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STORY OF THE I.N.A.

S.A. AYER





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S.A. AYER



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Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to write a few lines introducing the revised and updated edition of S.A. Ayer's book *Story of the I.N.A.* in the Young India Library series of the National Book Trust, India. The book was first published in 1972. The author, a trusted and loyal colleague of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in east Asia during the two glorious years 1943-45, has given a concise, faithful and lucid account of the Indian independence movement in east Asia for young readers. A new generation has grown up since the book was written and the youth of today are much farther away in time from the cataclysmic events in east Asia that heralded the dawn of Indian independence. It is most appropriate and timely in the centenary year of Netaji's birth that this valuable piece of work is being presented once again to the rising generation in the country. Let them have a glimpse of one of the most glorious chapters in the history of our struggle for freedom and some idea of a movement that was uniquely original in conception as well as execution and has so many lessons for those working to build a new India today.

It was my privilege to know and work with S.A. Ayer closely in the sixties and seventies and to have him as chairman of Netaji Research Bureau for three terms. His flair as a writer and chronicler comes out vividly in his fascinating book *Unto Him a Witness*, the story of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in east Asia. I take this opportunity of offering my tribute to the memory of an upright and

honest person who played a notable role in our freedom struggle and, what is more, to a dear and valued friend.

Jai Hind!

18 March, 1997

Calcutta

SISIR KUMAR BOSE

MAN OF DESTINY

Easily one of the most momentous events in the life of Subhas Chandra Bose was his dramatic escape from his home in Calcutta in the early hours of January 17, 1941 during World War II, and landing in Germany ten weeks later. By threatening his British rulers that he would fast unto death, he secured his release from jail in December 1940. He then confined himself to his room in his Elgin Road house for some weeks and meticulously planned one of the greatest escapes in history.

Hoodwinking the British-controlled C.I.D., who were keeping a round-the-clock vigil on his house from every vantage point, Subhas slipped out of the house in the dark, disguised as an upcoming Muslim gentleman, in a car. His nephew, Sisir Kumar Bose, drove him a distance of over 200 miles (300 kms) to the Gomoh railway station, as railway stations in Calcutta were being closely watched. At Gomoh he took the train to Peshawar (now in Pakistan) and during the journey he described himself as an insurance agent travelling on business.

Subhas and his Pathan escort from Peshawar to Kabul (Afghanistan) dressed themselves as Pathans from the tribal area between India and Afghanistan. Making a tortuous and agonising detour to avoid the passport and customs authorities on the India-Afghanistan border, Subhas and his escort staggered into Kabul in a thoroughly exhausted state in the freezing cold of an Afghan winter evening.

While in Kabul, his escort told the people that Subhas was his deaf and dumb brother whom he was taking on a pilgrimage and for a cure to holy places. During his stay in the Afghan capital, Subhas dressed himself up as an Afghan to avoid attracting attention in the bazaars of the city. After two months of untold hardships, privations, suspense, anxiety, physical suffering and mental anguish in Kabul, Subhas reached the safe haven of Berlin via Moscow early in April 1941.

This thrilling escape of Subhas Chandra Bose from India was according to plan and may well be described as a turning point in India's struggle for freedom. It was an article of faith with him that only armed aid from outside the country could dislodge the British empire from Indian soil. This was also his grand strategy. All his plans for his country's liberation were drawn up in his mind within the framework of the grand strategy. He changed his plans from time to time in the light of changing world conditions but he never lost sight of his overall strategy. He wanted to operate from Russia but as a pragmatist he was content to operate from Germany. He opened a Free India Centre in Berlin, and organised a Free India Army on German soil. This was a dress rehearsal for his colossal achievements in east Asia. He reached Japan after a ninety-day submarine dash from Germany in 1943, received solemn assurances of the Japanese government's all-out aid, took over the leadership of the Indian independence movement in east Asia and the Indian National Army (I.N.A.), and led the liberation army across the Burma (Myanmar)-India border. The I.N.A. crossed the border on March 18, 1944, and planted the Indian tricolour at Moirang in Manipur on April 14. After that, the battle went against the I.N.A. Torrential Burma rains inundated the I.N.A. lines; supply lines were cut off; the I.N.A. started falling back; its ranks were ravaged by malaria and dysentery; the enemy broke through and headed towards Rangoon; Netaji retreated from Rangoon in April 1945, and from Singapore

in August when the east Asia war ended. On August 17, Netaji boarded a bomber plane in Saigon on his last-known flight. The I.N.A. soldiers in east Asia were taken prisoner by the British who brought them to India and staged the historic trial of the I.N.A. at the Red Fort in Delhi. The countrywide upheaval that followed the trial unnerved the British, who decided to quit India which they did on August 15, 1947. In his last order of the day issued on August 15, 1945 on the eve of leaving Singapore, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Supreme Commander of the I.N.A., said to his soldiers, "The roads to Delhi are many and Delhi still remains our goal." He concluded the order with the affirmation that "India shall be free, and before long".

India became independent on August 15, 1947, though with the disastrous partition of the country.

CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL DAYS

Subhas was born on January 23, 1897 in the Cuttack (Orissa) home of his parents, Janakinath and Prabhabati Bose. He was their sixth son and ninth child. The family of Subhas had inherited traditions. It could trace back its history twenty-seven generations to Dasaratha Bose who founded the Dakshin-Rarhi (south Bengal) clan of Boses. One of his descendants settled down in Mahinagar near Calcutta and the family came to be known as the Boses of Mahinagar. One of the paternal ancestors, Mahipati, was finance and war minister to the then king of Bengal and the other, Gopinath, finance minister and naval commander to a later king. Haranath had four sons, the youngest of them being Janakinath, the father of Subhas Chandra Bose.

Prabhabati, the mother of Subhas, came from the Dutts of Hathkola, north Calcutta, and her family was known for its wise selection of boys for the marriage of the daughters. Janakinath had to undergo a severe test before he was approved by Prabhabati's father.

Janakinath was educated at Calcutta and settled down in Cuttack in 1885 to practise law. He became a member of the Bengal Legislative Council (Calcutta) in 1912 and received the title of *Rai Bahadur*. He resigned his post of government pleader and public prosecutor owing to some differences with the district magistrate. Later he renounced the title of *Rai Bahadur* as a protest against the repressive policy of the government. Janakinath took active interest in the social and educational institutions of Cuttack. His

charities were many, and a sizeable share went to poor and needy students. He was a regular visitor at the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress, the premier political organisation in the country. He was not an active participant in its deliberations, but when Mahatma Gandhi launched the non-cooperation movement, Janakinath Bose engaged himself in constructive activities such as spinning of *khadi* (home-spun) and propagation of national education. He was of a religious temperament and had deep compassion for the poor. Before his end came, he made adequate provision for his old servants and dependants.

Subhas, as a growing child, found Cuttack quite congenial. His was a well-to-do, middle-class family but his parents believed in simplicity in bringing up their children. Having eight brothers and sisters older than him and five younger than him had a psychological effect on sensitive Subhas; he felt insignificant; sometimes he felt lonely and lost in their midst. The elder brothers and sisters were a standing challenge to Subhas to catch up with them. He yearned for more intimate contact with his parents, but his father was, by nature, reserved and his mother dominated the domestic scene.

Growing up in the midst of a large family no doubt broadened the mind of Subhas but he tended to be shy and reserved and this trait persisted more or less throughout his life.

Subhas was five when he entered the English School in Cuttack. It was run on European lines and Subhas slowly became conscious of two different worlds: the one represented by his Indian home and society, and the other represented by his school which was a near approach to England. He also became aware of the racial discrimination in the school where Anglo-Indian boys enjoyed privileges which were denied to Indian boys. Later he went to an Indian school where the first great influence on his life at such a tender age came in the person of the headmaster, Beni Madhav Das. The headmaster made a tremendous

impression on Subhas, and the school reflected the Indian way of life. Subhas was absorbed in his studies, and he continued to neglect games, sports and other physical diversions. The result was he began developing into a precocious child.

Already Subhas was having serious inward conflicts; he could not decide for himself his goal in life. His attitude towards his parents changed drastically and he could no longer think of unquestioning obedience to them; at times, he felt himself driven to defiance. His time was taken up more and more with long walks and group discussions with like-minded boys.

When Subhas was barely fifteen, the second big influence on his life came in the shape of the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda's guru. From Vivekananda, Subhas learnt that service of humanity was service of the country, and from Ramakrishna that renunciation of lust and gold was essential for a spiritual life.

The teachings of these two great men brought about a spiritual revolution in teenaged Subhas.

Ultimately Subhas saw light. His inward conflict was at an end, and a new ideal inflamed his soul. He wished to effect his own salvation by abandoning worldly desires and the more his parents tried to place restrictions on him, the more rebellious he became. He began taking more seriously to yogic exercises and running after sadhus and discussing spiritual problems.

At sixteen Subhas acquired experience of village reconstruction work. At school he revealed no political maturity as his leanings lay in a different direction. He occasionally heard about the Indian National Congress from his elder brothers but was not much impressed. Politics was, of course, taboo in the house for the children but his brothers pasted the walls of their room with pictures of revolutionaries.

Towards the end of his school career, his religious

impulses grew stronger and studies were given less importance. Pursuing religion and yoga seriously, Subhas insisted on freedom of movement and action and came into clash with parental instructions. He disobeyed them because he was convinced of the truth of Vivekananda's saying that revolt was necessary for self-fulfilment. He now appeared wayward, even eccentric and obstinate, neglecting his studies and running after ash-besmeared sadhus. His parents therefore, thought that a change of environment would do him good, and that the atmosphere of Calcutta would be of great help.

