This essay is my tribute to Sumit Sarkar whose book on the Swadeshi movement in Bengal first persuaded me, a non-historian, that it was possible to deploy in the writing of modern Indian history the theoretical sophistication and analytical rigour of the social sciences while retaining the humanistic sensibilities and literary elegance of traditional historical scholarship. In addition, Sarkar brought into his first book a political engagement that was urgent and passionate just as it was an invitation to debate. These are values I have admired ever since.

The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal was published more than thirty years ago. The study of nationalism in all its diverse aspects has since attracted a great deal of attention from historians, social scientists and scholars of literature and the arts all over the world. The field of modern Indian history has been dominated by this subject. The political debates have also changed since the early 1970s. The status of national sovereignty and the ethics of political violence are being discussed today in a world historical moment that is quite different from what it was thirty years ago. Empire is no longer a mere historical entity, consigned to the past by the history of decolonization and national self-determination. It has re-entered political discussions as a description of the present and even a vision for the future. It seems worthwhile at this time to reopen the issue of revolutionary nationalism that Sumit Sarkar discussed with remarkable subtlety in the context of the debates of the early 1970s.

Beginnings

The history of terrorism in British India usually begins with the killing in Poona in 1897 of the British officials W. C. Rand and C. E. Ayerst by the Maharashtrian brothers...
Damodar and Balkrishna Chapekar. It is said that they had an intense hatred for the British rulers of the country and scorn for the useless chatter of nationalist politicians. They promoted the formation of clubs of young Indian men to pursue gymnastics, wrestling and other kinds of physical exercise. When the plague outbreak in Pune led to an aggressive search by the police of native neighbourhoods and private residences, there was much resentment in the city. The Chapekar brothers managed to procure revolvers and shot Dr Rand, the plague commissioner, on a Pune street, along with Lt. Ayerst who had witnessed the act. Both Damodar and Balkrishna were later arrested, tried and hanged.

Nothing much happened in Maharashtra after this to constitute anything like a political movement of terrorism – not until, that is to say, the assassination of Gandhi in 1948. Instead, the spotlight shifted to the east of the country in Bengal where a new political tendency was inaugurated in 1905-06. As Swadeshi - the first modern mass movement of Indian nationalism – opened in Bengal in these years with the immediate objective of undoing the partition of the province into two parts, secret groups committed to assassinations and armed insurrection also began to be organized there. For the next four decades, the activities of these groups would constitute a political movement in itself, at a tangent to the main body of Congress nationalism which remained officially wedded to the doctrine of non-violence, but ideologically and sometimes organizationally entangled with the Congress.

The history of “terrorism” in British Bengal is well documented. The series of official reports on the armed nationalist groups, beginning with F. C. Daly’s report of 1911 to those by R. E. A. Ray in the late 1930s, is richly detailed, meticulous and often brilliantly analytical, testifying to the seriousness with which the colonial establishment took the threat of terrorism. Most of the confidential official reports, based on police intelligence, are now publicly available. In addition, there has appeared a large collection of autobiographical and reminiscence literature written by participants in the movement, many of whom spent long years in prison. The secondary historical literature on the subject is also significant, besides which there is a very large body of textbook and popular literature. Most of the facts about “terrorism” are, in other words, fairly well known, not only to scholars but also to a wide public in Bengal.
The first phase of the movement ran from 1907 to 1918. The standard histories describe this period in terms of the activities of two organizations – the Jugantar group, located mainly in western Bengal, and the Anushilan group with its centre in Dhaka in the east. As a matter of fact, the so-called Jugantar party was not a single organization at all but a loose confederation of several groups acting with considerable autonomy; it was given this name by the government because of the leading public role played by the newspaper *Yugantar* in the first two years of the movement. Much of the early activities of these groups consisted of meeting in secret societies, starting gymnasiums and recruiting young men to revolutionary work. Had the Swadeshi movement not acquired the force it did in 1905-06, it is very likely, as Sumit Sarkar has suggested, that these organizations, born out of a desire for greater nationalist militancy, would have died quickly. But the revolutionaries took up the mass campaigns of Swadeshi with enthusiasm and in at least two districts – Medinipur and Dhaka – they were the principal organizers of the popular movement.

**Sovereign Independence as the National Goal**

Within the mainstream of the Swadeshi movement too, it was the so-called Extremist wing of the Congress led by Aurobindo Ghose and Bepin Chandra Pal that attracted a lot of attention for its call to militant action instead of sterile speeches. The English daily and weekly *Bande Mataram*, edited by Aurobindo Ghose, and the Bengali weeklies *Yugantar*, published without the name of an editor, and *Sandhya*, edited by Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, gained considerable circulation and created a lot of excitement. The *Bande Mataram*, for instance, was clear about the political stance and objective of the struggle:

The “Moderate” Indian politician aspires to be an Imperial citizen…. His loyalty draws him towards the Empire and his politics draws him towards self-government and the resultant is self-government within the Empire…. To include India in a federation of colonies and the motherland is madness without method. The patriotism that wishes the country to lose itself within an Empire which justifies its name by its conquest… is also madness without method. But to talk of
absolute independence and autonomy – though this be madness, yet there is method in it.3

It was also quite forthright in characterizing these methods:

The old gospel of salvation by prayer was based on the belief in the spiritual superiority of the British people – an illusion which future generations will look back upon with an amazed incredulity. … We do not acknowledge that a nation of slaves who acquiesce in their subjection can become morally fit for freedom…. Politics is the work of the Kshatriya and it is the virtues of the Kshatriya we must develop if we are to be morally fit for freedom. But the first virtue of the Kshatriya is not to bow his neck to an unjust yoke but to protect his weak and suffering countrymen against the oppressor and welcome death in a just and righteous battle.4

Hence the claim that colonial rule was not to be judged by the quality of its governance; it was illegitimate because of what it was – rule by a foreign power.

The new movement is not primarily a protest against bad Government – it is a protest against the continuance of British control; whether that control is used well or ill, justly or unjustly, is a minor and inessential consideration. It is not born of a disappointed expectation of admission to British citizenship, - it is born of a conviction that the time has come when India can, should and will become a great, free and united nation. It is not a negative current of destruction, but a positive, constructive impulse towards the making of modern India…. Its true description is not Extremism, but Democratic Nationalism.5

The Bande Mataram was also insistent in pointing out that the moral force of democratic nationalism had swept Europe in the nineteenth century and was now becoming a universal idea all over the world. Hence the new pretensions of imperialism.
The idea that despotism of any kind was an offence against humanity, had crystallised into an instinctive feeling, and modern morality and sentiment revolted against the enslavement of nation by nation, of class by class or of man by man. Imperialism had to justify itself to this modern sentiment and could only do so by pretending to be a trustee of liberty, commissioned from on high to civilise the uncivilised and train the untrained until the time had come when the benevolent conqueror had done his work and could unselfishly retire…. These Pharisaic pretensions were especially necessary to British Imperialism because in England the Puritanic middle class had risen to power and imparted to the English temperament a sanctimonious self-righteousness which refused to indulge in injustice and selfish spoliation except under a cloak of virtue, benevolence and unselfish altruism.  

