs and were both carrying small cloth haversacks over their shoulders. When they got nearer to us they seemed shorter than Burmese.

"What are you carrying?" they asked us in Japanese. We pretended not to understand, so they began to question us in Burmese which we certainly did not understand. As we said nothing they became suspicious and searched our bodies and the little baggage we carried. As we were wet through they

suspected us of being spies all the more. They pointed at us and then at the sky, obviously asking if we were parachutists. Half-an-hour later being still dissatisfied as to our identity they decided to take us to their headquarters. They made us get into a passing bullock cart which drove to one of six large pagodas overlooking the Salween River. It was the Kempetei headquarters. Several Japanese were questioning some prisoners. Next to the office was a dungeon where all the prisoners were kept. It was a filthy, evil-smelling place. Our bundles of clothing were taken away from us and we were locked up there.

"We must tell them now that we've been working as labourers at Nikkay," I suggested. "Tell them that we couldn't stand the conditions there, so decided to come to Moulmein, and that we're prepared to work for them."

"No, better say that we've come from Korekunta," said Bul. "Suppose they check up on us, what are we to say?"

"Don't worry about that," I said, "They'll only give us a few slaps or kicks and send us back to Korekunta, if they don't make us work here."

"How long will all that take?" asked Bul.

"We may have to live here in this dungeon for at least a month," I said. "This Burmese beside me tells me that he's been here for twenty days without a breath of fresh air, and he still doesn't know why they locked him up. That Burmese girl lying naked on the floor with her hands and feet tied-up has been here three days, and has only been given water to drink. He says that she's accused of harbouring a parachutist, and whenever they torture her they ask her where the man is, but she says that she doesn't know."

"You mean that's a woman and she's alive?"

"Yes, and this man says that she's still unconscious after yesterday's torture."

"If they can do that to a woman, what will they do to us?" said Kitchey.

"Don't you worry," I said. "We've still got those Japanese arm labels to prove our story that we've come from Korekunta and worked there. If they question us all together I'll do the talking, but otherwise remember to stick to that story.

Just then we heard the sound of a small siren and then the beating of gongs, which we knew meant that Allied planes were coming over Moulmein. A few minutes later we heard anti-aircraft fire and then the drone of several planes. Instead of moving us to the shelters outside the Japanese left us there. The shelters were only meant for them. Before long we heard bombs exploding. It seemed to be a concentrated raid on one spot, and later I heard that it was the railway yards at Martaban.

In the evening the Burmese lady recovered consciousness and to our surprise was questioned again. She lay full length on her back with her arms and legs stretched out and tied to the walls, and her hair was also tied to a peg in the floor. Three Japanese smoking cigarettes stooped over her and began to question her in Burmese. The Burmese beside me could speak very good Hindustani, and he told me in whispers what was being said, at the same time carefully watching the Japs so that they should not notice him talking to me.

"They're asking her how the Commando's dagger happened to be in her house," he said. "She says that she found it in the rice-field when she was cutting grass some months ago. They're telling her that she's lying. The other Jap says that if she won't tell them where the man is they'll make her suffer more. Again she says that she doesn't know any such man."

Then one of the Japs punched her face while another applied his lighted cigarette to her body. She screamed. It was a sight hard to bear. The ruthless cruelty of these Japs amazed us. I began to feel what the poor woman lying there was feeling as though I were in her place. Just then another air raid siren sounded and the Japs immediately ran out leaving the woman groaning on the floor.

Half-an-hour after the all-clear two Japs opened the door and told all three of us to go out. They took us upstairs and made us sit to the floor. Several Japanese were seated round a table, and to our surprise there was also a Sikh youngster of about twenty-four years of age. No sooner did he hear me say that Bul and I were Sikhs than he came forward and asked me if it was really true, and why I had no turban or beard according to Sikh rites. I replied that we had found it impossible to observe the strict rules of Sikhism while working

on the "Death Railway," and had cut our long hair short and shaved off our beards. In proof of our having been labourers I showed them our arm bands. They said that if we had produced our badges before they would not have arrested us, and asked why we had concealed them. I replied that not knowing Nippon-go we had been unable to understand their question.

We were still being interrogated when a 'phone message came saying that Allied parachutists had landed near Martaban, the town on the other side of the Salween River. On hearing the news, all the Japs in the office rushed wildly about. Before they left, the chief ordered the Sikh lad to question us. If he found us innocent he could release us, otherwise he could torture us or shoot us as he liked.