In 1913, at the age of sixteen, Subhas matriculated from Cuttack and secured second rank in the Calcutta university. He was promptly packed off to Calcutta but Subhas had already arrived at decisions on his future. Not for him the beaten track of life but his ideals would be his own spiritual welfare and the uplift of humanity.

AT COLLEGE IN INDIA AND ENGLAND

At the threshold of college life, Subhas felt that life had a meaning and a purpose; regular schooling of body and mind was necessary, as also a large measure of self-discipline which stood him in good stead throughout his life. Far from changing his Cuttack ways, Subhas gathered around himself in Calcutta a larger group of eccentric boys and his group in the college class attracted notice by its puritanic exterior; but the boys were unconcerned.

The college was a government institution, but the students being the cream of the academic world were not loyalists of the alien regime. As free thinkers, they attracted the attention of the police who looked upon the college hostel as a hotbed of sedition and a rendezvous of revolutionaries. Subhas's group styled itself as the neo-Vivekananda group which aimed at bringing about a synthesis of religion and nationalism. Pursuing Vivekananda's teaching that social service could be rendered through national reconstruction mainly in the educational sphere, the group set about enlisting bright students who would become trained professors, preparatory to the educational scheme to be launched by it. These young men were against terrorist activity and secret conspiracy, and were, therefore, not very popular in the atmosphere of terrorism then prevailing in Bengal.

Aurobindo Ghose influenced the youth of Bengal though he had been in exile in Pondicherry since 1910. As a regular reader of *The Arya*, Aurobindo's journal, Subhas was

impressed by the mystic's deep philosophy and passion. A profound impact was made on the mind of Subhas by Aurobindo's simple words: "I should like to see some of you becoming great; great not for your own sake, but to make India great, so that she may stand with her head erect amongst the free nations of the world. Those of you who are poor and obscure, I should like to see your poverty and obscurity devoted to the service of the motherland. Work that she might prosper, suffer that she might rejoice."

Subhas qualified himself for social service by helping a society in aid of the poor by collecting money and food-stuffs and begging for these from door to door. At times he felt very shy and had to fight a strong sense of shame. He participated in student activities such as debates, collection of funds for flood and famine relief, and often acted as the students' spokesman before the authorities. He took increasing interest in students' excursions and then began shedding his introvert tendencies.

Then during the summer vacation of 1914, when he was barely seventeen, Subhas suddenly left Calcutta, without a word to his parents, on a pilgrimage in search of a spiritual guru and visited Rishikesh, Haridwar, Mathura, Vrindavan, Varanasi and Gaya. He failed to find the guru and returned to Calcutta utterly disappointed.

When World War I broke out, Subhas was in bed, stricken with typhoid.

Subhas now began to develop politically. Two factors provoked him to strike out an independent line for himself. One was the general behaviour of the British towards Indians during World War I and their rudeness and arrogance on the trams, trains and streets. His sensitive temperament reacted sharply to these incidents. When Indians took the law into their own hands, the effect was remarkable. Subhas saw that the Englishman understood and respected physical force. The World War I also convinced him that a nation without military strength had no hope of preserving its freedom.

Subhas passed his intermediate examination with credit in 1915, and took the honours course in philosophy for graduation. Early the following year an incident in the college led to his suspension. An English professor by the name of E.F. Oaten had been repeatedly rude to the Indian students and, as the students' spokesman, Subhas took up this matter with the principal and it was settled for the time being. But once again the professor manhandled a student; in retaliation the students assaulted the professor on the groundfloor lobby of the college. Subhas did not take part in the assault but was an observer from a distance. Nevertheless, he was rusticated and had to return to his parents in Cuttack. This experience left a deep impression on Subhas who had his first taste of martyrdom. To his surprise, his parents understood and sympathised with him. Subhas pursued his social and spiritual activities during this enforced absence from college.

However, he returned the following year to Calcutta, and through the efforts of his elder brother, Sarat, was admitted to the Scottish Church College to continue his studies. While waiting for readmission, Subhas tried to join the 49th Bengal Regiment but was rejected because of defective eye-sight.

After joining his new college, Subhas enlisted himself in the university unit of the Indian defence force (Territorial Army), and joined the training camp near Fort William. He donned the khaki uniform and went with zest into musketry practice. He thoroughly enjoyed soldiering and was puffed up with pride while entering Fort William to pick up his rifle. Fort William was closed to him as an Indian, but its gates were thrown open to him as a soldier.

Passing his B.A. examination in 1919 with first class honours in philosophy, Subhas took experimental psychology for his post-graduation. A few months later, his father asked him if he would proceed to England and compete in the Indian Civil Service (I.C.S.) examination. In those days the I.C.S. was a coveted career and the highest ambition of

any young Indian was to "go to England for the I.C.S.". But Subhas was not keen to go to England and qualify himself to help the British empire in India. His mind was working in a totally different direction. Nevertheless, he agreed to go, saying to himself that he could hardly hope to pass the I.C.S. examination after a mere eight months in England.

Subhas sailed for England on September 9, 1919, arriving there five weeks later. He was admitted to the Cambridge university. In the meantime, even before Subhas left India's shores, the massacre of civilian men, women and children had occurred at the Jalianwalla Bagh in Amritsar; Punjab was under martial law; censorship was at work; and there were vague rumours of dreadful happenings in Amritsar and Lahore. But Subhas had sailed in a complacent mood.

At Cambridge, the I.C.S. examination lectures were on English, composition, Sanskrit, philosophy, English law, political science, modern European history, English history, economics and geography. Subhas was greatly impressed by the atmosphere of freedom for students and the general esteem they enjoyed. This was in striking contrast to police-dominated Calcutta where every student was suspect as a political revolutionary. Subhas was not very hopeful of getting through the I.C.S. examination because he had only eight months in which to prepare for it. But to his own surprise he passed the examination and stood fourth.

Now he had to make the most difficult decision of his career and he knew that it would hurt his parents. He entered into lengthy correspondence with his elder brother in India, Sarat Chandra Bose. Should he say goodbye to all his dreams and aspirations and settle down to a comfortable life? After seven months of mental agony, he finally made up his mind to resign from the I.C.S. even before joining it, which no Indian had ever done earlier in the history of the I.C.S. In the course of his letters Subhas said:

"If C.R. Das at his age can give up everything and face the uncertainties of life, I am sure a young man like

myself, who has no wordly cares to trouble him, is much more capable of doing so...

"The illustrious example of Aurobindo Ghose looms large before my vision. I feel that I am ready to make the sacrifice which that example demands of me...

"I have come to believe that it is time for us to wash our hands clean of any connection with the British government...

"The best way to end a government is to withdraw from it...I sent in my resignation a few days ago...

"C.R. Das has written, in reply to a letter of mine, about the work that is already being done. He complains that there is a dearth of workers. There will consequently be plenty of congenial work for me when I return home. The die is cast..."

PLUNGE INTO POLITICS

Subhas landed in Bombay on July 16, 1921, when he was just over twenty-three years of age and immediately called on Mahatma Gandhi at his Laburnum Road residence. The young man, on the threshold of public life, wanted to have an intimate talk with the leader who had launched a countrywide movement of progressive non-cooperation against the British government. Subhas was keen to find out from Gandhi himself the answers to three questions that he had in mind. How were the different activities conducted by the Congress expected to culminate in the non-payment of taxes? How could mere non-payment of taxes or civil disobedience force the government to retire from the field and leave Indians free? How could Gandhi promise *swaraj* within one year? With characteristic patience, Gandhi answered Subhas's questions. The young man was satisfied with the reply to the first question but not so in regard to the other two. However, he accepted Gandhi's advice to him to report to Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das (C.R. Das) on reaching Calcutta.

Arriving in Calcutta, Subhas took the earliest opportunity to meet C.R. Das. Before their talk was over, Subhas had made up his mind. He had found his leader and meant to follow him. He soon settled down in Calcutta and took stock of the situation in the country. Widespread enthusiasm throughout the land had given a fair chance of success to Gandhi's programme of triple boycott of foreign cloth, legislatures, and courts and educational institutions. The

liberals stood aloof and the revolutionaries disapproved of the cult of Gandhi's non-violence. In spite of a tremendous volume of mass support to Gandhi, there was no country-wide conflict with authority. At this moment of Congress depression, the government announced the proposed visit of the Prince of Wales to India. The Congress sprang into action and organised a countrywide boycott of the royal visit. Subhas jumped into the fray and spearheaded the boycott. The success of the boycott unnerved the British authorities in Bengal and the government arrested C.R. Das and his close associates, including Subhas who found themselves behind the bars by the evening of December 10, 1921. This was the first time that Subhas went to jail, and by the time he disappeared from his home in January 1941, that is, within a space of less than twenty years, Subhas Chandra Bose was detained by the British no fewer than eleven times. His first arrest abruptly ended his work as principal of the Bengal National College, publicity officer of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and captain of the National Volunteer Corps.

The following year, Gandhi suspended the non-cooperation movement because of violence in the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh), and he was later tried and sentenced to six years' simple imprisonment for sedition. Earlier in the year, Subhas had been released and he kept himself busy with flood relief work and also assumed the editorship of the *Banglar Katha*.

The Swaraj Party founded by Motilal Nehru (father of Jawaharlal) and C.R. Das favoured entry into the legislatures and civic bodies, and the Bengal Congress swept the polls in the Calcutta corporation elections. C.R. Das became mayor and appointed Subhas as chief executive officer, the youngest to hold that office at the age of twenty-seven. He accepted 1,500 rupees per month as his salary instead of 3,000 rupees per month as stipulated for the post. Subhas threw himself heart and soul into the work of the corporation and made the citizens of Calcutta feel the impact of a

new civic life. Under the pretext of scotching a revolutionary conspiracy, the British authorities arrested Subhas in October 1924, but the public felt that the real motive was to strike at the *swarajist* administration of the corporation. Subhas was removed to Mandalay Jail in Burma which was then a part of India. He had the proud consolation that before him, illustrious Indian patriots like Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai had been detained in Mandalay Jail. After two and a half years' detention, Subhas was brought back from Mandalay and released in Calcutta, in May 1927 on grounds of health.