To fight this imperialism that pretended to be benevolent, it was necessary first to create a vanguard of revolutionaries united into an institution.

What is needed now is a band of spiritual workers whose tapasya [spiritual quest] will be devoted to the liberation of India for the service of humanity…. The organisation of Swaraj can only be effected by a host of selfless workers who will make it their sole life-work. It cannot be done by men whose best energies and time are given up to the work of earning their daily bread… One institution is required which will train and support men to help those who are now labouring under great disadvantages to organise education, to build up the life of the villages, to spread the habit of arbitration, to help the people in time of famine and sickness, to preach Swadeshi. These workers must be selfless, free from the desire to lead or shine, devoted to the work for the country’s sake, absolutely obedient yet full of energy.  

The influence of this vanguard was not to be judged by the money it raised or the arms it collected. The struggle against a despotism of force always began by the sowing of an idea.
Thought is always greater than armies, more lasting than the most powerful and best-organised despotisms…. The idea or sentiment is at first confined to a few men whom their neighbours and countrymen ridicule as lunatics or hare-brained enthusiasts…. The attempt to work [that idea] brings them into conflict with the established power which the idea threatens and there is persecution. The idea creates its martyrs. And in martyrdom there is an incalculable spiritual magnetism which works miracles. A whole nation, a whole world catches the fire which burned in a few hearts; the soil which has drunk the blood of the martyr imbibes with it a sort of divine madness which it breathes into the heart of all its children, until there is but one overpowering idea, one imperishable resolution in the minds of all beside which all other hopes and interests fade into insignificance and until it is fulfilled, there can be no peace or rest for the land or its rulers…. Each despotic rule after the other thinks, “Oh, the circumstances in my case are quite different, I am a different thing from any recorded in history, stronger, more virtuous and moral, better organised. I am God’s favourite and can never come to harm.” And so the old drama is staged again and acted till it reaches the old catastrophe.  

*Bande Mataram*’s call for self-sacrifice in the cause of the nation was phrased in the most stirring rhetoric:

Regeneration is literally re-birth, and re-birth comes not by the intellect, not by the fullness of the purse, not by policy, not by changes of machinery, but by the getting of a new heart, by throwing away all that we were into the fire of sacrifice and being reborn in the Mother. Self-abandonment is the demand made upon us. She asks of us, “How many will live for me? How many will die for me?” and awaits our answer.  

It is important to note that these conditions created by the broader political struggle of anti-colonial nationalism provided the frontier of possibilities for the more
militant and violent actions of the revolutionary groups. One is speaking here both of ideological possibilities, involving a critique of the currently prevailing conditions and the imagining of alternative political futures, and of strategic and organizational possibilities, including the recruitment of cadres, the building and maintenance of organizations, the planning and execution of militant actions, finding a base of popular sympathy and support and keeping up the morale of activists. Actual and active links between the armed groups and the broader movement, in the form of direct coordination of activities or shared leadership, were not necessarily very frequent, even though official agencies were always keen to allege such links. But they participated in the same anti-imperialist and nationalist discourse, drew from the same stock of historical memory, often used the same arguments, and ultimately contributed to each other’s successes and failures.

Early Actions
The first serious “terrorist” act occurred in Bengal in December 1907 when an attempt was made in Medinipur to blow up a train carrying the governor Andrew Fraser. A mine had been laid which exploded when the train passed, producing twisted rails and a huge crater, but miraculously, the train was not derailed and the governor escaped unhurt. Some labourers employed by the railways were charged and convicted for having assisted in the attempt, but the real authors of the plot were not discovered at this time.

In April 1908, a bomb was thrown at a carriage in Muzaffarpur town in Bihar, killing two European women. The real target was the district judge Douglas Kingsford who, in his earlier posting as a magistrate in Kolkata, had become a hated figure in nationalist circles because he had ordered the flogging of political agitators for defying the police. Khudiram Bose, aged eighteen, was arrested the next day as he was on the run, while Prafulla Chaki, only a year older, when cornered in a gun battle with the police, shot himself to death. It transpired that the two had mistaken the carriage for one that belonged to Kingsford. Khudiram was tried, sentenced and hanged in Kolkata in August 1908. Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki became the first martyrs of the new movement.
The Muzaffarpur bombing immediately led to searches in a house in Maniktala in Kolkata that had been under watch for some time. The police found a stock of arms, ammunition and chemicals for making bombs and soon arrested the key figures of the group that had planned the bombing as well as the train wrecking. Barin Ghose, younger brother of Aurobindo, made a confession in order, he said, to save those not already incriminated as well as “to place the details of our workshops before the country so that others may follow in our footsteps.”\footnote{11} The next day, Aurobindo too was arrested and charged in the Alipur conspiracy case, the first major trial of a revolutionary group in Bengal. As the trial proceeded, one of the accused who had turned approver was shot dead inside the prison by a former comrade, while the government prosecutor, an Indian, was killed outside the court. The judge C. P. Brailsford sentenced Barin Ghose and Ullaskar Datta to death and another seventeen to transportation for periods varying from life to seven years. On appeal, the sentences were reduced and ten were transported to the infamous cellular jail in the Andaman Islands. The case against Aurobindo Ghose failed. The Anglo-Indian press alleged that this was because he had studied at Cambridge with Brailsford. Soon after his release, Aurobindo, fearing he would be arrested again, made his way to the French enclave of Chandernagore and subsequently retired forever from political life.\footnote{12}

For the next few years, even though there were not many significant attacks on British targets in Bengal, the revolutionary organizations spread quickly, especially in the districts of eastern Bengal. A list, compiled in 1912 by the intelligence branch of the police, of those suspected of being members of secret groups in the different districts of Bengal had more than 800 names along with information on the activities and associations of each person.\footnote{13} The list of persons connected with revolutionary groups in Bengal who were actually convicted in court on various charges added up to 651 at the end of 1920.\footnote{14} There was no doubt that the call to take up arms to rid the country of its foreign rulers held a great attraction for young men from educated upper-caste Hindu families.

The networks also extended outside Bengal. Hemchandra Das Kanungo, closely associated with Barin Ghose’s group, went to Paris in 1906-07 to make contacts with socialist and anarchist revolutionaries and returned with instructions on making bombs
and maintaining underground organizations. In northern India, Rashbehari Bose was a key organiser, setting up branches in different cities, attempting to incite a mutiny within the army and planning the spectacular bomb attack in 1912 on the viceroy’s ceremonial procession in Delhi. Lord Hardinge, the viceroy, though badly injured, survived the attack. Rashbehari Bose escaped and spent the rest of his life in exile in Japan. With the outbreak of the World War, some Bengal revolutionaries set up a plan to import a shipload of German arms by sea. Narendra Bhattacharya was sent for this purpose to Batavia; he would later become famous in the international communist movement under his assumed name of M. N. Roy. Jatin Mukherjee, better known as Bagha, and four others made their way to the Orissa coast to receive the arms. The plot was discovered by British intelligence: “it became evident that a definite plot was on foot, under German instigation and backed by German money, with the co-operation of seditious Indians, to smuggle arms into India, with the ultimate object of creating a rising against the British administration.” Bagha Jatin’s group was intercepted by armed police and, after a gun battle, surrendered. Bagha Jatin died from his wounds to become one of the most celebrated martyrs of the movement.

