

Annals of the Courage

THE FLAME OF PROMETHEUS WILL NOT BE EXTINGUISHED

Ali Havari

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Disturbing news come from Iran almost daily by teletype. The punitive agencies of the Islamic Republic have started savage repressions against the nation's democratic, progressive, and patriotic forces, chiefly their vanguard--the People's Party of Iran (Tudeh). The regime's propaganda media are going to all lengths to give out lies for the truth and cast aspersions on the Iranian Communists.¹ The journal has, in this connection, once again requested Ali Havari to tell readers from his own personal experience about the immense contribution that his party has made to the struggle against the shah's dictatorship and imperialism, for Iran's freedom and independence. We publish the interview.

- Would you tell us when and under what circumstances did you join Tudeh and what motivated this commitment?

In the history of my people the year 1941 holds a special place. The world was burning in the flames of the Second World War. The heroic Red Army was containing the onslaught of the nazi hordes. The Reza Shah Pahlavi reactionary clique of imperialist puppets made no secret of its sympathy for nazi Germany,

¹See Ali Havari, "Torturing the Party to Tear Up the Revolution", WMR, No. 3, 1984, pp. 66-69.

which, in turn, accorded Iran a special place in its plans of military gambles, counting on using its economic resources and strategic location against the Soviet Union and Britain. On British initiative British and Soviet troops² entered Iran on September 16, 1941 to block fascism's designs and cut short the subversive activities of its agents. This action by the anti-Hitlerite coalition allies was a heavy blow to the police dictatorship of the Shah, who was expelled from Iran. Although the semi-feudal regime³ remained in power, some possibilities opened up for bourgeois-democratic reforms.

In this situation a group of Communists, who had regained their freedom after long imprisonment, united with members of the advanced wing of the working class movement and on October 2, 1941 founded Tudeh.⁴ Three months later I was admitted to membership, and this predetermined the further course of my life.

What made me join an organisation of people who at the time seemed to me to be so unusual and different from others? Instead of replying permit me to quote an excerpt from my speech in 1966 before a military tribunal where the prosecutor demanded the death sentence for me and my comrade.

"Like millions of others in Iran I spent my childhood in unrelieved destitution. I saw the poverty, hunger, and suffering of the people and could not remain indifferent. What had to be

² The Soviet Union acted in accordance with the terms of the Soviet-Iranian treaty of 1921.

³ After Reza Shah Pahlavi abdicated, his son Muhammed Reza Pahlavi ascended to the Iranian throne—Ed.

⁴ Tudeh is the heir and continuer of the work of the Iranian Communist Party, which was founded in 1920 and outlawed in 1931. —Ed.

done to ease the lot of disinherited people? This question never left me in peace. There was much I could not understand: why was the destiny of children born in poor and rich families so glaringly dissimilar? What led to the poles of wealth and poverty? Why were some people unable to find employment, denied food and medicines, and doomed to die? Why, despite the country's incalculable natural wealth had our people to live in penury?

"It was my good fortune to become acquainted with Tudeh's scientific views. Its programme and social ideas were the long-awaited reply to these agonising questions. For that I joined the party with faith in my heart and a burning desire to liberate the Iranian working people."

These words, spoken by me many years ago, express my creed to this day.

- Iranian history over recent decades is closely linked to the struggles of the working class and its vanguard—Tudeh. Would you say a few words about how at different stages and in different situations Tudeh fought for national sovereignty, democracy, and social progress?

As I have already said, Tudeh was founded when the Second World War was raging. Since then you will not find a single major national event or powerful protest movement that does not bear the imprint of our party's active involvement and influence. The struggle against the Shah's dictatorship, fascism, British colonialism, and Iran's enslavement by an even stronger vulture, US imperialism, active participation in planning the anti-monarchy, anti-imperialist revolution of 1979, and the defence of the revo-

lution against. / ^{attacks} by external and internal reaction--each of these heroic pages of the history of the Iranian people is linked indivisibly to Tudeh.

I vividly remember how the militarist Shah's regime tried to educate people in a spirit of adherence to fascism. Costly military parades, chauvinistic slogans (such as "We Aryans are for the restoration of the former grandeur of the Persian Empire!"), and the vicious anti-communist hysteria clouded the minds of many Iranians, especially intellectuals from the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois strata.

From the day it was founded Tudeh joined in the struggle against the brown plague. The Communist newspaper Mardom (The People), subsequently Tudeh's central organ, became a rallying centre of the anti-fascist movement and played a prominent part in countering the demagogic propaganda and the intentions of those who were out to establish a "new order" on the Hitlerite pattern.

Further. The party correctly pointed out that national sovereignty was being endangered by British imperialism's control of the nation's oil industry and demanded the abrogation of the onerous agreement with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). The general strike by oilmen of July 1946 headed by Tudeh gave a powerful impetus to the anti-imperialist, democratic movement in Iran and to the mass actions for the restoration of the Iranian people's right to their oil wealth. This movement was successful. On March 20, 1951 the parliament passed a law that nationalised AIOC enterprises. This was a great victory of the working class

party, of all the democratic forces, and it had an immense impact on the nation's subsequent political and economic development.

Nobody can deny that in the early 1950s, although its status was only semi-legal, Tudeh became an influential political force that was tangibly influencing the course of the liberation struggle. At crucial moments of the inner-political struggle the heroic actions of advanced sections of working people headed by Tudeh were the main factors that kept the Mossadegh government⁵ in power; that government raised the question of nationalising the country's oil wealth in practical terms. In response to the Shah's attempts to remove Mossadegh from power in July 1952 the Iranian capital seethed with anti-Shah demonstrations led by Tudeh.

The party and the Central United Council of Trade Unions, formed on May 1, 1944 under its direct leadership and representing more than 90 per cent of all organised workers, raised the political level of the working masses and contributed to the conversion of the proletariat into a conscious maker of national history. What arguments to confute this can be given by the gentlemen who today assert that Marxism-Leninism is alien to the Iranian people? Our reply to them is: "Give the Iranians freedom of choice and the world will then see the worth of your inventions."