With C.R. Das gone two years earlier, Gandhi in virtual retirement from politics, and Motilal Nehru abroad owing to his daughter-in-law's illness, Subhas was thrown on his own resources. But he had had sufficient political apprenticeship under C.R. Das and had sufficient time in the Mandalay prison to chalk out the strategy for overthrow of the alien rule. Elected president of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee for the first time at the age of thirty, Subhas plunged headlong once again into active politics.

India was now convulsed with the boycott of the all-white Simon Commission appointed by the British parliament to assess Indians' fitness for the next dose of constitutional reforms. Subhas spearheaded this boycott also in Bengal as he had done the one against the Prince of Wales's visit. He then organised the All-Bengal Youth Association and the All-Bengal Students' Association. The Indian National Congress session at Madras at the year-end defined independence as the Indian people's goal. Subhas then emerged for the first time as an all-India Congress leader when he was appointed as one of the three general secretaries of the Congress with Jawaharlal Nehru and Shuaib Qureshi.

The Calcutta session of the Congress in December 1928 witnessed the first major trial of strength between the right and left wings. Gandhi moved a resolution threatening non-cooperation if a dominion status constitution was not

conceded by December 1929. Subhas moved an amendment that the Congress would be content with nothing short of independence. The amendment was lost, nine hundred and seventy-three voting for and one thousand three hundred and fifty against. Subhas felt that the voting was influenced by the fact that it was looked upon as a vote of confidence in Gandhi.

A year later, meeting at a historic session in Lahore (the state capital of undivided Punjab) under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress adopted the independence resolution amidst scenes of unprecedented enthusiasm at the midnight hour. Subhas was elected president of the All-India Trade Union Congress and held that office for two years.

The personality of Subhas Chandra Bose now emerged forcefully in the vanguard of the freedom struggle, giving an inspiring lead to the youth and students at the all-India level, rallying the support of industrial workers, and generally spearheading the leftist elements which were getting impatient for a showdown with the alien rulers.

The next seven years witnessed the election of Subhas as mayor of Calcutta at the age of thirty-three; his banishment to Europe for treatment of suspected tuberculosis; his contact with the dour fighter Vithalbhai Patel (Sardar Patel's elder brother) in Vienna; arrival in Calcutta despite a ban and consequent home internment; back in Europe for a major operation; attendance at the conference of the Indian Central European Society at Vienna; address to the Asian students; conference in Rome opened by Signor Mussolini; visit to Ireland; arrival in Bombay and arrest on board the ship; unconditional release and departure for Europe.

NATIONAL LEADER

When Subhas was still abroad in January 1938, he was elected president of the Indian National Congress, the highest honour the nation could bestow on any Indian. He was only forty-one years old, and one of the youngest presidents.

The year of the Congress presidentship of Subhas Chandra Bose was noteworthy for the appointment of a national planning committee under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru. His leadership of the Congress proved to be a turning point in the life of Subhas and in India's history. Feeling that a bare one year as president was not enough to put through his manifold programmes, Subhas decided to stand for election in 1939 also. Gandhi did not approve of this wish of Subhas and, instead, gave his blessings to Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya. In a keen contest, Subhas won and Gandhi described Sitaramayya's defeat as his own. This saddened Subhas. He was too ill to participate actively in the plenary session at Tripuri in Madhya Pradesh. His suggestion to give a six-month ultimatum to the British to grant independence was rejected by the right wing. The rift between the right and left wings in the Congress now came out into the open. Supporters of Gandhi carried a resolution at the plenary session asking Subhas to select members for the Congress high command, the top executive body, in consultation with Gandhi. Subhas failed to persuade Gandhi to help him in choosing his 'cabinet' colleagues. There could be no rapprochement between the

two. When the All-India Congress Committee met later at Calcutta, Subhas resigned his presidentship and later formed the Forward Bloc within the Congress. The new Bloc received widespread, enthusiastic support from leftist Congressmen. The conflict between the right wing and the Forward Bloc steadily grew more acute, and the Congress high command barred Subhas Bose, twice-elected president, from holding any office in the organisation for three years. This was done to punish Subhas for advising Congressmen to protest against two resolutions of the A.I.C.C., defining the relation of ministers vis-a-vis the Provincial Congress Committees, and ruling that permission should be taken from these committees for starting passive resistance.

Exactly as Subhas had predicted at Tripuri, war broke out in Europe in September 1939. The Forward Bloc intensified its anti-British campaign, seriously menacing the British war effort in India. The authorities jailed him in July 1940. Subhas was now convinced that India must take full advantage of the World War and enlist the aid of Britain's enemies to liberate his motherland. In a calculated gamble with his life, Subhas went on a hunger-strike in jail in November 1940, demanding his release. The British did not want his death on their hands, and released him but kept a strict vigil on his movements.

Subhas was bent on getting out of India and enlisting the support of the powers ranged against Britain in the war, and organising an armed force to march against the alien rulers entrenched in India. One day in January 1941 all of India was thrilled to hear that Subhas had eluded the secret police and escaped from his Calcutta home on which the police had been keeping a round-the-clock watch. The next time the world heard of Subhas was when he himself began speaking to India on the radio from Germany nine months later. His slipping out of his house at midnight in the guise of an upcountry Muslim gentleman, his *incognito* train travel to Peshawar as an insurance agent, and then by truck

to Kabul, hardships, privations, anxieties and risks in the Afghan capital as a 'deaf and dumb pilgrim' before the Italian Embassy there got him out of Kabul, and to Berlin via Moscow—this thrilling story is vividly narrated by his nephew, Sisir Kumar, in his book *The Great Escape*, his escort from Peshawar to Kabul, by Bhagat Ram Talwar, in his paper, *My Fifty-Five Days with Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose*, by his Peshawar host, Abad Khan in his paper, *Netaji's Escape—An Unknown Chapter* and his Kabul host, Uttamchand Malhotra, in his booklet *When Bose was Ziauddin*.

QUEST FOR FOREIGN AID

For some time after his arrival in war-time Berlin, Subhas went under the guise of 'Orlando Mazzota'—the Italian name on his passport for travel from Afghanistan to Germany via Russia. He soon settled down to his important mission with the active help of a handful of sincere and sympathetic Germans in the special India division of the German foreign ministry. This small, devoted band of German helpers was not of Nazi persuasion and was headed by Adam von Trott Zu Solz, a Rhodes scholar, who was hanged three years later for a plot to assassinate Hitler. His assistant was Dr Alexander Werth, who actively promoted friendship between West Germany and Free India, and who delivered the Netaji oration at the seventy-third Netaji birthday celebration at Calcutta on January 23, 1977. This small group of sympathisers in Hitler's government made it a point to see that Subhas was able to pursue his important mission with maximum facilities and no interference from the Nazi Party cadre outside the government or the bureaucracy in the government. Subhas organised the Free India Centre in Berlin with a nucleus of some twenty Indians including former ambassador, A.C.N. Nambiar, Dr Girija Mookerjee, and Dr M.R. Vyas who looked after daily broadcasts from the Azad Hind Radio, the Azad Muslim Radio and the National Congress Radio. Later, Subhas organised the Indian Legion recruited from among the Indian prisoners-of-war in Europe and north Africa whither they had been taken by the British to fight their

imperialist war against Germany and Italy. The Free India Centre was the forerunner of the provisional government of Azad Hind proclaimed by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at Singapore two years later. The Indian Legion was the western vanguard of the Indian National Army which Subhas led across the Burma-India border three years later.

The working team under von Trott had the support of the political department of the German foreign office, specially of the division under Dr Melchers who later became German ambassador to independent India. The Free India Centre established by Subhas in Berlin enjoyed a semi-diplomatic status and had dealings only with the German foreign office like all other missions of neutral countries accredited to the German government. Subhas could afford to dispense with any direct contacts with the Nazi Party.

The clear understanding between Subhas and the German foreign ministry from the very beginning was that Indian cooperation with Germany was a direct consequence of Germany being at war with England; Indians did not wish to be mixed up in Germany's quarrels with other countries or in her own internal quarrels. Neither Subhas nor the Azad Hind Radio at any time defended the Nazi Party's policy in Europe or elsewhere. Indian activities in Germany were based on the distinct understanding that Indians would advance the cause of their country's independence without being ideologically involved in the Nazi Party's doctrine. Though Subhas would have preferred Rome as the centre of his activities in Europe, as a practical politician he decided on Berlin in the light of a German-Italian agreement which could not be altered by Subhas or by the German sympathisers of the Indian cause. He might have even preferred Moscow, if Russia (now called Commonwealth of Independent States) had given him some hint while he was in Moscow on his way from Kabul to Berlin. It would not be rank opportunism for a pragmatist like Subhas who was out to enlist the aid of every friend of India. But the political set-up in Europe at that time

more or less compelled him to make Germany his base of operations.

This is the background against which Subhas organised the Free India Centre, the Indian Legion, nationalist Indians in Europe, the secret Indian radio stations, and, eventually his own submarine odyssey to east Asia. From the day he set about organising the Indian Legion (Free India Army), members of the Legion addressed him as *Netaji* (respected leader).