In Bengal itself, a couple of attempts were made in this early phase to assassinate senior British officials, including the governor Fraser; both attempts were attributed to the Anushilan Samiti and both failed. Otherwise, the list of “terrorist outrages” compiled by the police in the period up to 1917 is dominated by robberies on private homes of wealthy and not-so-wealthy Indians (in a bid to collect funds for procuring arms), the killing of dozens of Indian policemen, mostly of low rank, and a few murders of activists suspected of betraying the cause. Not surprisingly, these incidents, far more numerous than the few spectacular strikes against the alien rulers, are largely forgotten in the memorialised history of the revolutionary movement in Bengal.

**Strategies and Tactics**

There is a trend in the historical literature to characterize this early phase of “terrorism” in Bengal as an amateurish, almost infantile, attempt to organize an armed struggle for national liberation. Hemchandra Kanungo, after spending twelve years in prison in the Andamans, wrote his memoirs in which he launched a scathing attack on the leadership,
the ideological and organizational preparedness and indeed the seriousness of purpose of the movement.\textsuperscript{18} He alleged that the leaders never grasped the importance of adopting proper methods of prolonged secret organization and instead sought quick publicity. As a result, the revolutionary groups were easily penetrated by the police and their plans scotched. There was not enough emphasis on rigorous and scientific training in the use of arms, which was why so many of their actions were unsuccessful. Curiously, he put the blame for this on the unwillingness of the Indian leaders to learn from the experiences of revolutionaries in other countries. He condemned the Extremist leaders for taking the easy route to rouse the people into political action by instilling in them a cultural hatred of Europeans, often by stoking their religious prejudices. He also blamed those “professional Orientalists”, ever keen to praise India for its worst social practices, for their role in this game. Writing in the late 1920s, Hemchandra was utterly pessimistic and deeply cynical about the prospects of Indian freedom. He was enthusiastic neither about Gandhian non-cooperation nor about the revolutionary armed struggle, and blamed the indolence, fatalism, irrationality and ignorance of the “national character”.

Later historians have largely agreed with his judgment, at least on the ineffectiveness of the early revolutionary efforts. Amales Tripathi, who was in general appreciative of the role of the Extremists, concluded:

\begin{quote}
The Bengal Extremists looked to the idealized ‘people’ and impatiently expected them to rise. When they did not (which was only natural), despair led some of the Extremists to the path of individual terror. They thought, again mistakenly, that through terror it would be ‘easy to bring the ideas of revolution home to the common people.’\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

Sumit Sarkar, the historian of the Swadeshi movement, has a similar evaluation:

\begin{quote}
Taken as a whole, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that revolutionary terrorism was a heroic failure. The British were certainly badly frightened, as shown by the intensity of repression, but their administration was never in any real danger of collapsing. The bombs took far greater toll of Indian subordinates
than of their white overlords… lacking a peasant base, the revolutionaries could never rise to the level of real guerrilla action or set up ‘liberated areas’ in the countryside. As for the average educated Indian, he derived vicarious satisfaction from the deeds of the heroes, and watched and admired – from a distance.20

This conclusion is entirely reasonable if one takes “revolutionary terrorism” as one particular organized form of nationalist struggle, contending with other forms such as liberal constitutionalism or Gandhian non-cooperation or agrarian agitation. There is no doubt that the debates of the time were framed as debates between these rival forms of political action. Modern Indian historiography has, for the most part, followed that framework by continuing to evaluate the relative successes and failures of those contending tendencies. But if we regard all of these movements as parts of a single formation of anti-colonial nationalism, linked to each other by complex discursive and organizational connections, then our judgment on “successes and failures” would no longer be so straightforward. Thus, even the apparent failure of one tendency, judged by its own terms, might produce the effect, through unforeseen discursive possibilities, of enabling the success of another tendency. Historians of nationalism have become far more aware in the last two decades, following the path-breaking work of Benedict Anderson, of the subtle but powerful working of the nationalist imagination, enabled by the print, visual and aural media, in forging large anonymous communities.21 The early history of revolutionary terrorism in Bengal needs to be seen from this more recent analytical perspective.

It is not true to say that the Bengal leadership at this time had no conception of the broader political context and horizon of the different elements of armed resistance to colonial rule or that they were ignorant or uninterested in the historical experiences of other nationalist struggles. In fact, if one takes the weekly *Yugantar* as a platform where the intellectual leaders of the Extremist movement such as Aurobindo Ghose, Bhupendranath Dutt, Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar and Debabrata Bose came together with revolutionary activists such as Barin Ghose and Upendranath Banerji, then one finds considerable discussion on the history of revolutionary struggles in Europe, the Americas and Asia as well as on the specific strategies and tactics of modern warfare, including
guerrilla war. In particular, three examples from recent history were repeatedly discussed: the unification of Italy as a successful case of nationalist armed struggle against imperial rule (the life of Mazzini was held up as exemplary), the continuing struggles in Ireland as an example of armed anti-colonial resistance and the military successes of Japan as a demonstration of what could be achieved with sovereign nationhood. There was also a fair amount of discussion on guerrilla tactics in the Anglo-Boer war. In each case, the lesson drawn was the moral legitimacy and historical viability of nationalist armed resistance.

Revolutionaries have the right to destroy the established ruling authority. When the social body is sick and decrepit, when a flood of oppression sweeps the whole country … then if the subjects seek to destroy the oppressive ruling power, surely it must be hailed as a sign of their humanity and vitality. A nation that lacks the spirit of sacrifice and valour might think that begging for favours is the best way to deal with the situation, but countries like Italy or Japan would be ashamed to suffer such an indignity.