There was a quick response not only from the workers to the party's slogans calling for the country's democratisation and the consolidation of its independence. Tudeh enjoyed considerable

⁵ Muhammed Mossadegh was Prime Minister of Iran from April 1951 to August 1953. He represented the Iranian national bourgeoisie and advocated the nationalisation of the oil industry.—Ed.

prestige among the peasants, hundreds of thousands / ^{of} whom joined the Peasants' Union formed by Tudeh and also the ranks of the party itself. The largest in Iran's history Tudeh women's organization and youth league were set up through the efforts of the Communists. Many democratic movements, including the Freedom Front (consisting of, among others, patriotic journalists and writers), the United Front of Freedom-Loving Parties, and the United Anti-Colonial Front, all of which were formed on Tudeh initiative, functioned successfully. All these mass public organizations tangibly contributed to national liberation, to the political education of the people, and their enlistment into active public activity. The reactionary forces could not forgive Tudeh for this either during the Shah's reign or after his overthrow.

One of Tudeh's principal achievements was its consistent struggle against US imperialism and its exposure of the latter as the principal enemy of the Iranian people. In order to erode the positions of the British colonialists and win the disposition of Iranians, US imperialism acted for a long time in Iran behind the mask of an advocate of democracy and humanism. Much effort was required to show the real face of this wolf who had donned a sheepskin. But our party successfully resolved this important revolutionary problem, although the struggle cost the lives of hundreds of its finest sons and daughters. This is yet another reason for the violence directed against the Communists today.

Nobody can deny that Tudeh played an immense role in promoting the general cultural level of the people. Hundreds of Tudeh's

newspapers and journals, and theoretical, socio-political, historical and philosophical works educated Iranians in the spirit of patriotism, internationalism, love of freedom, and friendship with other peoples. I should like to mention just one fact illustrative of the monstrous crimes committed by reaction. It recently got coverage in the media. It is that reactionary elements in the Islamic Republic destroyed 13 fundamental manuscripts written over several decades by Ehsan Tabari, eminent philosopher, historian, poet, and scientist, and Political Bureau member and Secretary of the Tudeh Central Committee. Tabari himself has been in prison for a year and is being tortured ^{by} / Iranian secret police.

What reaction and imperialism fear is that the working masses will learn the truth. For that reason they always resort to repressions, torture, lies, and deceit. It is not by chance that an influential official of ^{the} / present Islamic regime has called the assault on Tudeh a "victory more important than victory on the battle front".

But I am quite confident that despite all the medieval repressions, reaction will never extinguish the flame brought by our people's Prometheus—Tudeh—a flame so vital to the Iranians in their struggle for full national liberation, democracy, and social progress.

- Whenever internal and external reaction starts repressions against Iran's democratic forces, the Communists are the first victims of this terror. You worked underground, were in prisons of the Shah's regime for many years, and have been sentenced to death. What helped you to stand firm in this unequal battle?

Indeed, of the almost 43 years of its existence the party has in fact had to function illegally for 33 years. During these years Tudeh sought to keep intact and, where possible, strengthen its position among the people. My militant comrades-in-arms--professional revolutionaries who worked underground--were the bridge linking Tudeh with the working people. They had to be not only boundlessly devoted to Marxism-Leninism but also able to dissolve, so to speak, among the people, to be vigilant, self-disciplined, in full self-control in the most extreme circumstances and, if necessary, ready to lay down their lives for the party and the people. I feel it is my revolutionary duty to name some of our heroes who died at the hands of the Shah's butchers.

Comrade Vartan was seized by SAWAK agents. He was ferociously tortured to give the location of a secret printshop, but at the price of his own life he defended the party's principles and his honour as ^a/Communist. He is no longer with us, but his name is written in gold letters on the party's banner.

Khosrov Rouzbeh, national hero of Iran and Tudeh CC member, flung at his judges: "My eyes, possibly, will not see socialism triumph in Iran, but I am quite positive that times will soon change... All my actions were motivated exclusively by the desire to see a new Iranian society that will bring happiness, dignity, prosperity, and freedom to the Iranian people." Khosrov Rouzbeh was executed by firing squad on May 11, 1958.

Siamak, Tazabi, and Hekmatdju are among the hundreds upon hundreds of Communist heroes who fell unvanquished in the struggle for their country's freedom. To this day thousands of Tudeh members are staunchly standing by the ideas of communism in Iranian prisons.

The party steeled us and helped to hold out in the unequal confrontation with SAWAK. A group of four, of which I was one, was engaged in work customary in underground conditions--we issued leaflets, circulated the party newspaper, organised actions by workers and students, and set up party cells. But the police eventually got on our track. A new stage of struggle began for us--in a SAWAK prison, where they tried to force us into betrayal, make us renounce our convictions and divulge party secrets. I and my friend Parviz Hekmatdju, a former pilot (both of us were Tudeh CC members), were kept in solitary confinement for long years and sentenced to death twice. Two of my comrades died under torture.

At the "trial" we declared, defending our party's honour:

"Mr. Chairman of the tribunal. Holding the threat of death over our heads you demand that we renounce our patriotic and humanist convictions. We are spelling this out clearly: go ahead and hang us!"

We did not know that at the time this trial was held Communists and democrats in many countries were protesting against this lawlessness. Years passed, and it was only before my release from prison during the days of the revolution that I learned what had stayed the hand of the killers two days before I was

to be executed. It was a powerful solidarity movement, an expression of which was a telegram from the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

The course of history has its own laws. The sentences it passes are strict and accurate, although in the dungeons where revolutionaries are tortured and where one hears the swish of whips it seems that time has stopped. But the wheel of history cannot be stopped with whips and dungeons.

Some months after my arrest, when I was being interrogated and tortured, I had a visitor in my solitary cell. He was the butcher General Nasiri, chief of SAWAK, accompanied by some colonels and the prison warden. He said to me through gritted teeth:

"You wanted a Red Iran, an Iran of the hammer and sickle?"

"A free and flourishing Iran," I replied.