Summit conferences between the Indian leader and the political leaders of Germany began a few weeks after his arrival in Berlin. They started with a meeting with the foreign minister, von Ribbertrop, but he could not meet Chancellor Hitler till May 29 the following year (1942). As a result of these top-level meetings, Netaji was given absolute independence in financial and procedural matters. The German foreign minister conceded Netaji's rather exacting demands that no German authority shall interfere with his work, that all financial assistance shall be treated as loans to Free India returnable after the war, and that the foreign office and supreme military command shall extend all necessary personnel and technical assistance. Netaji received funds out of the foreign minister's special fund for war expenses. He was promised more funds if the movement expanded and the number of followers increased. This promise was kept by the Germans later on without further negotiations. Two years later, Netaji made a token repayment of the loans in the name of Free India when the German ambassador in Tokyo was handed Yen 5,00,000, out of the voluntary contributions of Indians in east Asia to Netaji's war-chest. The absolute freedom of Netaji's activities in Germany was thus guaranteed in principle.

On the German side, Secretary of State, Wilhelm Keppler, functioned as a liaison officer with the German foreign minister, the Chancellor, and the government organisations generally. And, by and large, Netaji, his Indian associates, and the German staff of the special India division got on

well with Wilhelm Keppler and everything ran smoothly from the organisational point of view. The number of Indian co-workers now totalled thirty-five. The official inauguration of the Free India Centre took place on November 2, 1941. N.G. Ganpuley, a former member of the Indian National Congress in Bombay, had also joined the Free India Centre as an active worker and Nambiar's aide. The next year Netaji appointed Nambiar as his deputy and successor.

The Free India Centre concentrated its attention on the broadcasting services, and the Azad Hind Radio started with its transmissions in October 1941. Some twenty Indians belonging to the Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Parsi communities, hailing from different parts of India manned these broadcasting services in seven languages, namely, English, Hindustani, Bengali, Persian, Tamil, Telugu and Pushtu.

Netaji tried to establish contact with the German military authorities in Berlin, first through the special India division of the German foreign office and thereafter directly. In the course of these contacts, he met Dr Seifriz with whom he developed a warm friendship. Dr Seifriz looked after the interests of the Indian Legion in accordance with Netaji's wishes, and, after the war, he played a leading role in starting the German-Indian Society and expanding its activities. This Society today in a way continues the functions of the Indian information bureau in Berlin founded in 1929 by the Indian National Congress at the initiative of Jawaharlal Nehru.

The nucleus of the future Indian National Army was created by Netaji in Germany more or less about the same time as General Mohan Singh did in east Asia. Only, the Indian Legion could not be physically moved from Europe to the north-western frontier of India to synchronise its assault on the British citadel in India with the I.N.A.'s attack from across the Burma-India border in February 1944. However, organising the Indian Legion as the

fighting wing of the Free India Centre was for Netaji a dress rehearsal for the expansion of the I.N.A. in east Asia as the sword-arm of the provisional government of Azad Hind. Thus, the Free India Centre and the Indian Legion provided Netaji with invaluable practical experience in running a war-time revolutionary government and organising a liberation army to fight under the leadership of that duly constituted government. It was this far-sightedness of Netaji that enabled Bhulabhai Desai, defence counsel at the I.N.A. Red Fort trial in 1945, to claim rights of immunity under international law.

Originally, in Germany, there were only Indian commando troops formed by Indian volunteers numbering fewer than one hundred. These commandos had been trained by Captain Harbish assisted by two Indian civilians, Abid Hasan and N.G. Swami, both of whom later played important roles in east Asia also. German reverses in Stalingrad on the Russian front and in El Alamein on the north African front ruled out all possibilities of the Indian commandos operating on the north-west border of India. The original plan was to airlift these troops to the northern frontier of India at a propitious moment, and to transport the larger body of Indian Legionaries consisting of four battalions in a more leisurely way. But, this was not to be.

Recruitment for the Indian Legion began in September 1941 among the Indian army prisoners-of-war in Germany and north Africa, and Netaji visited Camp Annaburg for the first time in December. In the course of his discussions and speeches, he categorically demanded a clear allegiance to Free India and absolute readiness for sacrifices. Netaji made a tremendous impact on the officers and other ranks.

The first official manoeuvres by the Indian Legion were held by three battalions of the Legion and witnessed by Netaji and his friend Colonel Yamamoto, military attache to the Japanese ambassador in Germany, who later became the chief of the Japanese organisation in east Asia doing liaison work for the I.N.A. with the government in Tokyo.

The Indian soldiers under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Krappe swore their loyalty to their national flag which was the same as the Congress tricolour, except for the springing tiger in place of the spinning-wheel on the Congress flag. The springing tiger was to symbolise India's struggle for freedom. *Jai Hind* was the official greeting for soldiers and civilians, and Rabindranath Tagore's *Jana Gana Mana* was the national anthem.

Netaji had attained his primary goal in Germany by organising the Free India Centre and the Indian Legion. But he had not yet secured a joint declaration by Germany, Italy and Japan of their policy towards India and a guarantee of India's independence after the war. Mussolini gave his consent to such a guarantee; Premier Tojo of Japan readily concurred in this. But Hitler stalled on the pretext that such a declaration would be of little practical significance until developments justified such a decision and would give the declaration full weight. In his meeting with Hitler, Netaji had not only asked for the guarantee but also asked for himself freedom of political action within Germany. When Hitler asked what sort of political concept Netaji had in mind, Netaji got impatient and said to von Trott, who was acting as interpreter, "Tell His Excellency that I have been in politics all my life and that I don't need advice from any side." Hitler neither spoke nor understood English, and von Trott translated this reply in more diplomatic language. The meeting was a failure. Netaji was now in a blind alley in Germany, and there was nothing more to be done there in furtherance of his mission. He was now convinced that his field of activity must shift from Europe to Asia. From the day the British surrendered to the Japanese in Singapore in February 1942, Netaji began planning to proceed to Asia. He drew up tentative plans to organise and unify the three million Indians in east Asia and to prepare them for a fight from across the eastern borders of India.

REVOLUTIONARIES IN EXILE

When Subhas was waiting in the west for destiny, Rash Behari Bose was waiting in the east for the pre-dawn hour of India's freedom. The frail, ageing revolutionary in exile had been waiting in Japan for the great hour to strike. It struck when Japan declared war on Britain on December 8, 1941. India's British rulers became Japan's enemies overnight, thus suddenly releasing Rash Behari Bose from all restraints and clearing the decks for all-out action for the liberation of his motherland. Rash Behari had been patiently waiting for this golden hour for thirty long years since he escaped from India to Japan in disguise. There was a price on his head in India for a bomb attack on the viceroy, Lord Hardinge, in Delhi in 1911. Britain and Japan were then great friends and the British embassy's men in Japan kept up a relentless man-hunt for Rash Behari from the moment they knew that he had taken refuge in Tokyo and gone underground. In eluding the British agents, Rash Behari went through untold suffering and privation, changing his residence very frequently to cover up his traces and to elude extradition to India for trial on a charge of attempted murder of the viceroy. Ultimately the only way he could end his agony was to become a Japanese citizen which he did and settled down openly. In the meanwhile, he had married the daughter of his Japanese benefactor. A son and a daughter were born of this union, but the son was killed in World War II. A grand-daughter in the daughter's line visited India in 1969 and witnessed

with her own eyes the freedom of India which her grandfather had dreamt of all his life and had toiled to win till he breathed his last. He died in Japan a bare twenty months before India became independent. His last and only wish was to see India free and to lay his tired bones in the soil of free India. India is free and his relics in Japan await their pilgrimage to the independent India of his life-long dream and for which he lived, laboured and died.

Rash Behari Bose was not the only Indian revolutionary who actively worked for his country's freedom, with east Asia as his base of operations. At the beginning of this century, others went to Japan, China, Thailand and Malaysia to start revolutionary activities among Indians there to prepare for the liberation of their motherland. They were convinced that an armed uprising within the country was impossible. They planned to take advantage of the rivalries among the world powers and enlist the aid of some foreign country to liberate India from the British yoke. Outstanding among these revolutionaries, besides Rash Behari Bose, were the veterans Baba Amar Singh in Thailand and Baba Osman Khan in Shanghai.

Baba Amar Singh was arrested in India during World War I and sentenced to twenty-two years' rigorous imprisonment. After his release from jail in Burma, which was then part of India, he escaped to Thailand and started revolutionary activities there. As he grew too old for hard work, he groomed young Giani Pritam Singh, a Sikh missionary of Bangkok, to carry on his work. Under Baba Amar Singh's guidance, Giani Pritam Singh carried on considerable underground activities before the outbreak of the east Asia war in December 1941. He addressed letters to the British Indian army in Malaysia and Burma and these letters were secretly circulated among the Indian armed forces.

Baba Osman Khan organised a revolutionary party in Shanghai and published a newspaper which was circulated

in all the principal towns of China, Japan, Java, Sumatra Indonesia and even in Malaysia, Burma and India. When Shanghai fell to the Japanese at the start of the east Asi. war, Baba Osman Khan, with the help of the Japanese navy sent some of his men to India via Thailand and some other young men to Malaysia to do anti-British propaganda among the British Indian forces there.

In the meanwhile, Thailand became a centre of Indian revolutionary activities largely through the Thai-Bharat Cultural Lodge opened by Swami Satyanand Puri, a great Indian scholar and philosopher and disciple of Rabindranath Tagore. He had intimate contacts with some of the leading revolutionaries in India. When the Japanese declared war on Britain and America on December 8, 1941 and landed in Thailand the same day, the Indian Independence League was formed at Bangkok under the leadership of Baba Amar Singh within the next twenty-four hours. Swami Satyanand Puri promptly converted the Thai-Bharat Cultural Lodge into the Indian National Council and joined hands with the League.