When foreign rulers such as the English accuse all Indians of sedition, it is a meaningless charge. The political analyst Burke has said that one nation cannot be guilty of sedition against another. … When Russia and Japan in their recent war tried their utmost to destroy each other, neither accused the other of sedition…. England has occupied India by deception. … Hence there is no legality in her occupation of India; indeed, at every step one finds the grossest injustice and immorality. … So if the entire nation desires to end its subjection and become free no matter what, then whose demand is right in the eyes of justice – that of the English or of the Indians? We must say that no ruler has the right to shackle the desire for freedom – there is simply nothing else to say. The struggle for freedom will of necessity move on towards its objective. It will overcome a thousand impediments and take every step to reach its goal.
In fact, once the goal had been declared as complete and sovereign independence and not some form of representative government within the British empire, it was historical knowledge that told the Extremist leaders that such an objective had been never reached without armed conflict – from the struggle for independence in North and South America to the unification of Italy. Upendranath Banerji tells the story of a holy man from Gujarat who came to the Jugantar party hideout in Maniktala and tried to persuade the young men there that national independence could be achieved without bloodshed. The revolutionaries were incredulous. “Has that ever happened?” they asked. Upendranath thought the idea was little more than a tale from the Arabian Nights.\textsuperscript{25}

On the strategies of modern warfare, \textit{Yugantar} published two long serialized tracts – one called “War is the Law of Creation” and the other “The Theory of Revolution”.\textsuperscript{26} The first, clearly based on military manuals, contained long and detailed discussions on modern guns (the Mauser rifle and the Howitzer cannon were particular favourites) and shells (including shells that release shrapnel and poisonous gases), on trench warfare, sharpshooters, storming parties, engineers, lines of communication, and several instalments on guerrilla tactics.\textsuperscript{27} The second serialized tract dealt with the moral justification of revolutionary movements (“This is the law of creation. All created things must decay with time. They must be destroyed and recreated with new life…. Revolution is the true basis of peace. A peace induced by decay is no peace; indeed, it is a sickness.”\textsuperscript{28}), the collection of arms from home and abroad, the collection of funds, temporary conditions of unrest caused by revolutionary upheavals (“inevitable, but that is no reason to desist from doing what is ultimately good for the country”\textsuperscript{29}), the shaping of public opinion through newspapers, literature, music, theatre and secret meetings, and the methods of removing an oppressive regime. The series ended by proclaiming this:

\begin{quote}
It could be asked: what is the point in destroying the previous regime if the intention is to set up another centralized power in the same place? The answer is: the power that stands as an obstacle to the moral, spiritual, economic, physical and mental progress of the entire country must be destroyed and replaced by a ruling power that will actively support and facilitate such progress. That is the reason and objective of the revolution.\textsuperscript{30}
\end{quote}
This can only be seen as one of the earliest statements of an idea that would become dominant in the Indian national movement as a whole – establishing an independent and sovereign nation-state as a condition for all-round national development.

If there was a more specific theory behind these early attempts at armed revolution, it was one that could be called the theory of exemplary action. A favourite argument that was often cited in the literature of the time was the huge disparity between the small number of British officials and soldiers in India and the millions over whom they ruled. Yugantar quoted a British visitor as saying:

An Indian once said to a friend of mine: “It is very extraordinary that the British should maintain their hold of India; for there are so few of you and so many of us that if you could all be collected together in one spot, and each of us were to take a pinch of dust between his thumb and forefinger and sprinkle it upon you, you would all be buried under a mountain a mile high.”

Given this disparity, the argument went, if even a small fraction of Indians could be motivated to actively resist the British military superiority, then British rule would become unviable.

If even one-tenth of the people of the country feel in their hearts the pain [of subjection], then when the English seek to test their strength by deploying their soldiers, the unarmed resistance will turn violent, causing a huge conflagration. Out of that sacrificial fire will emerge the goddess, promising protection; on her forehead will be written in burning letters - LIBERTY.

The operative part of the strategy was thus to initiate a series of assassinations of British officials by a few brave revolutionaries prepared to sacrifice their lives in order to break the climate of fear and hopelessness.
Hundreds of thousands of people die every year in this country from epidemics and famine. Do we not have ten thousand sons of Bengal who are prepared to embrace death in order to avenge the humiliation of the motherland? The English in this country number no more than 150,000. How many English officials are there in each district? If you are determined, you can put an end to English rule in one day…. Give up your lives by first taking lives. Sacrifice your life at the altar of liberty. The worship of the goddess will not be complete without the sacrifice of blood.

**Igniting the Imagination**

It is interesting to note that even when historians have characterized the efforts of the “terrorists” as a failure, they have remarked on the effect their actions had on the morale of the nation. Amales Tripathi wrote:

They might be wrong. But as Yeats asked about the Easter risers:

‘And what if excess of love
Bewildered them till they died?’

And was such sacrifice altogether in vain? The land brooded over the Martyr’s memory … its imagination was stirred to its depths and the apathy of centuries disturbed…. When Gandhi gave his call to a more arduous struggle, more arduous because it was non-violent, India was ready.

But it is not clear at all from this account why the failed actions and deaths of a few individuals should have such a miraculous effect on millions of Indians of the next generation. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, who spent several pages defending the moral and strategic reasons given by the revolutionaries for their actions, concluded:

The revolutionaries galvanized the political consciousness of the country in a way that nothing else could, and left a deep impress upon all the subsequent stages of our political advance. They really commenced the national struggle for freedom as we conceive it today. … Even today when we think of the true national
movement for freedom, our minds fly back, at one leap, clear over half a century, to those who conceived their country as Mother-goddess and worshipped her with their own lives as offerings.\textsuperscript{35}

But other than mentioning the popular songs about the execution of Khudiram Bose or the thousands joining the funeral procession of Kanai Datta after he was hanged, Majumdar does not explain why the actions of the revolutionaries of 1908 should make them the pioneers of the political movement of Indian freedom.

The problem, I believe, lies in the attempt to measure the linear impact of the so-called terrorist movement, defined by a distinct ideology and strategy, in comparison with other competing movements. Instead, if one looks for the horizontal spread achieved by certain events in facilitating the imagination of a political community called the nation, one might better appreciate the historical effects and significance of the early revolutionary movement in Bengal. Consider the following description from official sources of the funeral procession of Kanailal Datta, one of the accused in the Alipur conspiracy case, who, along with fellow accused Satyen Bose, killed their former comrade Naren Gossain in prison after Naren turned approver. Kanai’s hanging on November 10, 1908, had been announced in the press.

An extraordinary scene was witnessed at Kalighat at the time of the cremation of Kanai, whose body after the execution was made over to his relations for disposal. Crowds thronged the road, people pushing past one another to touch the bier. The body was strewn with flowers and anointed with oil. Many women, to all appearances of a highly respectable class, followed the funeral procession wailing, while men and boys thronged round shouting “Jai Kanai”! This Kanai Lal Dutt was a person of humble origin, a weaver by caste. … He gloried in the deed he had committed and went to his execution without flinching. After the cremation his ashes were being sold in Calcutta, as much as Rs. 5 an ounce being paid by some enthusiasts. It is believed that the supply was made to suit the demand, and that the vast amount of ashes sold in Calcutta as the ashes of Kanai Lal Dutt was fifty times the genuine amount that ever existed. This affair had a
most pernicious effect on the minds of the youths of Bengal; so much so that in the following January, Lalit Mohan Ganguli, … on being arrested … made a false confession to having murdered Sub-Inspector Nanda Lal Banerji. He subsequently admitted that he had made this false confession because it was the dream of his life to have a funeral like Kanai Lal Dutt’s.\textsuperscript{36}

