PREFACE

It is recognised that the first major challenge that Netaji faced in the early years of his active political life commenced with his arrest in 1924 and deportation to Burma. The experience resulted in a transmutation of his personality as a whole—physical, emotional, social, intellectual and ideological, and laid the foundation of the leader that was to come. What came between his return from Burma and the next major turning point in his career in 1933 stemmed from the preparation in exile. The correspondence in this volume thus make a most valuable contribution to a study of this very significant phase of his life. The letters relate to all possible questions and situations—personal and family relationships, social customs, educational and cultural matters, morality and ethics, psychological problems, civic affairs, ideological conflicts and of course, among many other things, political questions of the time. They are not merely political but significantly historical.

Netaji’s letters of childhood, adolescence and early youth have been published in An Indian Pilgrim (An Unfinished Autobiography and Collected Letters 1897-1921, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1965). The present volume should be taken as a study in continuity. For a fuller appreciation of these letters the reader is advised to refer particularly to the following chapters of The Indian Struggle 1920-1942 (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1964, reprinted 1967): Deshbandhu C. R. Das in Power (1924-25), The Slump (1925-27), In Burmese Prisons (1925-27), and The Barometer Rises (1927-28).

The great bulk of the correspondence here is with his brother Sarat Chandra Bose. Apart from being an important source of information, the dialogue between the brothers throws new light on a relationship that probably began as an emotional attachment of childhood and youth and which eventually matured into a unique and life-long and indissoluble comradeship in struggle and suffering. A historical parallel is hard to come by. The letters to Basanti Devi and Bivabati Bose reveal
the nature and depth of the writer's personal relationships. Correspondence with his friends and colleagues, Dilip Kumar Roy, Santosh Kumar Basu, Satyendra Chandra Mitra, Sarat Chandra Chatterjea, N. C. Kelkar, Gopal Lal Sanyal and others, are of great interest for a wide variety of reasons. It is fortunate that Netaji preserved copies of his prison letters to the British Government. They are now being recorded as documents of exceptional historical value.

The great majority of the letters have come from the Sarat Bose papers, preserved with affectionate care by his wife Bivabati for nearly three decades, which now form a most valued acquisition to the archives of Netaji Research Bureau. They include copies in Netaji's own hand of his letters to the British Government and letters received by him in prison from friends and relations. Shrimati Basanti Devi has very graciously made a gift to the Bureau of what she could save of the many letters Netaji wrote to her over a period of nearly twenty years. We are indebted to Messrs Dilip Kumar Roy, Santosh Kumar Basu, Gopal Lal Sanyal, Hari Charan Bagchi and others for permission to publish letters to them and to Shrimati Aroti Dutt for letters to her father late Satyendra Chandra Mitra.

For the convenience of the increasingly wide circle of readers of Netaji's works, many of whom are not familiar with Bengali expressions and persons mentioned in the text, we have appended some Notes on the letters at the end. The Notes are by no means exhaustive and we hope to make considerable additions in the next edition. The Name Index will be useful to all.

Our sincere thanks are due to the Government of India, Ministry of Education, for a grant to meet part of the expenses of the publication.

I wish to place on record our grateful appreciation of the tireless work of Mr. Benode C. Chowdhuri in all stages of the publication, the help of Mr. Gouranga Bandopadhaya and the expert assistance of Mr. Harendra Nath Sengupta in designing
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Jai Hind

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Netaji was arrested on October 25, 1924, under the infamous Regulation III of 1818 and lodged in the Alipore Central Jail, Calcutta. The first letter of this collection—from Sarat Chandra Bose—was addressed to him there. In the first week of December he was removed to Berhampore Jail. His correspondence from there follow. On January 25, 1925, Netaji, along with seven other political prisoners, was taken away to Mandalay, Burma. His correspondence from Burmese prisons—most of which were with his brother—form the bulk of this collection. S.K.B.