From then on, it was an all-out effort on the part of all the patriotic elements among Indians from Burma in the west to Japan in the east. Branches of the Indian Independence League were established all over east Asia by the three million Indians residing there. The ground had been well prepared in all those regions by the Indian revolutionaries during the previous decades. December 8, 1941 saw the culmination of all these secret revolutionary activities. The restraints and handicaps of secrecy were removed at one stroke and an open upsurge of Indian patriotism swept all of east Asia.

The Japanese forces landed on the coast near the Malaysia-Thai border on the night of December 7/8 and the break of dawn saw them advancing towards Kotah Baru in Malaysia. The land forces of the British put up a poor resistance to the Japanese who were pastmasters in jungle warfare and always managed to outmanoeuvre the

British forces. The first battalion of the 14th Punjab Regiment stationed at Jitra in north Malaysia fought gallantly for three days but had to fall back before the advancing Japanese forces.

FIRST I.N.A. FORMED

In the meanwhile, Giani Pritam Singh left Bangkok by air on December 10 and, accompanied by Major Fujiwara and other Japanese army officers, crossed the Thai-Malaysia border and actively contacted the Indian army officers. The fateful and historic meeting between Giani Pritam Singh and Captain Mohan Singh took place in the jungles near Jitra. It may be said without exaggeration that the concept of the first Indian National Army was born on this fateful day. Captain Mohan Singh was the seniormost Indian officer of his regiment at Jitra. He had already been thinking of raising an Indian National Army to oust the alien rulers from India. He saw the Indian national tricolour on the bonnet of one of the cars accompanying the Japanese forces, and decided to approach the Japanese. When Captain Mohan Singh soon met Giani Pritam Singh, the latter explained to Mohan Singh the aims and objects of the Indian Independence League and urged him to join the League and raise an Indian National Army. After prolonged discussions in which Major Fujiwara also took part, Captain Mohan Singh agreed to join the Indian independence movement and fight against the British. He and fifty-four of his men pledged their lives for the freedom of India. The Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army) was symbolically formed at Jitra and Captain Mohan Singh was styled General Officer Commanding (G.O.C.) of the liberation army. For the first time in the history of the British Indian army, the sky reverberated with full-throated shouts of

'Azad Hindustan Zindabad' and 'Azad Hind Fauj Zindabad' from men of that army. From now on, an increasing number of officers and men joined the I.N.A. under Mohan Singh's leadership, as the Japanese forces rolled the British back towards Singapore and the Indian army officers and men were left leaderless on the battle-fields and taken prisoner by the Japanese.

A branch of the Indian Independence League was formed at Kuala Lumpur, the capital of the Federated Malaysia States on January 16, 1942, at a large gathering of Indians from all over Selangor state. Giani Pritam Singh and Major Fujiwara addressed the gathering and assured the audience that the Japanese government would give Indians every possible assistance in their effort to win their country's freedom.

Captain Mohan Singh later addressed five thousand Indian army prisoners-of-war at the main camp at Kuala Lumpur and told them that the object of the I.N.A. was to drive the British out of India and that the Japanese government had pledged its aid for the achievement of that aim. Mohan Singh's appeal met with a ready response and about four thousand out of the five thousand prisoners joined the I.N.A. The end of January saw a network of the Indian Independence League formed throughout Malaysia.

Singapore fell to the Japanese on February 15, 1942. The same night the Indian army was ordered to gather at Farrer Park (Singapore) on the following morning. The prisoners-of-war assembled at the park at 2.00 p.m. on February 16 when Lieutenant-Colonel Hunt, a staff officer of the British military headquarters in Malaysia, Major Fujiwara, Captain Mohan Singh, prominent members of the Indian Independence League, and some Japanese and Indian officers appeared before the Indian army. Lieutenant-Colonel Hunt, addressing the prisoners-of-war, said: "I, on behalf of the British government, hand you over to the Japanese government whose orders you will obey, as you have done ours."

Major Fujiwara then came to the microphone and said:

"I, on behalf of the Japanese government, take you under our command and hand you over to G.O.C. Captain Mohan Singh. As the British empire is coming to an end, Indians have a unique opportunity to attain freedom. It is an ideal time for you to rise and strike for your country's cause. Japan is prepared to help Indians in every way, even though Indians are British nationals and thus technically enemy nationals. We know that Indians are not British subjects from choice. The Japanese army would not treat you as enemies, but is prepared to treat you as friends if you repudiate the British nationality."

Captain Mohan Singh, speaking in Hindustani, said: "The days of British oppression in the east are numbered and their hated rule must come to an end. The Japanese armed forces have driven them from Malaysia and Singapore and they are beating a hasty retreat in Burma. India stands on the threshold of freedom and it is incumbent on every Indian to drive away those demons who have been for so many decades sucking the life-blood of Indians. The Japanese have promised us their all-out help in the realisation of our coveted dreams and it is upto us now to organise ourselves and fight for the freedom of four hundred million of our countrymen and women. For this purpose we have organised an Indian National Army from amongst the Indian soldiers and civilians in the Far East and I appeal to you all to join this army."

The soldiers responded to Captain Mohan Singh's speech with shouts of '*Inquilab Zindabad*' and '*Azad Hindustan Zindabad*', and raised their hands to show their readiness to join the I.N.A. Close on the heels of the handing-over ceremony, Mohan Singh organised propaganda lectures among the prisoners-of-war, and more than thirty thousand of them volunteered to join the I.N.A. But in tackling the

practical task of organising the liberation army, Captain Mohan Singh had to face a number of difficulties. While the response from the rank and file was spontaneous, some of the senior officers vehemently opposed the formation of the I.N.A. and advised the soldiers under them to keep out of it. The treatment of the prisoners-of-war by the Japanese was not wholly satisfactory; the supply of rations, clothing and medicines was inadequate and Captain Mohan Singh and the Indian Independence League found it difficult to supply the prisoners' needs. The Japanese also began to issue arbitrary orders to the I.N.A. and to the prisoners-of-war. Some mischievous elements tried to create Hindu-Muslim dissensions; British fifth columnists tried to impede the progress of the I.N.A. Some V.C.O's (Viceroy's Commissioned Officers) and K.C.O's (King's Commissioned Officers) had honest differences of opinion with Mohan Singh. They believed that the Japanese were raising the I.N.A. for their own selfish ends. There were others who did not like to work under Mohan Singh as they were senior in the British Indian army. Captain Mohan Singh, however, tried his best to overcome these difficulties and was able to convince his honest opponents about his sincerity of purpose.

He set up his headquarters in Singapore and was assisted by Lieutenant-Colonel N.S. Gill, in charge of prisoners-of-war headquarters, by Lieutenant-Colonel J.K. Bhonsle as Adjutant and Quartermaster-General, and by Lieutenant-Colonel A.C. Chatterjee as director of medical services.

THE SINGAPORE, TOKYO AND BANGKOK CONFERENCES

The spiritual training of the I.N.A. aimed at developing a high sense of honour and responsibility in all ranks of the army. They were taught to think of themselves as Indians first, irrespective of caste or creed. Gradually, separate kitchens and other religious barriers were abolished. The Congress tricolour was adopted as the national flag of the I.N.A.

On the civilian side, Giani Pritam Singh lost no time after reaching Singapore in helping Indians in Malaysia to form the Independence League of India for all of Malaysia with N. Raghavan as president. Before the war, Raghavan had been practising law as a barrister in Penang. In independent India, Raghavan became India's ambassador to China and France successively.

At a meeting of the representatives of the Indian Independence League of Thailand and Malaysia held at Singapore on March 9, 1942, Swami Satyanand Puri revealed that he had cabled from Bangkok to Subhas Chandra Bose in Germany on February 2, 1942, inviting him to come and lead the movement in east Asia and that Subhas had replied, agreeing to do so.

The Singapore conference was preliminary to a larger conference of representatives from Shanghai, Malaysia, Hongkong and Thailand to be held at Tokyo to negotiate with the Japanese authorities the terms of cooperation with Japan for achieving India's independence. Besides Raghavan

who presided, others who participated in the conference included Baba Amar Singh, Giani Pritam Singh, Swami Satyanand Puri, K.P.K. Menon, Captain Mohan Singh, Lieutenant-Colonel N.S. Gill and Major M.Z. Kiani who became a Major-General and commanded the first division of the I.N.A. under the Supreme Commander, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. One of the decisions of the Singapore conference was to request Subhas to come to Tokyo and accept the leadership of the Indian independence movement in east Asia.

A dark shadow fell on the Tokyo conference when disaster overtook the plane carrying four important delegates. Aboard the plane were Swami Satyanand Puri, Giani Pritam Singh, Captain Mohammed Akram, the right-hand man of Captain Mohan Singh, and Nilakanta Aiyer, a trusted colleague of Raghavan. They took off from Saigon on March 13, 1942 and nothing more was heard of them.

The Tokyo conference met on March 28, with Rash Behari Bose in the chair. In a message to the conference, the Japanese prime minister, General Tojo, said that the Japanese government expected that Indians would throw off the British yoke by themselves and create an independent India. "The Japanese government is fully sympathetic towards your efforts and will not hesitate to render all possible help in this respect," the message added.

Colonel Iwakuro, who later became head of the liaison organisation between the Japanese government and the Indian independence movement, attended the Tokyo conference as the representative of the Japanese government.

The conference passed a number of resolutions. One of them stated that unity, faith and sacrifice would be the motto of the movement. Another requested the Japanese government, in clarification of Japan's attitude to India, to make a formal declaration to the effect that Japan was ready to give all possible help to India to attain complete independence; that Japan would then recognise India's full sovereignty and guarantee India's absolute independence;

and that the framing of the future constitution of India would be left entirely to the representatives of the people of India. The conference also resolved to have an elected Council of Action and appointed Rash Behari Bose interim president of the Council of Action. These resolutions were to be ratified by a conference of League representatives from all over east Asia to be held in Bangkok.