How are we to understand this event? Kanai had been guilty of shooting to death a former comrade who had betrayed the cause and whose evidence would be used against the accused. Did that make him a popular hero? There was some skilful plotting involved in smuggling a revolver into the prison and arranging to meet the approver who was kept isolated from the other prisoners, but that was not why the people revered Kanai.\textsuperscript{37} It was, everyone said, his selflessness - volunteering to do the job in order, possibly, to lighten the sentences of his comrades by eliminating Naren Gossain who would then become unavailable to testify against them in court. He knew, of course, that he would never be able to escape and that a death sentence was inevitable. Yet not once did he break down or repent, repeating several times during his trial that if the situation arose, he would do it again. It was the patently disinterested honesty of his act, and the fact that he was punished to death for it, that made him into an object of reverence. Stories about Kanai’s resolution in the face of interrogation, threats and inducements circulated in the Bengali press after court reporters managed to learn about them from the accused in the Alipur conspiracy case.\textsuperscript{38} On the morning he was to be hanged, there were hundreds waiting outside the prison gate even before daybreak. The funeral procession is said to have been the largest Kolkata had seen until then.\textsuperscript{39} Further, even as people tried to make sense of this extraordinary set of events in terms of traditional notions of heroism or martyrdom, the reason behind Kanai’s death appeared as something completely novel. “He died for the country,” people said. But what was this entity called the country that could claim the sacrifice of a young life and turn thousands of unrelated people into a single community of mourners? It is at such moments of shared experience that the nation as an imagined community is born.

It is relevant to add that the government was quick to learn from this incident.
After the wild scene attendant on the funeral of Kanai Lal Dutt, the Government disposed of the bodies of persons executed for political murders, inside the jail wall, and all demonstrations of the kind were prohibited. This has doubtless put a stop to the determination that existed in many youthful minds to make an end like Kanai.  

Or take the famous song about Khudiram’s execution that began to circulate soon after his death and became one of the most widely sung nationalist songs in Bengal. Khudiram’s execution had been a great sensation, and Valentine Chirol, reporting in *The Times* of London, noted that Khudiram had become “a martyr and a hero. Students and many others put on mourning for him and schools were closed for two or three days as a tribute to his memory. His photographs had an immense sale, and by-and-by the young Bengalee bloods took to wearing dhotis with Khudiram Bose’s name woven into the border of the garment.” The song was truly a folk creation, because in spite of the intense historiographical attention to the details of the revolutionary movement in Bengal, no one has been able to name its author.

Bid me farewell, mother, just once; I’m off on a trip.
With a smile on my face, I’ll wear the noose; all of India will watch.

…   …   …
Saturday at ten: the judge’s court was bursting with people.
For Abhiram it was transportation, for Khudiram death by hanging.

…   …   …
After ten months and ten days, I’ll be born again at my aunt’s.
If you don’t recognize me then, mother, look for the noose around my neck.

An imputed kinship, a son like this in every home, any ordinary boy who could become extraordinary in death and be born again in another ordinary home. Such is the nation, consisting of innumerable ordinary people united by an imagined kinship – once again, a community born out of mourning, thousands of anonymous persons sharing the experience of grief at the death of a young man. Why grief? Because of the sheer
unselfish disinterestedness of Khudiram’s violent act and the retribution as punishment exacted for it by the colonial government. Khudiram’s attempt at assassination failed, because he chose the wrong target. He expressed his regrets in court for having killed two innocent women, but announced that if he were to get a second chance, he would go for Kingsford again. Unlike the judgment of historians, the popular imagination appears to have been captivated by the very amateurishness of the whole attempt – its youthfulness, its lack of careful calculation, its unwillingness to weigh costs and benefits – in short, its remoteness from the world of professional politics. It is this that explains the sudden and perceptible expansion of the boundaries of “the nation” in the period following the early revolutionary activities – something that could never have been achieved by the cumulative addition of constituencies by the organized politics of nationalist mobilization.

Indeed, the violent actions of the early revolutionaries and their “sacrifice” brought about by the inevitable retributions exacted by the state constituted that catastrophic moment when the law-preserving violence of the colonial regime was shown up for what it was – a myth. “Far from inaugurating a purer sphere,” Walter Benjamin has reminded us, “the mythical manifestation of immediate violence shows itself fundamentally identical with all legal violence, and turns suspicion concerning the latter into certainty of the perniciousness of its historical function, the destruction of which thus becomes obligatory.” Why did Khudiram or Kanai, pure of heart, guided by nothing other than love for their countrymen, have to die at the gallows? What could be more unjust than that? The answer was: they had to die because the law of the colonial regime was the manifestation of a fundamental system of injustice. Their sacrifice was a reminder to the nation that the system of colonial injustice had to be destroyed.

This very task of destruction poses again, in the last resort, the question of a pure immediate violence that might be able to call a halt to mythical violence. Just as in all spheres God opposes myth, mythical violence is confronted by the divine… If mythical violence is law-making, divine violence is law-destroying… Mythical violence is bloody power over mere life for its own sake, divine violence pure
power over all life for the sake of the living. The first demands sacrifice, the second accepts it.44

It is curious that when, more than a decade after the first actions of the Bengal revolutionaries, Gandhian activists launched their non-violent campaign to break the laws of the colonial state, they invoked the same rhetoric of sacrifice. Non-violent non-cooperation was, in fact, an insistent invitation to the colonial power to use its law-preserving violence in the most immediate way possible – by inflicting injury on the bodies of the agitators. Congress volunteers were bound by the pledge of sacrifice, offering their bodies to the violence of the state. Even when the state refused to inflict harm on the body, Gandhian non-violence could employ the extreme technique of the fast unto death, making the imperialist state irreducibly complicit in the destruction of the lives of its colonized subjects. The myth of legitimacy of legal violence is thus broken; the nation is galvanized into a collective desire for the destruction of the colonial state.

Contrary to the reasoned arguments of historians about the strategic efficacy of armed versus peaceful methods of anti-imperialist struggle, popular memory seems to judge the heroes and martyrs of both movements by the same criterion of sacrifice. This is what explains the indiscriminate coexistence of terrorists and Gandhians in the hagiography of popular nationalism – in songs and theatre, in textbooks and children’s literature, in calendar prints and portrait galleries, in street names and statuary. It is the same indiscriminate memory that Shahid Amin encountered in his research in Chauri Chaura, where Congress volunteers and policemen, arsonists and victims, all now participate equally in the remembered struggle for freedom in which they had all sacrificed their lives.45 “Forget your quibbles about strategies and tactics, about ends and means,” the popular nationalist imagination seems to say. “In the greater narrative of the nation, they are irrelevant, confusing and misleading us into fruitless debates, and succeeding only in hiding what was really at issue, namely, the fundamental illegitimacy of the legally constituted order. That is what we all wanted to destroy and replace by a new constituent power – ourselves.”