This young Sikh proved to be a security officer of the Indian National Army whom the Japanese trusted implicitly. He could speak Japanese fluently, which was the main reason why the Japanese liked him, and had been left behind by Nethaji Subhas Chandra Bose to act as a sort of liaison officer between the two forces. He could also speak English, having been well educated in Rangoon before the war. He took us outside, and we sat down on the steps of the pagoda and chatted. I felt confident that I could make him help us. He asked us first whether we wanted to speak in English, Punjabi or Hindustani.

As we could all understand English it was agreed to carry on our conversation in that language, and I introduced Bul and Kitchey to him and gave him my own name as Gopal Singh.

"Now, Mr. Gopal Singh, I want you to tell me frankly who you three are," he said, "and how you've come here. Tell me the truth whatever it is, and I'll help you. Subhas Chandra Bose left me here to help Indians so far as possible. Don't be afraid to tell me even if you're spies for the British. Our anti-aircraft batteries have shot down many British planes lately and we've captured a number of Indians among the survivors. They're all members of the I.N.A. now. So if you're British spies don't hesitate to tell me. I can hardly believe you've been working as labourers. You look too literate for that."

"We're all from Malaya," I replied, "and were brought

to Siam as forced labourers. I'm a planter by profession and own some rubber estates. Bul is the son of a doctor, and Kitchey's a clerk. It's true we're all literate, but we were put to work on the 'Death Railway'. We endured many hardships till at last we decided to escape to Rangoon where I have a brother. Being in the jungles all this time we didn't know that Rangoon has been captured by the British. But we'd rather find work here than go back where we came from. We had over a year on the railroad in the jungles, and will never forget it or the way the Japs treated us. We saw hundreds of our comrades, most of them Indians, die in misery. By luck, my friends and I are still alive, and believe me we three are the only survivors of our party which included two thousand Indians conscripted from Malaya. After experiencing all that we'd rather accept death here than go back there. We're ready to face the firing squad if you say so, but we will not go back to the 'Death Railway'."

He listened intently to my story. Most of my main facts were true and well known to almost everyone in Burma. I could see his heart melting at my words, and he would shake his head as though sympathising with me. But he did not cry. I could see no tears in his eyes. He would not have been a security officer if he had been as sentimental as that. Anyway, I had softened him quite a lot.

"Why did you come north instead of going south and trying to get back to Malaya?" he asked.

"Every station down south was being closely watched by the Japanese, Mr. Ajit Singh," I replied. "There had been so many deserters that they were questioning any labourer they came across. But they take no notice of anyone going north towards the war zone. So I decided to make for Rangoon where my brother who is a textile merchant would help me. We've been trying to see each other for over twenty years. My two friends and I have lived like brothers, so they came along with me. So here we are at your mercy."

"I believe what you say, and am sure you're not spies as the two Japs who arrested you told me this afternoon," he said. "I didn't know you were Punjabis then, and we're catching many parachutists who are spies now. You saw those people in the dungeon? Most of them are Burmese dropped here

by parachute by the British as advance parties. Did you speak to any of them?"

I knew the catch in that question, and told him that we had been far too worried about our own fate to take any notice of strangers. This seemed to satisfy him, and he took us to the headquarters of the Indian Independence League. We were told that we could sleep on the tables, and Ajit Singh gave us a thousand rupees for food before he left us.

We stayed there for three days and somewhat to our surprise met several Indians from Malaya. They had escaped from labour camps on the "Death Railway" and made their way to Moulmein. Some were running coffee shops, others were barbers, and others doing various odd jobs. One of our new friends, seeing our uncomfortable—though to us luxurious—sleeping quarters, arranged for us to move to a temple on the side of the hill, where we were much better off. Then, after a few days Ajit Singh got us a house with the help of another Sikh, Gurbachan Singh, who was a great help to us all the time that we remained in Moulmein.

The whole population had evacuated the town to the fields beyond the hills where they built their own huts or used ones already there. Much of the town had been destroyed by Allied bombing. But this house was found for us, and Ajit Singh got us sacks of rice and sugar, green peas, chillies, salt, forty-eight bars of soap, towels and other necessities. Even toilet requisites were not forgotten. We had enough of everything to last us several months. Sugar and soap were very expensive and almost non-existent in Burma at that time, yet we had them. In fact, we had more soap than we could use, so we decided to sell a few bars to buy fresh vegetables. We obtained Ajit Singh's consent, and each bar fetched as much as sixty rupees.