Turning to the prison warden, Nasiri asked:

"Has he said everything?"

"No," the gaoler replied, "he is a fanatic Communist."

Nasiri ordered that I should be tortured until the police got what it wanted. It does not matter now how long the torture went on, the important thing is what took place 15 years later, at the commencement of the revolutionary events of 1978.

In the hope of saving his throne, the Shah had to sacrifice some of his servitors. He ordered the arrest of General Nasiri. On the day that the people stormed the prison, the general aided by jailers tried to escape from the punishment he deserved. But one of our comrades recognised Nasiri in the crowd and turned

him over to the revolutionary guard. At his trial the general, shivering from head to toe, swore that he knew nothing about the torture of prisoners. But he did not escape the punishment he deserved: he was sentenced to death and executed.

In those faraway years, when, with his chest glittering with decorations, the SAWAK chief threatened me with death I could not, of course, ^{foresee} / that the revolution would free patriots from prison and put rabid reactionaries in their place. But as a Communist knowing the history of my own and other peoples I believed that justice would eventually triumph.

Regrettably, much of what we have lived through is now repeating itself in Iran. For more than a year now representatives of "divine justice" in the Islamic Republic have been persecuting patriots in flagrant violation of the law. Fiendish tortures, "confessions" wrung under duress, and charges of subversion and espionage—all this is a facsimile of the Shah's farces with the difference that while in those days people were killed under the facade of the "law", today they are being killed in the name of Allah. This is not harassment of the opposition. It is genocide against all differently-minded people.

As I am writing these words, Iran's repressive agencies have committed yet another odious crime. The trials in which 87 persons were sentenced to a total of 700 years of imprisonment and the death sentence passed on ten Tudeh members and put into effect are totally at variance with the country's legislation and universally recognised norms of international law.

The high-minded persons so savagely executed, says a statement issued in this connection by the Tudeh Central Committee, have throughout their glorious lives fought for freedom and national independence, for the emancipation of the oppressed. At the shameless mock trial all emphatically rejected as unfounded and absurd charges of espionage and treason, declaring that their participation in political struggle was motivated solely by their striving to defend the revolution's gains which met the interests of the people. One of them, Farzad Djahad, who was sentenced to death and shot, said at the trial: "We unknown soldiers of the revolution saw our hope in the republic, dreaming that our children will be happy and free, and for that reason we defended the republic. I do not ask for leniency and will not give up my convictions."

Repressions against Tudeh, which is the most experienced and active champion of the working people's interests, have been started when Iran is going through one of the hardest periods of its history, when society is facing enormous socio-economic difficulties, and the country stands before an open threat of military aggression by US imperialism. Simultaneously, the statement declares, there has been an intensification of the propaganda campaign against the Soviet Union, which is the most powerful bulwark of the world's progressive forces. What all this means is actually the creation of favourable soil for counter-revolution and the restoration in the country of the positions held by imperialism headed by the US imperialists.


The medieval repressions levelled at Tudeh leaders, members, and supporters have evoked protests from communist and workers' parties and other democratic and progressive forces, from people of good will throughout the world. Tudeh is grateful to them for their fraternal solidarity. We are convinced that the powerful and steadily growing protest by world opinion will help to tie the bloodstained hands of these 20th-century inquisitors. The just cause of the party will triumph in spite of all repressions and the repulsive intrigues of reaction and imperialism.

TÜRKİYE SOSYAL TARİH ARAŞTIRMALARI
TÜSTAV

THE BOOK SCENE

LOOKING BACK WITH PRIDE

Joaquim Pires Jorge, Com uma imensa alegria. Notas autobiograficas
(With Immense Joy. Autobiographical Notes), Avante!,
Lisbon, 1984, 109 pp.

It must have struck readers that recollections written by Communists generally convey an important ideological and political message and deal with noteworthy aspects of the working people's life. They are free of the conceit, egocentrism, self-admiration, and tendency to overrate the authors' role in history which certain books of the latter category betray. Many autobiographical works by Communists,  going far beyond the framework of the events depicted in them which the authors participated in or witnessed, offer a panorama of social and political actions by the masses. They are objective accounts of the experience of the communist movement of the country concerned and portray fellow-revolutionaries. These qualities make them sources of both political and considerable scientific value.

The book under review, whose author is a noted figure in the Portuguese working class and anti-fascist movement, one of the leaders of the Portuguese Communist Party, is a case in point.

Joaquim Pires Jorge has gone through many hardships, severe trials and uncompromising showdowns with the class enemy. He arrived at Marxism-Leninism, at a conscious struggle against fascism, after discarding views of petty-bourgeois revolutionaries held by many members of his generation, being naive enough to imagine

that a handful of armed daredevils could overthrow the reactionary dictatorship established by António Salazar in 1926. In those years (late twenties and early thirties), he believed in a palace revolution or military coup (see p. 22). However, it was not long before he realised that this would get the country nowhere. And when, in 1934, he had a chance to join the PCP and contribute his share to underground work, he unhesitatingly made this choice, destined to shape his life throughout the subsequent period.

The author's political biography comprises exile to colonial Angola for participating in an anti-fascist uprising, long terms (including one that lasted without a break from 1961 to 1971) in Angra do Heroísmo, Aljube, Caxias and Peniche, the Salazar regime's worst prisons, interrogations in cells of PIDE, the Portuguese gestapo, and lastly, decades of underground work full of dangers and adversities. However, every new test tempered his revolutionary will and made him more confident than ever that he had made the right choice. "Ours was a very hard life but we accepted it consciously and readily" (p. 45).

Turning page after page, the reader comes to notice that the author speaks about his personal experiences very simply, indeed casually, dissolving his fate, so to speak, in the collective fate of his fellow-Communists, of leaders and activists of the party, many of whom went through harsh tests like himself.

This tenor of the recollections is not accidental. Like other veterans of the PCP who have published their recollections in "Resistance", a popular serial brought out by the Avante!

publishers, Pires Jorge has dedicated his book primarily to the party, which has become his home and given his life meaning. Hence it is only right to describe the PCP as the chief protagonist of the book, since the party has a 48-year record of anti-fascist struggle in conditions of illegality and played a prominent role in Portugal's changeover from dictatorship to democracy after the April Revolution (1974).