Official Responses
British colonial officials in Bengal were startled by the sudden emergence of revolutionary secret societies actually planning and carrying out armed attacks on selected targets. The similarity in tactics with revolutionary groups in Europe led to the Bengal revolutionaries initially being called “anarchists” and “nihilists”; the term “terrorist” came into circulation much later. But as soon as it became clear that the authorities were faced not with a few stray incidents but with a continuing political movement, they also had to cope with the entirely unprecedented fact that these “crimes and outrages” were being committed not by rebel warlords or insurgent peasants or habitual criminals but by young men from educated, propertied and socially respected families – in fact, by young men who were precisely the products of modern Western education. It posed for British authorities a completely new set of problems in dealing with political resistance to the empire. The official literature, both public and confidential, on terrorism in Bengal is particularly interesting for this reason.

The point was made most strikingly in the report of the Rowlatt committee set up in 1918 to look into the phenomenon of “sedition” in India: “The circumstance that robberies and murders are being committed by young men of respectable extraction, students at schools and colleges, is indeed an amazing phenomenon the occurrence of which in most countries would be hardly credible.” Then why was it happening in Bengal? Needless to say, the explanation was sought in the specific political and cultural influences on the lives of Bengalis belonging to this class.

The initial analysis put the blame squarely on the malicious propaganda and incitement to violence spread by the Extremist press. F. C. Daly, writing in 1911 the first comprehensive report on the revolutionary movement in Bengal put together by the Intelligence department, opens by mentioning the Amrita Bazar Patrika and alleging that the true policy of that paper was systematic opposition to all measures of Government, in a spirit of malignant hostility, rather than of honest public-spirited criticism. It lost no opportunity of attacking an European official, and of representing Europeans generally as tyrannical bullies, whose favourite diversion was kicking defenceless Indians…. It was the Patrika, I think, that first started the
doctrine of retaliation, advising the children of the soil in dealing with Europeans to return frown for frown and blow for blow. However, it was soon found that if one paper was forced to close, another appeared in its place. Referring to the *Yugantar*, for instance, Charles Tegart, the most famous counter-terrorist policeman, reminded his audience at the Royal Empire Society in London: “In one year successive printers and publishers were five times successfully prosecuted, but the imprisonment of the individuals did not check the trouble, in fact aggravated it. Dummy printers and publishers were appointed from the junior ranks, who gloried in cheap martyrdom and each prosecution advanced the sales.”

A new Press Act was put in force in 1910 to give the government sweeping powers to shut down, penalize and confiscate presses charged with printing seditious material. It served to moderate the tone of the newspapers, but did not stop the flow of young recruits into the revolutionary groups.

The official criticism then turned to the state of education in Bengal. Valentine Chirol, Indian correspondent of *The Times*, in some ways led the campaign. He complained bitterly about the superficiality of Western education in India, marked by mechanical imitation and cramming, far removed from the actual social and cultural world in which the student lived, and devoid of moral instruction. Secondary education in English, he thought, had expanded too quickly, and now most school teachers were Indian, not European. “From the point of view of mere instruction the results have been highly unsatisfactory. From the point of view of moral training and discipline and the formation of character they have been disastrous.” The more conservative among senior colonial officials concluded from this that the promotion of Western education in India...
had been a “grave political miscalculation”. Alfred Lyall, introducing Chirol’s book on the “anarchist” movements in India, remarked that

although education is a sovereign remedy for many ills … yet an indiscriminate or superficial administration of this potent medicine may engender other disorders. It acts upon the frame of an antique society as a powerful dissolvent, heating weak brains, stimulating rash ambitions, raising inordinate expectations of which the disappointment is bitterly resented.53

But why should a superficial Western education turn young Bengalis from the propertied middle classes into bomb-throwing terrorists? Chirol provided the elements of a cultural-anthropological answer: it was, he said, that lethal combination of religion and modernity. called “nationalism” that was the root of the problem.

There are only two forces that aspire to substitute themselves for British rule… One is the ancient and reactionary force of Brahmanism, which, having its roots in the social and religious system we call Hinduism, operates upon a very large section… of the population who are Hindus. The other is a modern and, in its essence, progressive force generated by Western education, which operates to some extent over the whole area of India, but only upon an infinitesimal fraction of the population. recruited among a few privileged castes… Though both these forces have developed of late years a spirit of revolt against British rule, neither of them has in itself sufficient substance to be dangerous. The one is too old, the other too young. But the most rebellious elements in both have effected a temporary and unnatural alliance on the basis of an illusory “nationalism” which appeals to nothing in Indian history, but is calculated and meant to appeal with dangerous force to Western sentiment and ignorance.

It rests with us to break up that unnatural alliance.54

British officials in Bengal were fascinated by the presence of religious literature, especially the Bhagavad Gita, in the libraries maintained by the revolutionary groups, the
use of religious invocations in the initiation ceremonies for fresh recruits to the Anushilan Samiti, and most of all by the seemingly ubiquitous appeal of what was described as the cult of the goddess Kali. The portrayal of the Bengal “anarchist” as a religious fanatic produced by some of the darkest and most mysterious strands in his culture was one way in which the official mind sought to resolve the paradox of Western education giving birth to terrorism: the educated Bengali, despite his knowledge of English, was still susceptible to the secret attractions of a savage religion. Consider this description by an ex-colonial writing under the unconvincing pseudonym of “Moki Singh”:

Anarchism has a particularly objectionable religious accompaniment. While the initiate kneels at the feet of Mother Kali, represented in her wildest aspect, with matted hair pulled about her head, her bloodshot eyes glaring mercilessly down, her hands squeezing the last life blood out of a dummy man. Two bombs lie at her feet… The exotic atmosphere bemuses the worshippers, leads them into a trance. Perhaps Mother Kali’s hellish eyes have hypnotized them… The doped struggling worshippers work themselves into a paroxysm of fanatical fervour… The climax of the ceremony is reached; the anarchists claim another follower…

We have them there, struggling against another depressing aftermath of primitive savagery, working once more from the bestiality that is the cornerstone of anarchism, until they again meet in another orgy…

Once the terrorist had been identified as at core a religious fanatic, the moderating influence of Western education could only be of limited effectiveness. Although high-powered expert teams such as the Rowlatt committee recommended extensive educational reforms as a means to combat terrorism, they concluded that the only effective method was the use of punitive and preventive administrative powers against those most likely to conspire to commit violent acts against the state. The Rowlatt committee was not very hopeful of achieving results merely by punishing the offenders.

We may say at once that we do not expect very much from punitive measures. The conviction of offenders will never check such a movement as that which
grew up in Bengal unless all the leaders can be convicted at the outset. Further, the real difficulties have been the scarcity of evidence…. The last difficulty is fundamental and cannot be remedied. No law can direct a court to be convinced when it is not.\textsuperscript{56}

The committee considered the possibility of lowering the threshold for admissible evidence in cases of sedition, but abandoned the idea because it might not be legally sustainable. The most promising option was preventive detention of potential offenders for which special powers were needed. The Defence of India rules enforced during World War I had given the government such powers, but they would lapse with the end of the war. The Rowlatt committee recommended new “emergency” powers to deal with sedition, involving speedy trials, no right of appeal and detention without trial of suspects.