For the first few days in that house we did little but eat and sleep. Then life there became somewhat monotonous, and we began to wonder how we could be a little more active. One day after a heavy lunch I said to my companions, "Why shouldn't we cut the telephone wires running on the side of the hill? I think those lines are the only means of communication the Japs have from the front line. It should be easy enough. They're not on posts but on the ground. And I've

seen some pliers which we can use to snap them, in the kitchen."

There were many people crossing the hill at that time to collect pieces of wood and broken planks in the town to sell to the needy or to use as fuel themselves. So next day we went into the town and collected three bundles of planks, then walked back by the hill. Half-way down we took a much needed rest, for those bundles were slightly on the heavy side. We sat down a few yards apart, and were almost sitting on the wires. After resting for about five minutes I cut two wires and immediately passed the pliers on to Bul, telling him to give them to Kitchey as soon as he had finished with them. Then I collected about twenty feet of wire and coiled it round our bundles. We went straight to the keeper of the coffee shop and asked him if he would like to buy some wood. Besides paying us a good price he gave us some coffee and cakes, for he was very pleased to have some firewood. While he was busy preparing our breakfast I uncoiled the wires from the bundles and dumped them later in the Salween River just behind our house so as not to leave any clue. That coffee and cake tasted good, for we were happy at having accomplished a useful stroke for the Allies.

Whilst in Moulmein our main ambition was to try to cross the front line on the Sittang River less than a hundred miles away. We learned from making enquiries that the journey between Martaban and the Sittang was very dangerous because the area was infested with dacoits, who would shoot a man dead before robbing him.

"What are we going to do now?" said Bul. "The land route looks quite impossible, what with dacoits besides the Japanese, who would hold us as spies if they caught us there. But if we don't go by land, we've only got two other routes—by sea or air. Don't tell me that we're going to invent wings and fly now. We'd be shot down by the anti-aircraft guns anyhow."

We had a hearty laugh at that, and then I said, "We must try to get hold of a map of Burma and study the sea route. That's our only chance of getting to the other coast which is held by the British. We could steal one of the sampans out of the hundreds left on the banks at night. I think Rangoon is

due west from here, but we must make certain from a map first. The Japs have no patrol boats or planes flying about that could spot us. Once we're out at sea I'm sure we could cross the Bay of Bengal easily enough, and if we were lucky we might be picked up by some Allied submarine. Otherwise it should take us not more than a couple of days."

My companions thought over my plan for some time in silence, then Kitchey said, "What about the Japanese coastguards in Moulmein and Martaban? They may not have any patrol boats or aeroplanes, but they've surely got coastguards. They'd be armed and would shoot us on sight."

"I've studied their positions," I replied. "If we leave at night we can pass them unobserved, and once in the middle of the river we can let the boat drift. The current will take us to sea by morning. But we must get a map of Burma first. I think our friend Gurbachan Singh may have one, and if not I know a Burmese who may have some sort of an atlas."

That afternoon Ajit Singh and Gurbachan Singh came to see us, bringing with them the latest copy of the Domei News Agency's latest war report. We had been dying to see one of these for a long time. The news would naturally be "cooked" in favour of the Japanese, but we knew how to read between the lines in order to form an accurate picture of the trend of events.

"Do you receive a copy of this news, Mr. Ajit Singh?" I asked.

"Do you like the bulletin?"

"Yes, and I'd like to know when the Japanese are going to take the upper hand and recapture Rangoon. We've been out of touch with world news so long that we really would like to see it every day."

"That can easily be arranged," said Gurbachan Singh. "A Burmese friend of mine receives a cyclostyled copy. I'll introduce you to him, and you can go to his house every day to read the news."

On the way to his friend's house I asked him where the office of the Domei News Agency was in Moulmein. He said that it was at the Karen High-school Building, where an American-born Japanese was in charge doing everything from receiving the news to cyclostyling the bulletins. On Ajit Singh

saying that he knew him well I offered to help him if he were short-handed. Then Gurbachan Singh introduced us to his Burmese friend, who showed us where the news file would be hanging on a wall in his house. On leaving him, Ajit Singh invited us to a restaurant where we sat drinking tea. After a time, another Indian came in to see Gurbachan Singh, a young lad in his early twenties, called Kartar Singh, who belonged to a very rich family in Moulmein dealing mainly in teak, a very valuable Burmese timber. The house in which we were living actually belonged to him, and he said that he was glad to hear that we were using it. He became very friendly, invited us to his home and helped us financially, too. It was in his house that I found a map of Burma, which I borrowed and studied very carefully with my pals.

