

Was this judge a revolutionary?

SOME time ago a cross-fire of sentiments had taken place in the Lok Sabha about the role of the I.C.S. during India's fight for freedom.

It was pointed out that when the patriots were suffering at the hands of the alien rulers, the I.C.S. officers were acting as great supports to the rulers, and now, in free India, some of them after a comfortable retirement have put themselves up as patriot-politicians.

Whatever be the merit of such observations, when in future a truly complete history of India's fight for freedom will be compiled, a chapter should be devoted to record the service of some of the members of the Civil Service to the cause of freedom.

And perhaps, as the foremost among them would be hailed Charu Chandra Dutt. His little-known memoirs can prove to be a splendid source of information about several amazing episodes.

Panic

In 1908 a sensational piece of news appeared in the London 'Times' — that while arresting Sri Aurobindo and his revolutionary lieutenants, the police were obliged to search the bungalow of a judge, one C. C. Dutt, I.C.S.

Though in fact the search was only contemplated, the news created a panic among the British in India, since it revealed how dangerously deep-based was the plan of the revolutionaries.

On being interrogated, Dutt made the statement — shocking to his superiors — that there was no need for any separate investigation into his conduct; if anything was proved against Sri Aurobindo, it could be taken for granted that he had a part in it!

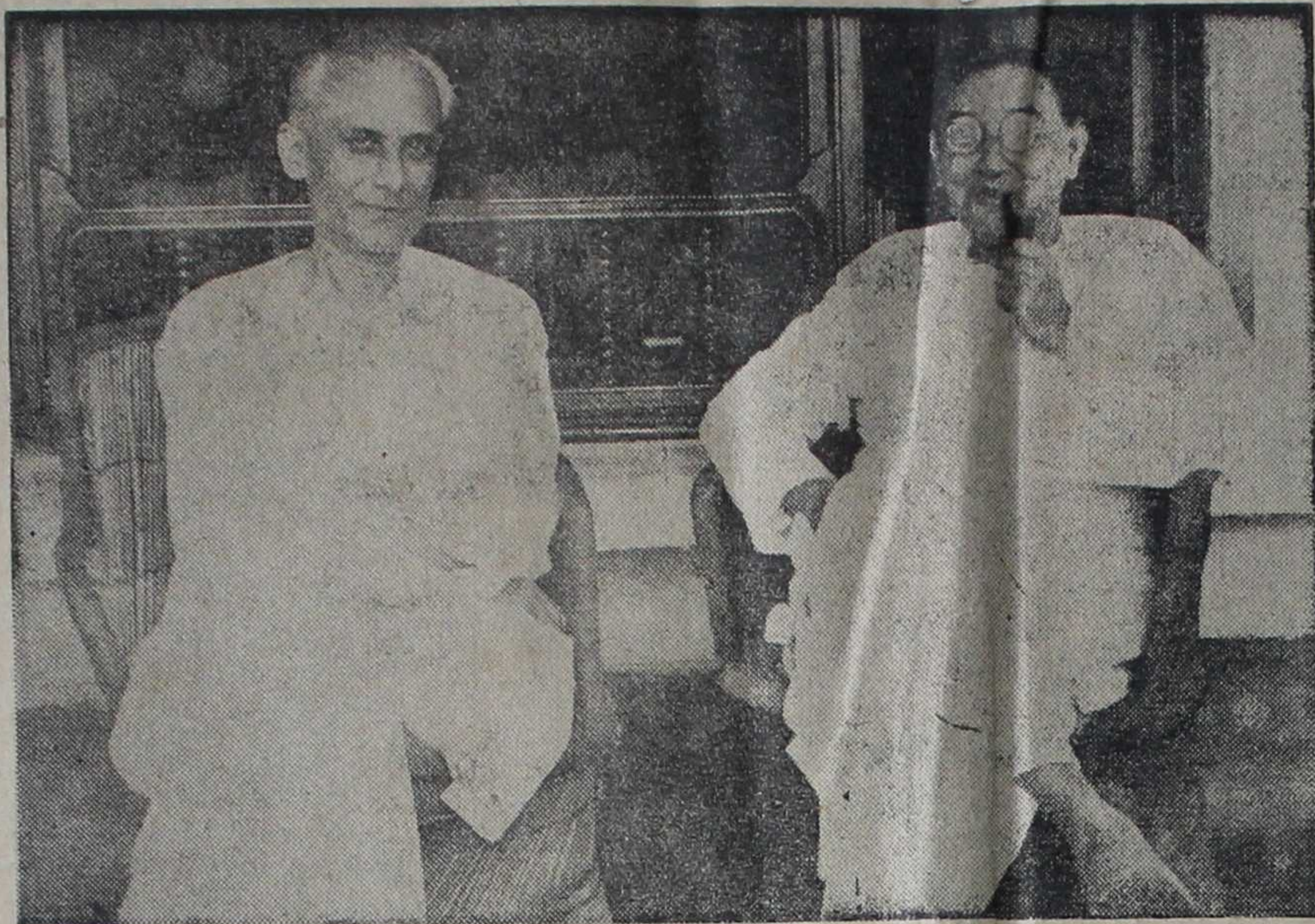
However, Naren Goswami, the man who had linked Sri Aurobindo, Dutt and the latter's brother-in-law, Raja subodh Mullik (the only person to be bestowed with the title of Raja by the people — when he declared his donation for founding the National College in Calcutta in 1905) together, was shot dead inside the jail by two young revolutionaries and hence nothing could be proved against Dutt thereafter.