Pires Jorge became a Communist at a time crucial for the country and the party. For objective and subjective reasons the PCP, founded in March 1921, was unable to transform itself by the time the fascist coup was carried out into an efficient and influential political force leading the working class. Although it turned out to be the only organisation calling on the people to resist a military coup, it was unable at the time to mobilise the masses against reaction's offensive.

With socio-political life in the country dominated by fascism, truly titanic efforts were needed to save the party, protect its cadres, branches and publications, and reorganise its work according to the exigencies of secrecy. The author mentions the difficulties which Communists encountered when they set out to reorganise ^{the} party in the strictest secrecy. The lack of habits of underground work, a shortage of experienced people and funds, virtually complete international isolation, organisational weakness, and many other

things hampered the transformation of the PCP into a leading force of the anti-fascist movement.

Underestimation of the need for secrecy among members in the thirties did great damage to the party. "Avante! and O Proletario were passed on from hand to hand or mailed. The workers who printed them were members of the party's Lisbon organisation. They did their usual work at the printing plant by day and carried on party work by night. This was a truly criminal practice in terms of the exigencies of secrecy, since the slightest blunder could have dire consequences for both the Lisbon organisation and the printing plant" (pp. 37-38). Disregard of the requirements of underground work led to major losses; in the mid-thirties, the police uncovered several places where Avante! was printed and arrested all the members of the PCP Secretariat (1935).

However, selfless work enabled the Communists to overcome difficulties. In spite of unrelenting repression, they accomplished a revolutionary feat by turning in a very short time a weak party with little influence into a solid and efficient organisation that played a tremendous role in the anti-fascist resistance.

The book contains numerous details about that important period in PCP history, about the vast experience gained by the Communists over decades of underground work, that is, details unknown to the majority of the international readership.

The party was thoroughly reorganised under the leadership of Alvaro Cunhal, Militão Ribeiro, Sérgio Vilarigues, Pedro

Soares, Pires Jorge and other professional revolutionaries set free in 1940. The reorganisation was characterised above all by the restoration of Leninist standards and style in party work, a tightening of discipline and the promotion of democratic centralism (see p. 46). Justly considering that success in the effort to revive the party depended largely on the ideological purity of its ranks, the Communists launched an offensive against the opportunist views that had gained some currency in the PCP. Besides, they adopted the most rigid rules of secrecy, formed a permanent core of leaders and assured their relative safety.

The reorganisation produced results at once: the party became stronger organisationally, held a congress (1943) for the first time since it went underground, and sponsored the formation of a number of democratic fronts grouping diverse sections of the anti-fascist opposition. Communists stepped up their activity in the official trade unions and organised the uninterrupted printing and circulation of Avante!. It is worthy of note that from August 1941 to the April Revolution of 1974, or for 33 years, the dictatorship was unable to silence the newspaper, to uncover and destroy the underground presses which printed it. The devising of a well-regulated and strictly secret mechanism for the publication and circulation of an illegal Communist press was a major accomplishment of the party. The party's successes entitled its members afterwards to describe the years between 1942 and 1949 as an outstanding period in its history.¹

¹ See Avante!, No. 298, March 1961.

The author gives considerable space to the struggle of fellow-Communists in fascist prisons. "Even in prisons we formed party organisations capable of functioning, having leaders and tasks of their own, maintaining links with higher bodies and participating in the activity of the PCP as best they could" (p. 90). Before and during the Sixth Congress (1965), Communist inmates of Caxias and Peniche were regularly and fully informed of the Congress and supplied with texts of delegates' speeches.

The techniques of communication by tapping admittedly plays a notable part in the life of political prisoners. Portuguese Communists got to know it after Bento Gonçalves,² a PCP leader, had mastered one of them during a visit to a Leningrad museum, the one-time Peter and Paul Fortress where Russian revolutionaries were imprisoned under tsarism. His experience proved useful to thousands of Communists. Many of them became so skilful at using the prison "Morse code" as to even play chess in that way (see p. 35).

The reader will be interested to learn that in 1960 ten Portuguese revolutionaries led by Alvaro Cuñhal escaped from Peniche, a medieval prison fort. The author gives dramatic details of the months-long preparations for the daring operation which some of the finest cadre members of the party helped carry out and which had a world-wide echo. The event was a telling blow to the positions of the fascist regime and added to the appeal of the PCP, which benefited politically and organisa-

² General Secretary of the PCP from 1929 to 1942; he lost his life in the Tarrafal concentration camp.--Ed.

tionally by freeing a group of experienced revolutionaries from Salazar's prison.

A particularly noteworthy merit of the book is that, being a valuable historical record, it furnishes instructive information about the development of the PCP as a Leninist party of the new type operating underground. From this point of view, too, the recollections are of unquestionable political relevance for fraternal parties still compelled to work and fight underground.

However, there is something else that makes the book valuable. The recollections are intended for the present and future generations of young revolutionaries who may benefit greatly from the veteran Communist's experience. For it is typical of young Communists that they primarily search for romance in the struggle for a just cause. And revolutionary romance is a feature of the past and present activity of the Portuguese Communist Party.

Sérgio Tатаis

Byline 16

LINE OF THE REVOLUTION

Sardar Prithvi Singh Azad

veteran member of the Communist Party of India (CPI)

Last spring, when the 13th CPI Congress was greeting veterans of the struggle for the party's revolutionary cause, Sardar Singh, 93, was named first. This is what he told our journal about himself.

I might as well begin with 1931 because that year my life entered what I would now describe as a new, meaningful period. Although I was close on forty I set out for Moscow on foot from Karachi, without passport or any other identification papers. I will tell you later why I did it.