As decided at Tokyo, a conference of delegates from the Indian Independence Leagues in Japan, Manchukuo, Hongkong, Burma, Borneo, Java, Malaysia, Thailand, Shanghai, Manila and Indo-China was held at Bangkok for a week from June 15. It ratified the Tokyo resolutions including the one calling upon the Japanese government to make a formal declaration guaranteeing India's absolute independence after the departure of the British. It also appointed a Council of Action consisting of Rash Behari Bose as president and Raghavan, General Mohan Singh, K.P.K. Menon and Colonel G.Q. Gilani as members. The Council was invested with powers of control over the Independence League in all the territories and over the Indian National Army. It also invited Subhas Chandra Bose to come to east Asia, and appealed to the Japanese government to use its good offices with the government of Germany to enable Subhas to reach east Asia.

Immediately after the Bangkok conference, both the League organisation and the I.N.A. plunged into action, with Bangkok as headquarters of the Council of Action, and Singapore as headquarters of the I.N.A. The Council functioned through a number of departments in the League organisation. The I.N.A. was composed of the Field Force Group, Gandhi Brigade, Nehru Brigade, Azad Brigade, S.S. Group, Intelligence Branch, Military Hospital, Medical First Aid Corps, Engineering Company, Military Propaganda Unit and Reinforcement Group.

The Japanese liaison office was first under Major Fujiwara and was known as the Fujiwara *kikan* (office) and later under Colonel Iwakuro, it was known as the Iwakuro *kikan*.

Major Fujiwara convinced most Indians of his sincerity from the very beginning of the I.N.A. Colonel Iwakuro could not easily fill the void left by Major Fujiwara. Colonel Iwakuro, as the on-the-spot liaison officer in Singapore between the League and the I.N.A. on the one side and the Japanese government in Tokyo on the other, could not establish the same rapport with the Indian side as his popular predecessor.

CRISIS AND DISBANDMENT OF THE I.N.A.

The six months following the Bangkok conference of June 1942 witnessed a gradual and all-round deterioration in the situation. The failure of the Iwakuro *kikan* (liaison office) to get the Japanese government to make a formal declaration on the lines outlined by the Tokyo and Bangkok conferences proved a major cause of distrust and misgivings. The Indian side repeatedly urged the *kikan* to get the declaration from Tokyo but in vain; the I.N.A. was not satisfied with the quality and quantity of equipment supplied by the Japanese side. The Japanese side in Burma took up a contemptuous attitude towards the League organisation. After the British were driven away from Burma, the Japanese army dealt with the evacuee Indian property there in violation of the understanding that such property would not be treated as enemy property. At an unhappy conference between the Japanese and Indians in Rangoon, one of the Japanese blurted out: "We do not want you to be puppets. But if we do, what is the harm in being puppets? Why is a puppet bad?" The man who said this was only a minor official but what he said reflected the mind of some other irresponsible Japanese also.

Tokyo's reluctance to make the declaration was sought to be explained away by Colonel Iwakuro and others. These explanations and excuses merely served to weaken the position of Rash Behari Bose as president of the Council of Action. The other members of the Council as well as the general public were confirmed in their misgivings about the

true intentions of Japan in offering to help the League and the I.N.A. The flame of passionate longing for India's freedom burnt undimmed in the breast of Rash Behari Bose. No one had the slightest doubt about his undying patriotism as an Indian. But his thirty-year stay in Japan, his advancing age, frail health and mild manners made some Indians doubt whether he could withstand the strain of an uncompromising stand vis-a-vis the Japanese. The Council of Action was drifting apart from the Japanese; the other members were drifting apart from their president; General Mohan Singh was moving farther and farther away from Rash Behari Bose and from the Japanese; the Japanese antagonised both the Council of Action as a body and General Mohan Singh, the G.O.C. of the I.N.A., by their evasiveness on the question of a formal declaration from Tokyo and by their rough and ready methods of dealing with the I.N.A.; the two sides were now on a collision course; the actual collision was not very far off. Members of the Council of Action, excepting the president and Raghavan, resigned; the Japanese persisted in interfering with the I.N.A. by issuing arbitrary orders of movement of the I.N.A. troops without consulting the Council of Action and against the wishes of General Mohan Singh. This precipitated a first-class crisis and General Mohan Singh was arrested by the Japanese on December 29, 1942 in Singapore, removed to a nearby island where he was detained till December 1943, then taken to Sumatra and kept there till the end of the war. The British then took him to Singapore and finally to Delhi in November 1945 and released him unconditionally in May 1946.

Even before his arrest, General Mohan Singh had told the I.N.A. soldiers that if he was separated from them, the I.N.A. would be automatically dissolved. With his arrest on December 29, 1942, the first I.N.A. ceased to exist. Raghavan, the only remaining member of the Council of Action, also resigned later, leaving Rash Behari Bose, the president, in isolation.

Six months of mounting suspicion, distrust, misgivings, tactlessness and lack of faith in Japanese sincerity culminated in the dissolution of the Council of Action and the disbandment of the first I.N.A. Chaos and confusion prevailed for some time following the crisis.

Rash Behari Bose then set about the task of rebuilding the League as well as the I.N.A. with the help of Dr Lakshumiyah who had succeeded Raghavan in the organisation on the civilian side, and Lieutenant-Colonel J.K. Bhonsle on the military side.

Rash Behari Bose apparently felt that it was only a matter of time before Subhas Chandra Bose reached east Asia and assumed leadership of the movement and the I.N.A. He was, therefore, determined to do his best to hand over the League and the I.N.A. to Subhas as going concerns. He shifted the headquarters of the League from Bangkok to Singapore in March 1943 and worked day and night to put the League and the I.N.A. in the best shape possible after the shocks of the crisis which had momentarily paralysed the civilian and military sides.

Lieutenant-Colonel J.K. Bhonsle was appointed director of the military bureau of the I.N.A. and Lieutenant-Colonel M.Z. Kiani was made the commander of the army.

Rash Behari Bose called another conference of Indians in east Asia at Singapore from April 27 to 30, 1943 and it passed the resolutions that "the Indian National Army is the army of the Indian Independence League and all officers and men of the I.N.A. as well as all members of the I.I.L. shall owe allegiance to the League" and "that the entire Indian independence movement be placed on a war-footing immediately and that the constitution of the I.I.L. be so altered as to enable it to discharge its vital war duties with utmost speed and efficiency." The amended constitution invested Rash Behari Bose with almost dictatorial powers.

After satisfying himself that the League as well as the I.N.A. had definitely survived the crisis and had been revived sufficiently to face the future with a degree of



Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.



Subhas in uniform for the first time as a cadet of the university unit of Indian defence force, 1917. Netaji is standing second from *right*.



As president of Haripura Congress, 1938, Netaji with Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Pandit Nehru and Maulana Azad.



Netaji on arrival in Berlin, April 1941 as Orlando Mazzota.



General Mohan Singh, founder of the first I.N.A., 1942.



Netaji with the first cadet officers of the I.N.A. in Europe, 1942.



During his submarine voyage from Europe to east Asia, Netaji with Abid Hasan, April 1943.



Netaji arriving at Singapore airport in July 1943. Behind him from *left* to *right* are J.K. Bhonsle, Rash Behari Bose and Shah Nawaz Khan.



Rash Behari Bose handing over leadership to Netaji, Singapore, July 1943.



Netaji broadcasting to India from Singapore, 1943.



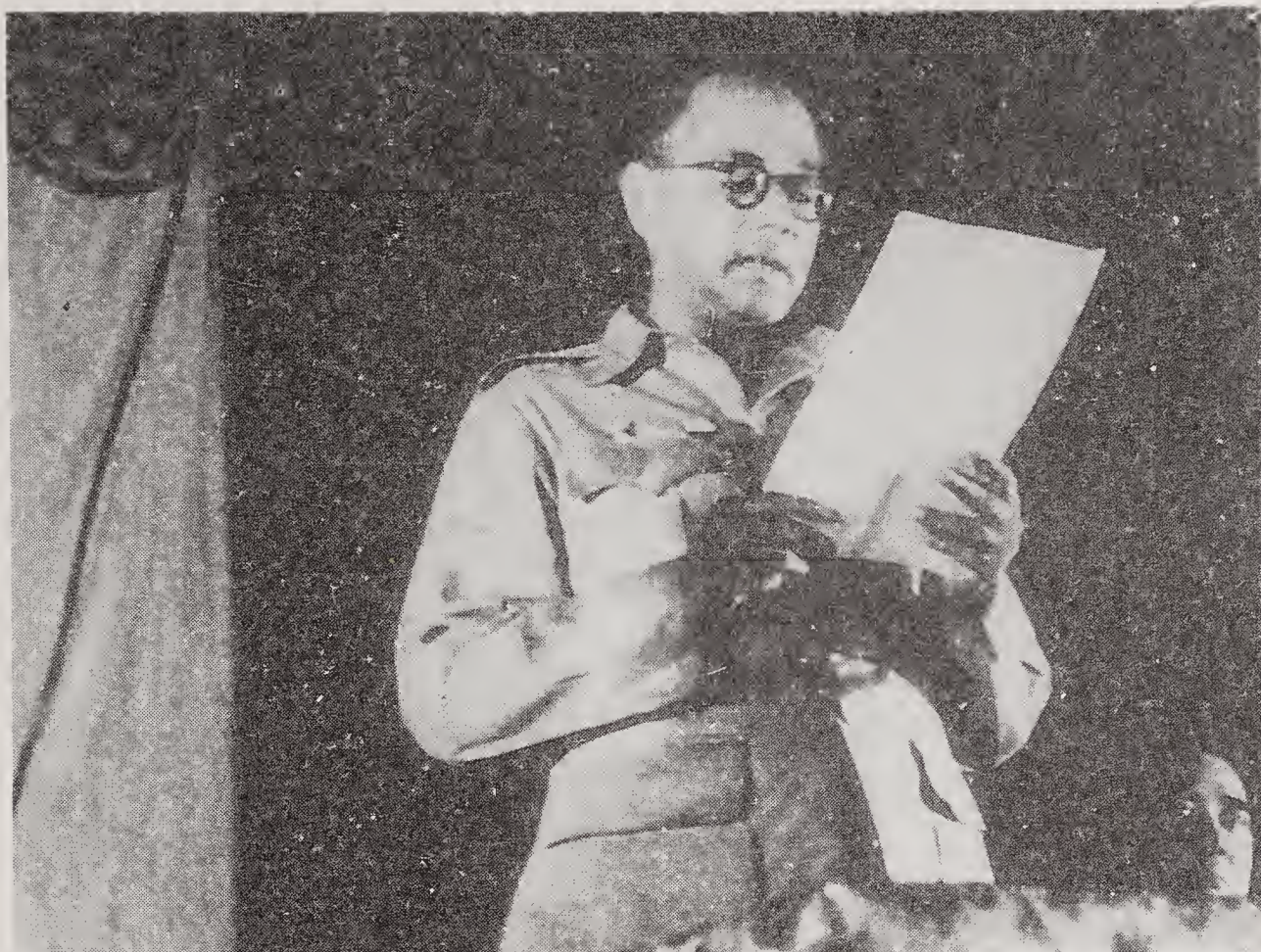
The I.N.A. on parade at Singapore being reviewed by Netaji, 1943.