By those means alone \textsuperscript{[the Defence of India Rules]} has the conspiracy been paralysed for the present, and we are unable to devise any expedient operative according to strict judicial forms which can be relied upon to prevent its reviving, to check it if it does survive, or, in the last resort, to suppress it anew. This will involve some infringement of the rules normally safeguarding the liberty of the subject.\textsuperscript{57}

But the committee was careful to add that the “interference with liberty” must not be penal in character: if suspects were to be detained, they should be kept in a special asylum and not in jail, and no one was to be convicted without a proper judicial trial. Detentions should be supervised by a periodic judicial review of each case. The emergency powers should also be for a limited period only, to be renewed by a fresh notification by the government.\textsuperscript{58}

Armed with these recommendations, the Imperial Legislative Council passed new laws in March 1919 to give the government special powers to curb seditious activities. The laws were condemned by virtually all sections of Indian opinion, from constitutional liberals to fire-eating revolutionaries. They were condemned for being arbitrary and
excessive; indeed, they were condemned for being in violation of the law. Within a few days, Gandhi launched his first nation-wide mass campaign against the so-called Rowlatt Act. Despite his fervent calls for non-violent resistance to the government, the satyagraha was marked by considerable violence and bloodshed in most cities of northern India. The Rowlatt Act was never put into operation and, following the constitutional reforms in late 1919, repealed.

It is worth considering the implications in this context of the general tendency in British imperial policy to maintain as strictly as possible the forms of legal propriety. At one level, the concern was prompted largely by the supervisory powers exercised by the British Parliament over colonial policy. Democracy at home did not preclude the pursuit of imperialism abroad, as the career of Joseph Chamberlain clearly exemplified. But to make the exercise of imperial power in the colonies consistent with the enlightened claims of democratic civility at home, it was essential that colonial governments be seen to act in accordance with the best standards of the law. The use of state violence in late colonial India, even when it was aimed against rebels, outlaws or terrorists, was never regarded as a war, but always as police action that had to be carried out within the ambit of the law as proclaimed for all imperial subjects. When faced with threats such as that of terrorism, colonial governments would often complain, as in the report of the Rowlatt committee, of being hamstrung by the overly demanding requirements of the legal system and would demand special powers to deal with an emergency. But the effect of this pervasive legalism in British colonial governance was, paradoxically, the relative immunity of the body of positive law from nationalist critique. Extremist or moderate, violent or non-violent, terrorist or Gandhian, Indian nationalists rarely questioned the positive content of the judicial and penal system built by the British colonial power in India. What they questioned was the legitimacy of the founding power that had made the law. The divine violence invoked in the sacrificial acts of revolutionary terrorists as well as those of Gandhian satyagrahis only sought to expose the myth of the law-making power of the colonial regime; it did not seek to destroy the positive law of the state. This explains the apparent paradox of the new constituent power of a sovereign Indian people deciding in the aftermath of independence to preserve the entire structure of the judicial system as well as the entire body of the positive law designed by the colonial state. They
were not, as imperial apologists would have it, the gifts of the British empire to India.\textsuperscript{61} Rather, they were seen as technologies of government in universal circulation that lacked, under conditions of imperial rule, a legitimate constituent power to promulgate them into the morally obligatory status of genuine law. This could only be done by the destruction of the colonial regime and the inauguration of sovereign and popular nationhood.

\textit{Postscript: The Later Phase}

It remains for me to briefly sketch the course of “terrorism” in Bengal in the 1920s and 1930s. The inauguration of constitutional reforms in 1919 led to the release of many revolutionary leaders held in detention. In a significant shift in tactic, revolutionary groups, especially the so-called Jugantar party, decided to join the Swarajya party of C. R. Das, Bengal’s pre-eminent Congress leader, and engage in open constitutional politics. It is said that there was a pact between the Jugantar leaders and C. R. Das by which, in return for political protection, the revolutionaries supplied the cadres with whose help Das managed to win support in the district committees of the Congress for his plan to contest elections and enter the newly formed provincial council.\textsuperscript{62} In fact, from this time onwards, the Congress organization in the districts, especially in eastern Bengal, as well as the provincial committee, continued to be dominated by leaders with “terrorist” links right up to independence.

The 1920s then was a period of relative lull in terrorist activities in Bengal, although several Bengal revolutionaries played important roles in the spread of secret organizations in the United Provinces and Punjab that carried out several daring acts in this period. But there was an explosion of armed actions in Bengal as soon as Gandhi’s civil disobedience movement was launched in April 1930. The most spectacular were the raids in Chittagong on the police and military armouries and the gutting of the telegraph office. The actions were planned on the Easter weekend in deliberate emulation of the Easter rising in Ireland in 1916. After the attacks, the raiders retreated to the hills and were hunted down four days later.\textsuperscript{63} The Chittagong revolutionaries – their leader Surya Sen who was arrested three years later and hanged, Ambika Chakrabarti, Ganesh Ghosh, Ananta Singh and Loknath Bal who were transported to the Andamans, and two women, Pritilata Wahdedar who chose to swallow cyanide rather than surrender and Kalpana Dutt
who spent nine years in prison – became stellar figures in the growing pantheon of revolutionary martyrs and heroes in Bengal. The Chittagong raids had an electrifying effect. “The younger members of all parties,” an official report says,

clamoured for a chance to emulate the Chittagong terrorists. Their leaders could no longer hope, nor did they wish, to keep them back, for the lesson of Chittagong had impressed itself on their minds no less than on those of their more youthful followers, and there seemed to be no reason why their over-cautious policy should be maintained. Recruits poured into the various groups in a steady stream, and the romantic appeal of the raid attracted into the fold of the terrorist party women and young girls, who from this time onwards are found assisting the terrorists as housekeepers, messengers, custodians of arms and sometimes as comrades.64

Assassination attempts against senior British officials came thick and fast. Lowman, the Inspector-General of Police, was shot dead in Dhaka; Simpson, the Inspector-General of Prisons, was shot dead in his office inside Writers’ Buildings in Kolkata; and Tegart narrowly escaped death when his car was bombed on a Kolkata street. Garlick, a district judge, was shot through the head in his courtroom at Alipur. Between 1931 and 1933, Peddie, Douglas and Burge, three successive district magistrates of Medinipur, were assassinated. In December 1931, Stevens, district magistrate of Tippera, was shot dead in his bungalow by two young women, Suniti Chaudhuri and Shanti Ghosh. Two months later, the governor Stanley Jackson was delivering his address at the convocation of the University of Calcutta when Bina Das, a fresh graduate, pulled out a pistol from within her academic robes and shot at him; she missed and was overpowered and arrested. The next governor John Anderson introduced a tough regime of emergency laws with wide powers of search and detention. He was shot at in Darjeeling in 1934 and miraculously escaped unhurt.