It took me fully three months to reach Kushka. In Kabul I was held by the Afghan authorities but managed to escape, and after that I had no chance to stop for rest. By the time I arrived at the frontier I couldn't take off my shoes because my feet were bleeding. I made it clear to the first Soviet frontier guard I saw that I was an Indian revolutionary, and added that if I sat down I would hardly be able to get up. The guards brought me a pailful of warm water. I put my feet in it and when I finally took off my shoes my skin came off with them. They bandaged my sore feet right away, gave me some food and put me up for the night.

Some time around midnight, however, I was roused by two guards, who told me to get up.

"The wolf has a sheep's skin on but its teeth show just the same," one of them said.

Afterwards I understood that the guards had received a report saying that a dangerous spy was about to cross into Soviet territory. They mistook me for him, all the more because I had no papers, as I've said, carried a pistol and couldn't explain things properly. I was put in a cell where there were some men looking like Moslems. They probably took me for a "true believer", and so they told me how they had been fighting against Soviet rule. They demanded that I should pray to Allah for the "destruction of the infidels". I pretended to pray. In the morning, however, when the guard unlocked the door I rushed to him.

"I'm not what you take me for," I said. "I'm a revolutionary. I had thought I could count on a warm welcome in the Soviet Union. But see what happened."

Shortly after that I was summoned to the commander, a stout man with smiling eyes.

"This is a big chief," I was told. "Tell him the truth, the whole truth, if you value your life."

I chuckled.

"What's so funny?"

"Why, we're in the Soviet Union, a country of workers and peasants, aren't we? How come you have so stout a chief here?"

They all burst out laughing, and you know that laughter helps ease tension. In short, we had a friendly talk and I was given two hours to put everything on paper and above all to explain why I had first called myself an Indian revolutionary and then also an American one.

Now is probably the time to tell you why I went to Moscow. In the process I'll have to go back to the earliest years of my life.

I was born in Punjab. My father, a landless peasant, had to emigrate to Burma in search of a better life for his family. In Burma as in India, a liberation potential was building up at the turn of the century. There was a movement for boycotting British goods. I eagerly took notice of all that as I grew up, longing to contribute together with my coevals to the fight against the colonisers. With the maximalism of youth, we saw "tit for tat" as the only way. It so happened that in 1908 the British colonial authorities hanged a Bengali terrorist of my age. Besides, they gave a six-year prison term to a noted Indian for writing an article in the boy's defence. I admired the example set by the two Indians. I resolved to join the revolutionaries and fled to Hongkong. There I got in touch with young Indians, Filipinos and Burmese who longed like myself to fight for freedom even at the price of their lives.

"Go to the United States if you want your country to win freedom," people in the know told me. "We are now mustering forces over there."

In 1909, my new comrades helped me make my way to the States. There I really found an organisation of Indian revolutionaries who wanted to free their country from the British yoke. I joined it and was soon one of its more active members. We worked everywhere, collecting money to buy arms. We also took part in the American labour movement. However, the important thing

was that we planned to go back to India when the time came to launch an uprising, nor did we doubt that the people would support us. When World War I broke out we decided that now was the time, and so 150 volunteers sailed for India after taking what I now know were naive precautions.

We cherished great hopes but had a poor idea of the situation in India, so that nothing came of our plans. The greater part of the "American" group was arrested on arrival. A court sentenced 24 revolutionaries, including myself, to death by hanging, and the rest got life sentences. Nevertheless, the seeds sown by our attempt at revolt had already sprouted in India, and our case caused a big stir. As there was a war on, the colonisers found it expedient to revise the sentences, with the result that seven men were hanged and the rest found themselves in prison on one of the Andaman Islands.

We were all in solitary confinement in that terrible prison. Regulations were outrageous. When one of my fellow-inmates, a man 20 years older than I, was beaten to death I called a hunger strike in protest. I refused to take food or drink or to talk. I lay on the bare floor of the cell day and night. Trying to break me, my jailers fed me through the nose. This lasted for five-odd months. I lost over 40 kilograms, or nearly half my weight. But I had my comrades' backing and held out. I feel strong enough even now, at 93, so you can imagine what I was like 70 years ago.

All of us were young and strong and offered resistance as best as we could. When British soldiers beat us we hit back, re-

fusing to give in even to threats of using arms. Several prisoners managed to escape by locking up their guards. In Delhi a high-ranking British official described the inmates of Andaman prison as a "pack of wolves". This is why the British decided to scatter us over various prisons.

I was transported to Madras and from there to a small town in southern India. On arriving there, I realised that the jailers weren't overzealous. One night when the guard on duty fell asleep I made my way to freedom in spite of my irons. It was the rainy season and I had to walk or wade as the case might be. At last I reached a village and found ^{myself} / in front of a dark peasant hut. It was quiet inside. What was I to do? I couldn't speak the language of the province. I moved my feet and the jingle of my irons woke up the housewife. She came out and saw me, and then she woke her husband and lit a lamp, and both stared at me in surprise. I made a sign to indicate that first of all I wanted to get rid of my irons. But they were poor peasants who had no suitable tool. Using a stick and a stone, we knocked off my irons with great difficulty, adding to my sores. As my clothes hung down in shreds I was compelled to discard them. That left me with nothing on but a loincloth because my hosts couldn't lend me any clothes. I was grateful for the little food they offered me.

I trudged on at random in the dark but at daybreak I was back to where I had waded waist-deep through rainwater. I was so exhausted that it was all I could do to get to a dry place. There I was overtaken by pursuers and sentenced to another 30 years' imprisonment, this time for trying to escape. The court

put me down in its records as a dangerous and incorrigible criminal. This happened in 1921.

A year later the authorities decided to transport me and another three revolutionaries to a safer place, Nagpur prison in central India. We were put on a train with nine guards. We had a long way to travel and on taking my bearings I made up my mind to try once more to regain my freedom.

At a suitable moment I asked to be taken to the toilet. The policeman guarding me stayed at the door outside. I had only a few minutes at my disposal. I tried to open the window but it was safely locked, except that above it there was a large fan. I managed to force it and squeezed myself through the hole, feet first. I dropped out of the train just when it had slowed down because there was a bridge ahead. I got away almost unhurt.