We found that there were two routes by sea open to us. By going west from the mouth of the Salween River we could land on the British side not far from Rangoon, which should take us about three days. Or we could proceed north along the coast towards Thathoon and then turn west across the Bay of Bengal. The first route was the better as there would be less chance of being spotted by the Japanese coastguards.

"What about the boat or sampan? Where are we going to get one?" asked Bul.

"I've been studying that problem for some time," I replied. "All the boatmen leave their sampans tied-up to the bank behind our house when they go home at night. There is no watchman. I've got my eye on a boat that belongs to the Burmese who lives half a mile or so from the river."

Next morning we obtained a bamboo of about twelve inches in circumference and cut it down to ten feet. We also got four big beer bottles ready, filling them with fresh water. In the evening we went to the river bank and saw the Burmese boatman sitting on the river bank with his wife near the spot where he had tied his boat to a peg. We had to wait nearly three hours before they started for home. After making quite sure that they were well on their way we fetched our bamboo and four bottles of water. It was now about eight o'clock at night and pitch dark, and we felt very nervous as we slowly climbed into the boat. To our dismay we found no oar in it. We had forgotten all about an oar, but it was too late to do

anything about it now as we were already in the boat. This was our chance to slip away. If we waited till the next evening to get an oar anything might have happened. I told my friends not to worry about it as we could use the bamboo as a substitute, though it was very heavy.

Untying the cord from the mooring peg, I pushed the boat away from the bank, and after an hour's rowing we were in the middle of the river. The current was very strong there, so I told my friends to lie down, and I did so, too. Then we shook hands, not only on having successfully left the bank but also because we knew that anything might happen and this might be our last night together.

The minutes slowly rolled into hours as we lay there speechless. I could not sleep nor could my friends, and we could feel the boat moving. From time to time I popped my head up to see that it was keeping to the middle and not drifting towards the bank, and also asked my companions if they were all right. In the early hours of the morning I could feel the waves increasing in strength, and before long the boat was being tossed about like a cork on the water. At any moment I expected a huge wave to swallow us. When daylight came we could see the coast of Cheungzeon Island not far off to our left. The end of the boat came very quickly. A mountainous wave swept over us, and as it sank beneath us we clutched the bamboo which I had prepared for just such an emergency. I shouted to my companions not to put their entire weight on the bamboo, but only enough to keep them floating. For an hour we clung to the bamboo which was tossed about by the waves. Fortunately the tide was flowing in, and we managed to make for the coast of Cheungzeon Island. And at last with some difficulty we climbed up the muddy shore.

In the boat we had lost all our clothes, and had nothing left but what we were wearing. It took us three hours to dry ourselves. Then we walked across the island to a settlement on the other side, and finally got back to Moulmein. Next day when Ajit Singh and Gurbachan Singh came to see us I complained that our house had been burgled by someone in our absence and all our clothes had been stolen. They asked us where we had been, and I said that we had been looking at the bombed streets of Moulmein. "Don't worry," said Ajit Singh. "I'll

get you two or three blankets and some singlets from the Japanese store to-day."

A few days later we made another attempt, but it ended in disaster even more quickly. We stole a boat and left in the same way as before, and were only passing Crow Island when it sank. We had a lucky escape from drowning and also from the coastguards stationed at Martaban. If it had not been a dark night they would certainly have spotted us.

Our two failures made us even more determined to reach British-occupied territory somehow, and we immediately began making preparations for a third attempt. This time we planned to take the coast route towards Thathoon, and then to cut across the Bay of Bengal where the monsoon waves would be smaller than those down south. We were sitting in our room discussing the plan at about ten in the morning when we heard the drone of planes. Popping my head out of the window I saw two Spitfires flying at a height of about 500 ft. We were terribly scared by the machine-gunning and ran to the shelters. There we met a Kempetei chief and therefore could not talk freely and express our happiness at seeing the British planes. On leaving the shelter I was surprised to see some Burmese looking up into the sky. I looked up too and saw something glittering coming down. I knew that it must be pamphlets. I rushed to get one, but only managed to catch a glimpse of it before the Kempetei chief snatched it out of my hands. I had seen some flags on it, however, which seemed to be the Union Jack, the Stars and Stripes, the Hammer and Sickle, and the fourth I mistook for the Japanese flag when in reality it was the Chinese. If it is the Japanese flag, I thought, then it means that there has been some sort of armistice. But then why the Russian flag? So far as we knew, Russia was not at war with Japan. Later I borrowed one of the pamphlets from a Burmese and discovered my mistake. It was indeed a happy moment to learn that Russia had joined the Allies, for it would mean a quicker end to the war.