Netaji taking the salute of the I.N.A. at Padang, Singapore in July 1943.



The Indian National Army in battle formation for Netaji, at Singapore in 1943.



Netaji reading the proclamation of the provisional government of Azad Hind at Singapore, October 12, 1943.



Netaji at the front in 1944.



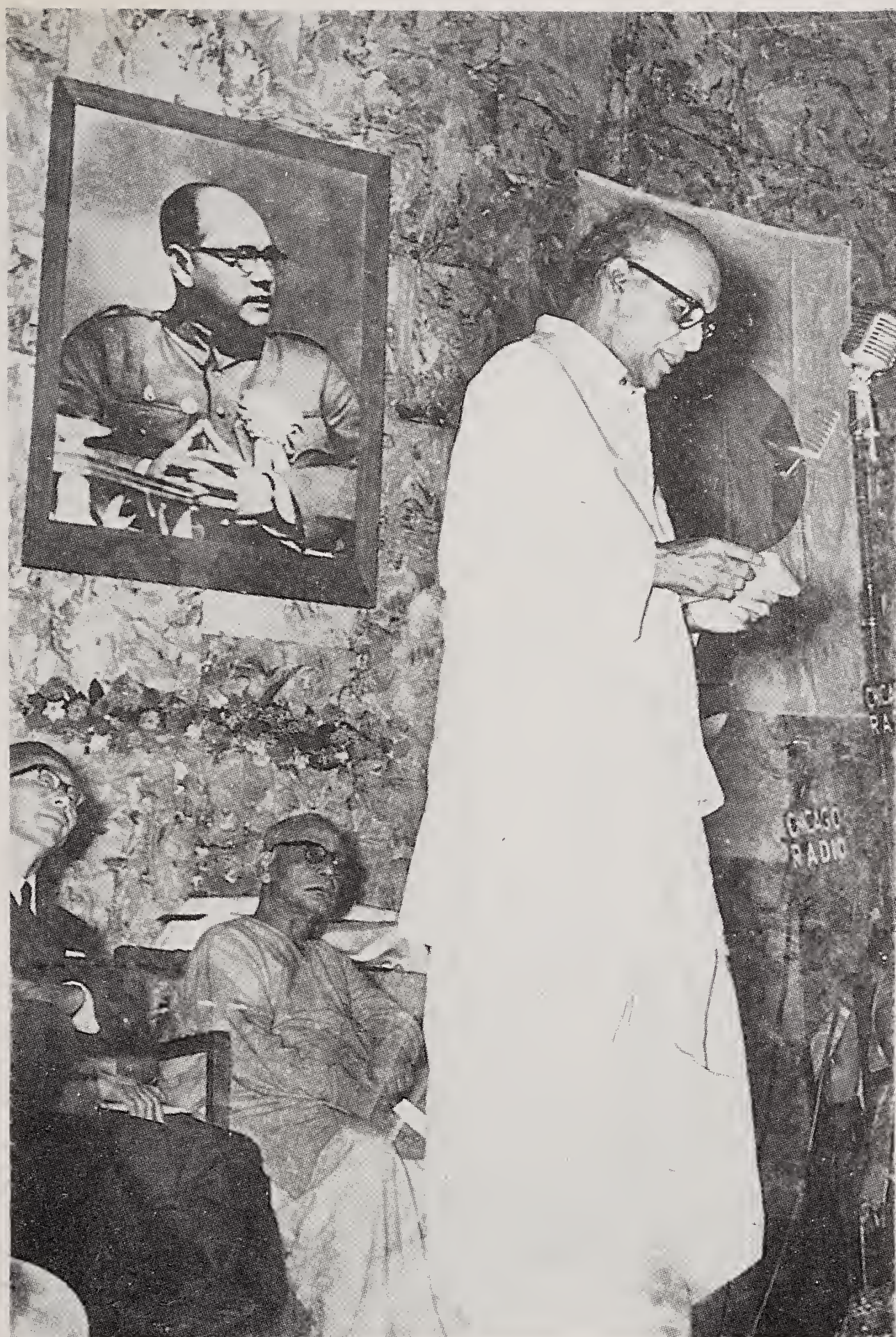
With senior officers of I.N.A., standing *left to right* are Major-General A.C. Chatterjee, Major-General M.Z. Kiani, Colonel Habib-ur-Rahman, 1944.



Last available photograph of Netaji taken at Saigon, August 17, 1945.



The memorial to martyrs of I.N.A., Singapore, demolished by British forces after re-occupation.



S.A. Ayer, author of this book, speaking at the presentation ceremony of Netaji's sword to Netaji Museum, Netaji Bhawan, March 1967.



The late prime minister, Indira Gandhi, at a public meeting in Delhi on Azad Hind Day, 1968.

confidence, Rash Behari Bose left for Tokyo in June 1943. But the general public still entertained misgivings about the inner strength of the League and the I.N.A. and now pinned its hopes on the invitation of the Bangkok conference to Subhas Chandra Bose to come to east Asia and take over the leadership of the movement.

NETAJI ARRIVES IN EAST ASIA

As a result of urgent negotiations between the governments of Germany and Japan, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, accompanied by Abid Hasan, boarded a German submarine at Kiel at dawn on February 8, 1943. His submarine was met in the Indian Ocean, some 400 miles (600 km) off Madagascar, and he and his companion were safely transferred to a Japanese submarine on April 28. They landed on the north coast of Sumatra on May 6, and, after a week's wait, flew on to Tokyo where they arrived on May 16, 1943, a fateful day indeed in the life of Subhas. The perilous odyssey had come to an end after ninety days of war-time adventure in a submarine through enemy-infested seas. A pleasant surprise awaited Netaji when he landed in Sumatra. The first to greet him was his old friend, Colonel Yamamoto, military attache to the Japanese ambassador in Berlin, who had played an active role in arranging the submarine voyage. Colonel Yamamoto was now the new chief of the liaison office (*Hikari kikan*).

From the moment of his arrival in Tokyo, Netaji plunged into a hectic round of talks with the Japanese leaders. He met the Japanese premier, General Tojo, twice during his stay and reached a broad understanding on his plans for the liberation of his country and the extent of the Japanese aid. Premier Tojo invited Netaji to attend a meeting of the Japanese Diet (parliament) and, looking in the direction of Netaji, General Tojo told the Diet: "We are determined to extend every possible assistance for the

cause of India's independence."

When Netaji was satisfied that the stage was all set for action, his dramatic arrival in Japan was revealed for the first time to the public of Japan and to the rest of the world.

Indians in east Asia were thrilled to the core; the entire situation underwent a phenomenal change; the atmosphere was electrified by the announcement of the presence of Subhas in east Asia. Indians felt that the incredible had happened, and were jubilant; the dynamic revolutionary would be leading the freedom movement and battering the eastern gates of the British citadel in India.

Broadcasting from Tokyo to Indians in east Asia, Netaji said:

"It is not possible for our countrymen at home to organise an armed revolution and to fight the British army of occupation with modern arms. This task must, therefore, devolve on Indians living abroad—and particularly on Indians living in east Asia...The hour has struck, and every patriotic Indian must advance towards the field of battle. When the blood of freedom-loving Indians begins to flow, India will attain her freedom."

In a later broadcast from Tokyo, referring to some of his countrymen who had been brought up in English institutions and been influenced by English propaganda, Netaji said:

"I would ask those countrymen to put their trust in me. If, the powerful British government that has persecuted me all my life and has imprisoned me eleven times has not been able to demoralise me, no power on earth can hope to do so. And if the wily, cunning and resourceful British politicians have failed to cajole and corrupt me, nobody can hope to do so...I am not far from the Indian frontier. No power on earth was able to hamper my movements since January 1941; and no power on earth will be able to prevent my crossing the frontier once

again in order to participate in the last phase of our national struggle."

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, accompanied by Rash Behari Bose, landed at the Sambawant aerodrome (Singapore) from Tokyo on the morning of July 2, 1943 and motored to the main airport of Singapore where the officers of the I.I.L. and the I.N.A. and a large and enthusiastic crowd had assembled to welcome him.