The place was the vicinity of Amravati, a city in the state of Maharashtra. I knocked on the door of the very first house I came across. It turned out to be a student hostel. I was lucky because nationalist, anti-British sentiment was strong among the students. I ventured to come to the point without offering any explanation.

"Take me to the leader of your city's independence fighters," I said. "It's very important, believe me."

To be sure, the students could have taken my request for a provocation but something in my behaviour made them trust me. Without asking any questions, they took me to whom they called the "doctor". Well, I thought, it's too late to retreat, and so I told him everything about who I was and where I came from. He

turned out to be a real doctor, a courageous patriot. My sores were seen to, I was given shelter and some of the wherewithal to begin underground work.

Incidentally, I imagined at the time that I owed the support people gave me in the most diverse, occasionally critical circumstances, to a sort of personal magnetism. Subsequently I realised, of course, that it was merely an expression of the liberation spirit characterising every ^{section} / of society.

They helped me get to Bombay, where I was to live under a false name. I needed a suitable job, one that would place me among young people. My experience urged me to infuse them with freedom-loving, patriotic ideas. I decided to have a go at gymnastics as a coach because I had been strong and deft from childhood. The time came when I even fitted out a simple gym which served me as a dependable livelihood and the mainstay of my underground activity.

Eight years went by. The police was unable to track me down but the Communists found out my whereabouts. They strove to win over national revolutionaries, telling them that terrorism is the wrong way to freedom and that only by organising the workers and peasants is it possible to free the country from the colonisers and establish people's rule. Needless to say, they knew my record--from arrest to escape--like many other people in India. As for me, I looked on the Communist Party with distrust at the time because there were too persistent allegations about the Communists "getting gold from Russia". But the man who contacted me was an esteemed revolutionary and nothing could make me distrust him. He proposed a meeting with his leader in Allahabad. After a long conversation there which badly eroded my homespun notions of the true road to freedom, I was advised to go to Russia to study

Marxism-Leninism. "You've got a pistol," I was told, "but you must remember that knowledge is another revolutionary weapon. When you come back you'll be able to serve your country better than before." I remembered these words well. They served me as a guide on my difficult path.

And this explains why the year 1931 saw me on the Soviet frontier. I was allowed to travel on to Moscow.

Looking back at the time when I had another two chances to go to the Soviet Union and even wrote a book about that country (it was published in India), I smile when I recall the naive ideas about Soviet reality I had in the past. Coming across people and looking closely at what seemed to be calm faces--one's face reveals a lot, you know--I couldn't help thinking in surprise: "Are these people real revolutionaries? They don't even carry arms. All they talk about is blast furnaces, power stations, harvests..." But the very same people soon brought it home to me that they were doing a really revolutionary job by building a new world. And when I was enrolled in the Communist University of Working People of the East, I began to see clear in the very laws governing life and revolutionary struggle.

I studied diligently, giving my all to it. The training of willpower and staunchness I had received in prison came in handy. Things were also made easier for me by the fact that instruction was carried on chiefly in English. Besides, my comrades helped me a lot. In short, I made a name for myself as a conscientious student and was admitted to the Bolshevik Party.

On graduation I decided to return to India without delay. I made a detour, going to Marseilles and then sailing for Pondicherry (it was a French enclave in India at the time). From there it was a stone's throw to Madras. I got there in the end, if not without adventures, by lulling the vigilance of the police. All I wanted after setting foot on my native soil was to get back to work as early as possible, to devote the knowledge I had acquired during my long absence to the liberation of my people, to the revolutionary struggle.

The local organisation of the Communist Party of India, which I joined, instructed me to move to Bombay again to work underground. It was certainly easier to maintain secrecy in a big, multinational city which I knew very well. We began to publish an illegal newspaper there. I had to do almost everything as a staff member--writing articles, circulating the paper, raising funds for its publication. We made progress, experiencing no serious setbacks. Gradually we came to the conclusion that it was time to add work in legal conditions to underground activity.

I must say that the Indian National Congress was very active by then. Pressure from the growing liberation movement made things difficult for the British colonisers. I told my party leadership that I would like to work in legal conditions.

"I think it's time," I said, "because every child can now tell the British outright what it thinks of them."

"What if you're arrested?"

"My arrest would merely add to public discontent. After all, my record is known to many."

The party approved my idea on the understanding that I should meet with Mahatma Gandhi first because if I were jailed again, his prestige among the people would serve our cause.

Gandhi asked me to tell my life story in detail.

"It would be dangerous for you to deliver yourself into the hands of the authorities because you have too eventful a record," he said after hearing it. "This time they might finish you off."

"I'm not afraid of that," I replied. "I want my example to inspire young people. Please make it known that I am here with you."

Although Gandhi advocated non-violent resistance, he hesitated for a long time. In the end he called up the Bombay police because he wanted to defend me before the authorities. But his intervention didn't help even after he had approached the highest-ranking colonial officials. I was arrested and sent back to prison with a sentence that was to run till 1966 for my previous "crimes".

Shortly after that, World War II broke out. In an effort to secure the Indians' support, the colonial authorities released the more prominent fighters for the liberation of the country. I was among those who were set free. Gandhi unexpectedly invited me to serve with him as an assistant.

"I am apparently nearing the end of my days," he said, "and I badly need people like you beside me." Yet he knew that I was a Communist. Our party leadership recommended me to accept the offer in order to maintain closer ties with the national leader. I stayed with him until the beginning of the mass movement calling upon the British to quit India, when the colonial authorities stepped up repression again and put me back behind bars along with many others.

Incidentally, in purely personal terms, those brief periods in between two imprisonments gave me the first respite after my studies. In 1943, when I was nearly fifty, I married--I'd had no such opportunity before. By now I have two grown-up children: a son who's a flyer and a daughter, a medical school graduate. My grandchildren are growing up too.