Two days later more Spitfires flew over Moulmein and dropped more pamphlets bearing the emblem of a peacock and a statement written in Burmese that Japan's surrender might be announced within twenty-four hours. Feeling very happy

we waited anxiously for the final result. It was two days later, however, before we saw any more pamphlets which had been dropped by mistake some miles outside Moulmein. Printed in red diagonally across the black Burmese print was the announcement that Japan had surrendered.

About an hour later we met by chance the Domei chief who said to us bluntly, "You needn't be afraid of raids now. The planes won't bomb us any more. The war's over." It was a final proof to us that the war had ended. Yet so long as he was with us we dared not show any sign of happiness.

"What are we going to do now?" said Bul, as soon as we were alone.

"Our job is over, and we can be happy at having done our duty," I said. "There is no point in our going on now. Before long Allied forces will land here, then we can get in touch with them and they'll send us back to Malaya."

We waited five days, but still there was no sign of the arrival of our forces. The railway from Moulmein to Bangkok was strictly for the use of military. Then we found out that about thirty Indian National Army men had come out of the jungles and were to be evacuated to Bangkok. We made friends with the Sikh lieutenant in charge of the party, and were finally allowed to accompany them.

We spent the first three days at Bangkok as though actual members of the Indian National Army, posing as lieutenants of the health department. Meanwhile, an order was issued by General Command Headquarters that all members of the Indian National Army should be paid six months' pay. So each of us collected about three hundred ticals and new uniforms and kit. Then we walked out of the camp on hearing that Allied Headquarters had been set up in Bangkok. They had actually been formed by the prisoners of war from various parts of Siam, and a Colonel Scott was in charge. We reported ourselves to him and explained how we had come there. He told us to wait for the arrival of the Liberation forces expected in a day or two.

When they did come we were put to work with the Intelligence under Lt.-Col. Seodat Singh, and spent three enjoyable weeks in Bangkok with the money that we had received from the Indian National Army.

My thoughts often turned to my home, however. I wondered if my family were still alive or if they had been killed by the Japs. It was a great anxiety. Bul and Kitchey were also very worried about their families.

Life had indeed been very hard for my family after my escape from my house in March. My brother, Gurdial Singh, did his best to help my wife, four children, and my parents by sending them rice and other foodstuffs from Penang where he was working, but it was not enough to keep them all alive. So my seven-year-old daughter had to work as a labourer on a vegetable nursery to get some rice from the Japanese. My wife, after finishing the housework, would go and do some planting of her own for the family, in a small jungle which she had cleared, behind the house. She planted vegetables and tapioca. My parents took care of the few cows which had been left behind by the Japs. It was my nephew aged twelve, Ragbir Singh, who ran up to the house to tell my wife of the good news of the Japanese surrender. He was very fond of her and had tried to console her after my disappearance by telling her not to worry as I would soon return to her. That day she was not at home as she had gone digging. My ten-year-old son, Kartar Singh, who was in bed recovering from typhoid fever, told Ragbir where he would find her. So he rushed up to the farm where he saw her digging the soil. Seizing her by both hands he said, panting, "Auntie, the war is over. You have nothing to worry about now. Uncle will be back in a day or two." At first she would not believe him and said, "Tell me, Ragbir, who told you that the Japs have surrendered? Are you sure it's true?" "By God, I am telling you the truth, Auntie," he said. "The whole town is talking. My father told me last night. In a few days Allied forces will be here. People in the town are firing crackers in their happiness. Uncle will surely be back in a day or two."

Then she prayed to God, believing that He had put an end to the war. She hoped that I was safe, but she was worried because she had heard no news of my whereabouts for months. She did not even know if I was still alive. After that the days became like ages to her, and both she and my parents began to watch the road in front of the house hoping to see me come that way. Days passed and then weeks, but still there was no

news of me. Before the arrival of the Allied forces the Japanese would sometimes come to the house and ask my family if I had returned. Some of them said that they wanted to see a man for whom they had searched so much, others asked my wife to fetch me home as no harm would come to me now. Then the Liberation forces arrived, yet still there was no sign of me. This made my family even more anxious. My wife would often burst out crying, and even my father began to believe that I must be dead. When a month passed after the liberation without news of me my family became still more worried. Though food was ready for them on the table now they could not eat it.