Proposal

Dutt had first met Sri Aurobindo in Baroda around 1901. Since then he had accepted him as his Master and with an irrevocable devotion secretly worked under his direction, organising groups of revolutionaries all over the country and recruiting and patronising boys like Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram who, today live as glorious legends.

Towards 1906 he became associated with one of the most

In this rare photograph Charu Chandra Dutt (right), the judge whose name was linked with the early revolutionaries, is seen with Rathindranath Tagore, son of the poet.



When Goa was put up for sale by the Portuguese

by Manoj Das

dramatic moves in the history of our struggle: — when Goa was put up for sale!

Were the Portuguese ever sentimentally attached to Goa? They simply had "stuck to Goa" as Nehru observes, "and their leader, Albuquerque, who had the fine title of Viceroy of the East, indulged in disgusting cruelties." (Glimpses of World History).

And Panikkar substantiates, "The Portuguese never had an empire in India. Their territorial possession which they vaingloriously called the 'State of India' were at no time much larger... The degradation of Portuguese life in India after the first twenty years of pioneer effort is affirmed by all authorities..."

Hence, the revolutionaries were not amazed when the Portuguese authorities of Goa sent a secret proposal to them, telling them that they were prepared to hand over Goa for a certain (huge of course!) amount of money.

Only, a false rebellion would have to be enacted and it should

appear as though the Governor was under duress.

Naturally, it would have been wonderful if the revolutionaries had got as big a foothold as Goa. The money was soon arranged. But the question was, would the Government of India — the British — remain passively gaping at the fall of Goa to the revolutionaries?

They would certainly strike! So, it was decided to arrange for some great power to recognise the new regime of Goa simultaneously with its 'capture', and to send a ship there, so that the Government of India could not attack Goa without challenging that great power.

France and Germany were approached. But they turned down the request. However, they were kind enough to promise never to

divulge the plan.

Then Russia was approached. "Yes," said the Russian Ambassador in India, "the Czar would be happy to teach a lesson to the British for their treacherous conduct in the Russo-Japanese war."

But a big naval encounter between Russia and Japan was imminent. Russia would do the needful only if she was victorious in the prestige encounter.

"The Intelligence Department further told the Viceroy that there were proofs of treasonable correspondence with Russia and staff officers..." (See "India Under Morley And Minto" by Dr. M. N. Das; George Allen And Unwin, London.)

Bad luck! Russia was badly beaten, and the Ambassador could not oblige them.

How militant Dutt was in his spirit can be ascertained from his own words: "One day I was impatient and said (to Sri Aurobindo), 'Kindly permit me to raise an open army!'"

"The Master gave a pat on my

formed Dutt's friends that Russia back and said, 'Impatience won't do Charu! In moments of crisis a few must stand behind!'

"That gracious smile and the touch of my Master! And those sweet words! I have never come across any comparison to them in my life. All my agitation completely subsided then."

This was around 1904. Dutt remained in touch with Sri Aurobindo in spite of warnings to him from three successive Governors.

He was compelled to go on leave for two years and had to suffer a punitive reduction in his salary.

After his retirement in 1925, he joined Santiniketan and became the Vice-President of the institution. Rabindranath Tagore was very fond of him and his writings.

Restless

Commissioned by the Calcutta Session of the Indian National Congress, 1928, he wrote the history of the National Congress — the first to be written.

But his soul was getting restless to join his Master — Sri Aurobindo — who had gone over to Pondicherry since 1910.

So, thirty years after, he joined his Master's Ashram in Pondicherry. By then Sri Aurobindo had been, to quote Dutt, "enthroned in the heart of the world."

Dutt devoted the rest of his life writing on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. (His book 'The Culture of India As Envisaged By Sri Aurobindo' published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan is a splendid work of insight and erudition.)

He died in 1952 in Pondicherry.