It was in 1947 that independence brought us Indian revolutionaries out of the colonisers' prisons for good. Everything changed and so did our struggle. The emphasis in it shifted to the social sphere, and internationally it concentrated on consolidating independence in a climate of peace. Together with other Communists of the older generation, who had gone through the school of underground activity and harsh trials, I continued working in the party, chiefly in the state of Gujarat. I participated for many years in the leadership of the peace movement. I hope my effort wasn't fruitless, to judge by the proportions the movement has assumed here in India.

However, it is too early to speak about it as a thing of the past. I go on helping the party even now that I've come back as an old man to my home state, Punjab, where I'm closer to my children. I meet with young people, all the more since I'm a counsellor in the Department of Education and also take part in the peace movement. I hope I will be fit enough to carry on, at least until I'm a hundred years old.

Looking back, I can see that my life has been following one and the same line, the line of the revolution. In telling you about my past, I wish to say this to the younger generation: "A Communist certainly needs courage and strength but above all he needs the conviction that comes of Marxist knowledge, and he must be able to take it to people, to translate ideas into revolutionary deeds. He has to learn this all his life."

Annals of Courage

TWENTY YEARS IN PRISON

The Filipino Communist Jose Lava spent twenty years of his life in jail, but the long prison term failed to break his spirit. Immediately upon his release in 1970, secured by Philippine and international public pressure on the government, he plunged into active party work. How did he manage to survive this ordeal? What helped him to prevail, to preserve his identity and his ideals? We put these and other questions to Comrade Lava, who currently represents his party on WMR.

I will always remember the fateful day of October 18, 1950. That was when the authorities seized a large group of Communists in Manila, including some leaders of our party. In the course of the trial which lasted until May 1951 and was based on trumped-up charges,¹ six CPP members were sentenced to death; for several comrades, myself included, the verdict was life imprisonment, and the rest were sentenced to various prison terms.

At first I did not believe that I would remain in prison for more than twelve years (the maximum penalty for simple rebellion). I was hoping that the political situation in the country would change, that the sentence would be reviewed and the correct penalty imposed. However, years passed, but the only things that changed were the prison cells and the faces of the guards and of my fellow inmates.

We spent the greater part of the first/^{five}years of imprisonment on death row. There was also solitary confinement during which we were deprived of all reading matter and could leave the cells only for brief walks, and meetings with relatives or lawyers. Due to an outbreak of gang warfare in the death row we were transferred to the prison chapel for several months into which 250 inmates were packed like sardines. We had to sleep on the floor with hardly enough space left for walking.

Intelligence officers kept imprisoned Communists under constant surveillance and repeatedly tested out fortitude. Once, after a period of very strict confinement in a military jail, several comrades, myself included, were taken out of the prison blindfolded. It was a long and silent drive to an undisclosed destination. As it turned out, it was yet another interrogation, although conducted in the manner of an almost friendly talk with an intelligence officer posing as a historian. From me, he wanted to hear my version of an internal party controversy, involving forms and methods of struggle. I indignantly refused this transparent attempt to get my "cooperation" for splitting purposes.

I was subjected to experiments in which psychotropic drugs were used. The aim was to test their effect on human behaviour. I could not tell whether it was day or night, I was semi-conscious all the time. When I began to recover my senses, another injection was administered. And/^{then}they told me I was losing my mind. I asked my wife to take this matter up with the President and she did, but was ignored.

As far as I know, only one CPP member succumbed to enemy pressures after spending several years in jail--one ^{of} / those sentenced to death. The others successfully resisted such pressures. From my very first days in prison, it never occurred to me to appeal for pardon: this step could have been interpreted as a sign of weakness, of readiness to trade my convictions for release.

Attempts were also made to sway us through our families. No attempts were made to approach my two older brothers who were not directly involved in the revolutionary struggle but were known for anti-imperialist convictions and their socialist sympathies. The authorities tried to act through my mother. A family acquaintance was induced to talk her into persuading me and my younger brother, at that time General Secretary of the CPP CC, to give up our convictions. But my mother said: "Whatever my sons may be doing must be good because I trust them fully. All I can do is hope and pray for their health and safety."

There were also outright provocations we had to withstand. Intelligence officers once staged a real show. They said they found a note at my cell door reading, "Comrade Lava, everything is ready." They wanted to use this forgery to accuse me ^{of} / preparing an escape. But the scheme fell through. A prison security officer was assigned to investigate the case, and he proved to be an honest man. After questioning me several times, he realised that I had nothing to do with the incident, and he duly recorded his conclusion. I regret to say that he paid for his integrity: he

himself was framed and beaten severely during interrogation sessions. Later we learned that the officer had died.

Our jailers tried to demoralise us by playing on the difficulties in the development of the international communist movement. For example, after the 20th Congress of the CPSU which denounced the ^{personality} cult period and its abuses, an intelligence officer brought me a copy of U.S. News and World Report with anti-communist coverage of the congress and asked for my opinion. I replied that first of all I doubted the authenticity of the magazine's version and added that at any rate this information could not undermine the commitment of Communists to socialism, just as it was impossible to deny that, led by the CPSU, the heroic Soviet people and their armed forces played the decisive role in the defeat of Hitler fascism.

Virtually from the very first days of our imprisonment, our group was visited by Catholic priests and nuns. They tried vainly to shake our atheist convictions. From the early 1960s, brothers of the Catholic De Lassalle University made frequent visits to some ^{of} /our leading comrades. I was included in two such visits. The aim was to split our group with the help of Maoist propaganda. They were looking for people who displayed a degree of ideological immaturity and lacked adequate practical experience. Very few were swayed. Most Communists remained steadfast.

I think that what helped me to survive my 20 years in prison was above all the readiness to face harsh trials and my faith in the ideals which prompted me to join the Communist Party. I became

a Communist in 1937, when the CPP had been working underground for five years. From the very outset I had a fair grasp of the risks and sacrifices the life of a party member entailed.

I deliberately spoke about this to my future wife in the course of my courtship. I am proud to say that she understood me and that she showed great perseverance and fortitude during the long years I spent in prison and even before I was arrested. She had to raise our three children virtually on her own, and she rebuffed all the attempts of the enemy to influence me through her.