There in Bangkok I knew nothing of what was happening in Kuala Lumpur. I tried to get Lt.-Col. Seodat Singh to send my family a wireless message, but he was too busy to do it. At last we decided to leave for Malaya. On the way we stopped at Ipoh with the intention of meeting my contacts and thanking them for all they had done. To our sorrow we were not to see Teja Singh. Only a few days before he had died of pneumonia. It was indeed a big heart-break. He had saved my life twice in the nick of time, and now he had gone without my having the chance of thanking him. Dr. L. S. Bul was yet another man whom I was not to see again. His death was due to those eager to earn the reward of $100,000 for my arrest. Those responsible for the death of this dear old man may have escaped their just punishment on legal grounds, but justice will still be meted out to them in the next world in the eyes of God.

I arrived at Kuala Lumpur railway station by train from Ipoh on September 28th, 1945. Taking a rickshaw I started on my way home with Kitchey by my side, Bul having gone to his brother's house. As we approached, I saw my cattle grazing and near them my youngest daughter, aged six, taking care of them with a stick in her hand. I alighted, picked her up in my arms and kissed her. She did not smile, and seemed to want to be put down. She had apparently forgotten me or rather failed to recognise me, for she had never seen me without a turban before. I called her by her short name "Bhajoh", saying, "Don't you recognise me? I am papa, your loving papa." She did not speak. Still carrying her in my arms I

climbed back into the rickshaw and we went on. From two hundred yards away I could see my house on the top of the hill. And there were my parents, my sister and her husband. Before long they saw the rickshaw coming up the valley and three figures getting out of it when it stopped a hundred yards away. I heard someone say, "Two Indians have come, and one of them is carrying Bhajoh."

I paid off the rickshaw man and started walking towards my house beside Kitchey, with my daughter in my arms. I think it was my carrying the child that made my sister recognise me, and I heard her shout, "Brother has come." She ran towards me and I clasped her in my arms. Then my father came running with tears in his eyes. By now I was almost home, where I fell into my mother's arms. And there was my son who looked so thin after his sickness and my two other daughters. My father's tears were flowing freely now from happiness, and that made everyone else cry too. I knew that my father was happy to find his lost son whom he had thought dead, and that it was the happiest moment of his life to see him alive.

I could not see my wife and asked where she was. My son said that she had gone to the jungle at the back of the house to plant tapioca. My sister offered to go and call her, but I said that I would go myself. I ran up the hill behind the house to the clearing in the jungle, and there she was digging with a hoe. Taking out my handkerchief I wiped the tears out of my eyes. She had not seen me yet, so I ran to her. For a moment she was frightened as to who it could be that had caught her in his arms and thrown her hoe to the ground in an attempt to kiss her. Then she gazed into my face, crying, "Darling, is it you? Can I believe my eyes? Has God answered my prayers to bring you back alive to me? No, I cannot believe it is you." She looked me up and down, then burst into tears, saying, "Oh, God, I have got everything I wanted. I thank You for answering my prayers." My own tears began flowing once again as my cheek rested on hers. "Oh, my darling, you are as strong as ever," she said. "And I thought you would be a starving skeleton, if I ever saw you alive again. As I was digging I was praying to God to send me news of you—even of your death."

"Come, let us go home," I said, kissing her again. "All are waiting anxiously for us there. Bhajoh, you know, could not make me out. Except for our son, the other children are all looking curiously at my face. I don't think they remember me any more."

"That is not surprising," she replied. "After your escape in March, whenever they spoke of you we checked them, and would not let them utter your name. So it is not strange that they should have forgotten you. Besides, our son has been so ill that we gave up all hope of his living. But God is great, and did not want to break my heart."

And to-day I am the most contented of men, having been granted by God the greatest reward that man could have for such services as I rendered. I escaped death when I should not have done so, and lived to see my family and my parents alive when they too might have perished. The day of our reunion was the biggest reward that any human being could ask for. That was the reward of God. Then the British Government gave me a certificate of Commendation for my services to the cause of all freedom-loving peoples, which in my heart is the Victoria Cross.