With the systematic arrest and detention of their leaders, the revolutionaries now appeared to lose steam. The intelligence branch reported in 1937 that “the parties in most districts lack competent leadership and are disorganized, but recruitment is going on.”65 In fact, although there appeared to be a vacuum in the planning of strategies and actions,
the flow of young recruits continued unabated, their ranks now being swelled by women and, in some cases, by Muslims. The intelligence reports noted that “the religious aspect” that was a characteristic of the earlier life of the secret societies now seemed “to have been disregarded.” It was also said that in Dacca district, twenty per cent of high school students had been recruited by one revolutionary group alone and that no more than two per cent of students were pro-government. It was also in this period that the colonial government appeared to settle on a clearer definition of terrorism:

Terrorism, as distinct from other revolutionary methods such as Communism or the Ghadr Movement, may be said to denote the commission of outrages of a comparatively “individual” nature. That is to say, the terrorist holds the belief that Indian independence can best be brought about by a series of revolutionary outrages calculated to instil fear into the British official classes and to drive them out of India.

Curiously, it was in the middle 1930s that the Bengal revolutionaries too appeared to make serious choices between “individual terrorism” and other forms of organized revolutionary action. Mass nationalist mobilizations were now a familiar feature of Indian politics; rather, new questions about the economic and social future of the nation were being raised within the national movement. Confined to prisons and detention camps, the leaders of the revolutionary groups became acquainted with the new ideas of Marxism and the possible role of the communist party in the anti-imperialist struggle. Many of them now renounced the politics of terrorism and assassination and embraced the idea of sustained mass organization among workers and peasants. A considerable part of the leadership of the Left parties in Bengal at the time of independence, including the Communist Party, the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the Forward Bloc, came from the ranks of the former nationalist revolutionary groups. Needless to say, the Congress party that came to power in West Bengal after independence contained many leaders with “terrorist” pasts. Now ranged on opposite sides of a new political divide, the former revolutionaries joined in giving birth to the new postcolonial orthodoxy – condemnation of the politics of terrorism while memorialising the sacrifice of the martyrs.
Notes

1 Amiya Kumar Samanta, as Director of the Intelligence Branch of the West Bengal Police in 1995, has compiled these reports in six large volumes. Samanta, ed., Terrorism in Bengal: A Collection of Documents on Terrorist Activities from 1905 to 1939, 6 vols. (Calcutta: Government of West Bengal, 1995),
4 “Many Delusions”, Bande Mataram, April 5, 1907, in ibid., pp. 234-7.
5 “Nationalism not Extremism”, Bande Mataram, April 26, 1907, in ibid., pp. 296-9.
6 “Shall India be Free?”, Bande Mataram, April 29, 1907, in ibid., pp. 305-8.
9 “The Demand of the Mother”, Bande Mataram, April 11, 1908, in ibid., pp. 852-5.
10 The nationalist newspaper Sandhya, in its characteristically direct style, had this to say about Kingsford: “On seeing the appearance of Magistrate Kingsford, one would take him to be a butcher. We do not know Mr. Kingsford’s genealogy; if the facts about it were made public, perhaps it may become known that the Magistrate’s father or grandfather, or somebody or other (related to him) was a butcher, otherwise how could his appearance be like that? And his understanding is like (his) appearance; as is the appearance so is the conduct.” Official translation from Sandhya, August 28, 1907, in Seditious Newspaper Articles, Ex. 1339/1, reprinted in Samanta, ed., Terrorism in Bengal, vol. 4, p. 628.
12 The most recent and careful account of the Alipur conspiracy case is to be found in Heehs, Bomb in Bengal.
14 Intelligence Branch, CID, Bengal, List of Persons Connected with the Revolutionary and Anarchical Movement in Bengal, part 2, Conviction Register, reprinted in Samanta, ed., Terrorism, vol. 5, pp. 667-773.
15 Hemchandra himself narrates the story in Hemchandra Kanungo, Bamlay biplab pracesta (1928; Kolkata: Chirayata, 1997).
16 W. Sealy, Connections with the Revolutionary Organization in Bihar and Orissa (1917), para 82, reprinted in Samanta, ed., Terrorism, vol. 5, pp. 7-134.
18 Kanungo, Bamlay biplab pracesta.


26 These were later published in 1907 as two separate booklets entitled *Bartaman rananiti* and *Mukti kon pathe?* with the name of Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya, designated as the printer of *Yugantar*, as their author. The pamphlets were soon proscribed. It is unlikely that Abinash Chandra was the author of these tracts.


33 “Svarajya sthapan”, *Yugantar*, 1, 49 (March 3, 1907), in Bandyopadhyay, ed., *Yugantar 1906-1908*, p. 383. My translation. *Sandhya*, as usual, was more direct: “It is a matter of great rejoicing that an excellent kind of bomb is being manufactured. This bomb is called the Kali Mai’s boma, *i.e.* the bomb of Mother Kali. It is being experimented on, then it must be kept in every house. … A son is wanted from every family who must practise the virtue of a Kshatriya. Let them play with Kali Mai’s bombs. Bom Kali, Kalkattawali.” Official translation from *Sandhya*, May 6, 1907, in *Seditious Newspaper Articles*, Ex. 1338/1, reprinted in Samanta, ed., *Terrorism in Bengal*, vol. 4, p. 611.


Hem Kanungo gives a detailed account of the various plans laid to eliminate Naren Gossain. He also makes the acerbic remark that the people’s response to Kanai’s execution had nothing to do with their disapproval of traitors, because Naren’s death did nothing to stop future revolutionaries from turning approver. Kanungo, *Bamlay biplab pracesta*, pp. 190-200.


Heehs, *Bomb in Bengal*, p. 192.

Daly, *Note*, in Samanta, ed., *Terrorism*, vol. 1, p. 44.


Ibid, pp. 150-1.


Upendranath Banerji mentions that after the failed attempt on the Bengal governor’s train in late 1907, a government official told him very knowledgeably that some Russian nihilists had arrived in India with the intention of spreading anarchy. *Nirbasiter atmakatha*, p. 18.


Chirol, *Indian Unrest*, p. 324.


I have discussed this point at greater length in my article “Empire After Globalisation”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39, 37 (September 11-17, 2004), pp. 4155-64..


that it was Subhas Chandra Bose who negotiated the agreement on behalf of C. R. Das; in return, the Jugantar leader Bhupati Majumdar was made the secretary of the Bengal Congress. Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay, *Biplabi jibaner smriti* (1956; Kolkata: Academic Publishers, 1983), pp. 40-1.

63 For a recent account, see Manini Chatterjee, *Do and Die: The Chittagong Uprising 1930-34* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1999).


65 Hale, *Terrorism*, p. 60.

66 Ibid., pp. 3-4.

67 Ibid., p. 1.