Reflecting on the fate of my comrades and loved ones who made similar sacrifices, I would say that we became Communists precisely because we reacted particularly acutely to the foreign and domestic oppression our country and our people suffered from. I think that the traditions of the Philippine national liberation movement, which had begun with the struggle against Spanish colonial rule in the late nineteenth century, also played a part. My parents brought us up in the spirit of these traditions. I knew since I was a kid that my uncle fought in the war against the colonial rulers and was killed in the battle of San Rafael at the age of 18. Our parents fostered in us, in my brothers and sisters, a love of our country, compassion for the poor and the oppressed, commitment to justice, and a yearning for knowledge and truth.

Filipino Communists were tempered in the crucible of Japanese occupation and the subsequent armed struggle for liberation against US neocolonialism. The Japanese invaders declared that

the Communist Party was their first and foremost enemy and began a veritable hunt after its leadership. Many dedicated comrades were killed at that time, including Crisanto Evangelista, founder of the CPP. Once, after a clandestine meeting of the Political Bureau which I attended, I narrowly escaped arrest and maybe even death. Death was only a step behind clandestine Communist activists, and we got used to the constant threat to our lives. And when the agents of a reactionary pro-American regime seized us in 1950, I felt some fear but was prepared for the worst.

Upon arrival in the prison, before we were tried, we were all placed in different cells to isolate us from one another. At once, without any prior agreement, we began to sing the Internationale and then chanted "Down With US imperialism and its puppets" and "Long live the CPP and the HMB".² Other prisoners and even some guards and employees later told us that this mass singing and chanting of slogans had a profound impact on them: if people behave like this in jail, then they must be confident of the justice of their cause and of final victory.

Another thing which helped us to preserve our fighting spirit and faith in our eventual release was the fact that throughout our 20-year-long imprisonment we conducted party work. It was done in different forms, depending on the strictness of the confinement.

Our first step was to organise study meetings. The studies continued even when we were placed in different cells. Then the leading party organ in the prison began to hold regular meetings. Naturally, this would have been impossible if we had failed to

establish friendly relations with some of the guards. Some came from areas where the CPP traditionally had a strong influence and where the people were sympathetic to the party. Others simply responded to the decent and humane way in which we treated them. When we decided to hold a meeting, they opened the doors of our cells and we gathered in one of them. At the first sign of alarm we rushed back to our own cells, to give the guards time to lock the doors. We did our best never to let down our friends among the guards.

Here I must say that there were also other Communists who had been arrested earlier. They had an organisation of their own, were on good terms with many prison employees, and soon established contact with us. For our part, we found a way to reach those party members who were arrested later and were confined in the part of the prison reserved for the "Rebellion" group³ (as distinguished from our group called "Politburo group"). That was no easy task: the administration of the prison was doing its best to keep contacts among political prisoners to a minimum. Nevertheless, the search for some avenue of contact went on. We asked the guards we trusted to give a message or pass a note to our comrades. We used every opportunity to talk to them during visiting time for families and other relatives.

The difficult thing about our situation was that we had virtually no contact with the party leadership. The prison authorities searched thoroughly everything political prisoners received, even home-made food. That is why from the very beginning we decided not to compromise our families and asked to convey the

necessary messages to us only verbally, during visits.

Sometimes however, we managed to circumvent the jailers. For example, there was a strict order that newspapers or periodicals should reach political prisoners only via the military counter-intelligence officers who either censored them heavily or deliberately delayed them. However, relatives and friends wrapped, say, fried fish or patties in the latest newspapers. The guards did not pay any attention to the oil-stained wrappings, and we received the information we needed so badly.

With the advent of a new, nationalistic President in 1957, the regime of incarceration applied to Communists became somewhat more relaxed, and we were able to organise a party school in the prison.

The understanding, helpfulness, firmness and self-control we showed made other inmates respect us. The prestige of the Communists was enhanced by the fact that they kept raising with the prison authorities the question of better conditions for all prisoners, of more frequent visits by relatives, of access to newspapers and books. We tried to treat prisoners from the underworld with equanimity and understanding, not to offend them or provoke hostility. We invariably said "no" to all attempts to extort money from us to buy liquor with, but we never refused to give advice and we helped to draw up petitions for reductions of prison terms. We were able to bring about reconciliation between prisoners from rival gangs and to minimise senseless bloodshed.

We also managed to get on well with a large group of Japanese prisoners of war who were confined together with us at the beginning.

I think the authorities did this for a purpose: they thought that the Japanese would be hostile towards Communists for their active role in the resistance movement. The objective was to intimidate us, to exert additional psychological pressure on us. But we defeated this scheme. As soon as our two groups were mixed, we explained that we had fought the Japanese militarists but never identified them with the Japanese people. On the whole, we maintained normal relations with the prisoners of war. We even prompted some of them to become interested in Marxism-Leninism because we told them about the ideas and purposes of our struggle.

Although isolated from the outside world, we did learn that the Communist Party remained active despite the blows dealt to it. Gradually, the CPP re-established mass worker, peasant and youth organisations. Democratic forces gained strength. In 1968, a broad campaign for the release of political prisoners was launched, supported by international public opinion. Increased pressure was brought to bear on the government and on the Supreme Court which finally reviewed and reduced our sentences.

January 6, 1970 was another memorable date for me. That was when we walked out of the gate of the prison where we had spent almost 20 years. Our release was extensively covered in the press. Not only relatives and friends but also correspondents of many newspapers met us at the gate. One of them asked me what I thought and felt in these first moments of freedom. "I entered prison a Communist, and I am leaving prison still a Communist," I replied. I could not put it any other way.

¹ The Communists were charged with rebellion aggravated by murder, arson, kidnapping, robbery, etc. not provided for in the Penal Code which penalises only simple rebellion.

² Initials of the Philippine name for the Communist-led National Liberation Army.--Ed.

³ This group included both those who engaged in direct armed struggle and leaders of the CPP-led "Congress of Labour Organisations" (CLO).

TÜRKİYE SOSYAL TARİH ARAŞTIRMA
TÜSTAV