Dressed in a cream-coloured silk lounge suit and holding a felt hat in his left hand, Netaji walked with leonine dignity to take the salute of his first guard of honour provided by the I.N.A. in east Asia. A thrill ran through the ranks of the formation when Netaji addressed them as '*Sathio aur Dosto*' (comrades and friends). They were thrilled even more when he said he was on the eve of realising India's dream of fighting Britain with the sword for India's liberation. Sensation prevailed throughout the I.N.A. camps when the men of the guard of honour marched back to their barracks and repeated with great gusto the gist of Netaji's brief address. Netaji won the undying admiration and profound loyalty of the rank and file of the I.N.A. in east Asia at that very first contact with the liberation army.

Two days later, on July 4, 1943, before an enthusiastic gathering of five thousand Indians representing the community in east Asia, at the Cathay Cinema Hall, Netaji formally took over the leadership of the Indian independence movement in east Asia from the veteran revolutionary, Rash Behari Bose. In a magnanimous and self-effacing speech, Rash Behari handed over the leadership to the younger and dynamic hands of Subhas. In accepting the leadership, Netaji said:

"...In order to mobilise all our forces effectively, I intend organising a provisional government of Free India. It will be the task of the provisional government to lead the Indian revolution to a successful conclusion..."

TEMPESTUOUS LEADERSHIP

The day after he took over from Rash Behari Bose, Netaji plunged headlong into his new tasks. From then on, he knew no rest night or day till, twenty-five months later, he boarded a Japanese medium bomber plane at Saigon on his last-known flight.

On July 5, 1943, he took the salute at an impressive parade of the I.N.A. officers and men who filled the vast *maidan* opposite the Singapore Town Hall. Dressed in a khaki uniform, Netaji moved through the serried ranks of the soldiers, and then walked back to the rostrum to address rousing words to them. He said,

"Soldiers of India's army of liberation: Today is the proudest day of my life...Every Indian must feel proud that this army has been organised under Indian leadership and that when the historic moment arrives, under Indian leadership it will go to battle...Let your battle cry be '*Chalo Delhi, Chalo Delhi*' (To Delhi, to Delhi)...Our task will not end until our surviving heroes hold the victory parade on another graveyard of the British empire—the Lal Qila or the Red Fort of ancient Delhi."

The following day, July 6, the premier of Japan, General Tojo, on a flying visit to Singapore, reviewed the I.N.A. on the same grounds and complimented the liberation army on its smart turn-out.

Three days later, addressing an enthusiastic mass rally of Indians in Singapore, Netaji made an impassioned

appeal to them for "total mobilisation for a total war".

"I expect three lakh soldiers and three crores of dollars. I want also a unit of brave Indian women to form a death-defying regiment who will wield the sword which the brave Rani of Jhànsi wielded in India's first war of independence in 1857."

He divided his time between the headquarters of the I.I.L. and the I.N.A. and attended both offices regularly. He reorganised and expanded both the League and the I.N.A. organisations. The departments that were already functioning at the League headquarters were: general, finance, publicity and propaganda, intelligence, recruitment and training. Netaji strengthened these departments and added seven new ones, namely, health and social welfare; women's affairs; national education and culture; reconstruction; supply; overseas; and housing and transport. Dr Lakshmi Swaminathan, who later became commandant of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, was placed in charge of the women's department.

A new spirit pervaded the entire I.N.A. An outstanding feature of the reorganised I.N.A. was the intensification of the motto 'unity, faith, sacrifice' in the day-to-day working of the I.N.A. Communal harmony of a high order prevailed among the ranks and a common kitchen for all soldiers was only one of the symbols of communal amity and camaraderie.

Netaji went on a whirlwind tour of Malaysia and addressed hundreds of meetings of Indians all over the region. Total mobilisation of Indian man-power and money followed Netaji's tour and the efforts were pursued with vigour by the League organisation throughout east Asia.

Recruitment and training camps were opened in large numbers to cope with the rush of volunteers offering themselves for the I.N.A. The problem was to find adequate resources in equipment and weapons to impart training to the thousands of patriotic young Indian civilians who left

their homes and their jobs to sacrifice their lives in the armed fight for India's freedom. Enthusiasm among the entire Indian population of Malaysia and Singapore reached almost fever-pitch.

Netaji was satisfied that in three brief months, the I.N.A. had been thoroughly reorganised and was in fighting trim; he was also satisfied that Indian civilians in east Asia were making a splendid response to his call for total mobilisation. He then thought of the next logical step of forming a provisional government of Free India, as he had foreshadowed in his speech when he assumed the leadership of the movement in July. It had taken him barely four months in which to transform the atmosphere of doubts, misgivings and unco-ordinated efforts into one of patriotic upsurge, supreme confidence, and readiness for total self-sacrifice in the cause of freedom. The motto of the I.N.A. 'unity, faith, sacrifice' became a striking reality.

In less than four months since he landed in Singapore, Netaji had galvanised the entire freedom movement of Indians from Burma in the west to Japan in the east; the I.N.A. had been welded into one strong unit and was ready to march to the front; the civilian population was ready to offer its all in the cause of freedom and the people were ready to offer their very lives in the freedom war. Very high expectations had been aroused by Netaji's hint at a public meeting in September that the I.N.A. would stand on Indian soil before the end of the year. Perhaps, he had some confidential information from the Japanese quarters which led him to drop the hint. Thus, in four months' time, Netaji's dynamic leadership was fast pushing the movement inexorably towards a climax.

HISTORIC PROCLAMATION

October 21, 1943 will be a red-letter day in the history of India's fight for freedom. On that memorable day, representatives of the Indian Independence League from all over east Asia gathered at the Cathay Cinema Hall in Singapore to hear Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose make the historic proclamation of the establishment of the provisional government of Free India. The occasion was solemn; the hall was packed to capacity; every inch of standing space was occupied; tense expectation prevailed. The clock struck 4.30. Netaji rose in his seat on the dais, and read the proclamation in slow and measured tones; in the emotion-charged hall, the audience listened to every word of Netaji in pin-drop silence. It was a one thousand five hundred-word proclamation which he had drafted at one stretch, sitting up all night two days before. It was a masterly survey of India's struggle for freedom from the year 1757. It said,

"It will be the task of the provisional government to launch and conduct the struggle that will bring about the expulsion of the British and their allies from the soil of India. It will be the task of the provisional government to bring about the establishment of a permanent national government of Azad Hind, constituted in accordance with the will of the Indian people and enjoying their confidence..."

The proclamation concluded with the rousing appeal:

"In the name of God, in the name of bygone generations who have welded the Indian people into one nation and in the name of the dead heroes who have bequeathed to us a tradition of heroism and self-sacrifice, we call upon the Indian people to rally round our banner and to strike for India's freedom."

The proclamation was signed on behalf of the provisional government of Azad Hind by:

Subhas Chandra Bose (head of state, prime minister, minister for war and foreign affairs);

Captain Mrs Lakshmi (women's organisation);

S.A. Ayer (publicity and propaganda);

Lieutenant-Colonel A.C. Chatterjee (finance);

Lieutenant-Colonel Aziz Ahmed, Lieutenant-Colonel N.S. Bhagat, Lieutenant-Colonel J.K. Bhonsle, Lieutenant-Colonel Gulzara Singh, Lieutenant-Colonel M.Z. Kiani, Lieutenant-Colonel A.D. Loganadan, Lieutenant-Colonel Ehsan Qadir, Lieutenant-Colonel Shah Nawaz (representatives of the armed forces);

A.M. Sahay, secretary (with ministerial rank);

Rash Behari Bose (supreme advisor);

Karim Gani, Debnath Das, D.M. Khan, A. Yellappa, J. Thivy, Sardar Ishar Singh (advisors);

A.N. Sarkar (legal advisor).

After proclaiming to the world the establishment of the provisional government of Azad Hind, Netaji proceeded to take the oath of allegiance to India. The Cathay Hall now witnessed the most poignant scene that had ever been enacted there. The atmosphere was tense when Netaji began reading the oath:

"In the name of God, I take this sacred oath that to liberate India and the thirty-eight crores of my countrymen..."

Netaji then paused; he could not proceed; his voice was choked with emotion; tears started rolling down his cheeks;

he pulled out his kerchief and wiped the tears; a hush fell over the entire hall; many in the audience shared his agony and emotion and broke into tears. At that moment, Netaji forgot the audience before him; his eyes saw only the long cavalcade of the revolutionaries of the past, and the unarmed millions of freedom fighters inside India who were at that very moment putting up a valiant fight against the heavily armed alien rulers. Netaji broke down; he could not go on with the oath; he then regained his poise and continued:

“I, Subhas Chandra Bose, will continue the sacred war of freedom till the last breath of my life.

“I shall remain always a servant of India and to look after the welfare of thirty-eight crores of Indian brothers and sisters shall be for me my highest duty.

“Even after winning freedom, I will always be prepared to shed even the last drop of my blood for the preservation of India’s freedom.”

When Netaji finished taking the oath, the tension was suddenly relieved and the pent-up feelings of his audience burst into frenzied cheering which echoed and re-echoed for several minutes. Full-throated shouts of ‘*Inquilab Zindabad*’, ‘*Azad Hind Zindabad*’ rent the air.

THE RANI OF JHANSI REGIMENT

The day after he proclaimed the provisional government of Azad Hind, Netaji opened a camp for the Rani of Jhansi Regiment in Singapore with Captain Lakshmi as commandant. Indian women from all strata of society flocked to the camp, wanting to be trained as combatant soldiers, or as nurses or in any other useful capacity as women volunteers attached to the regiment. Girls from affluent families with convent education left their sheltered existence under their parental roof and flocked to the camp in their hundreds. They were eager to undergo the rigours of military training including rifle shooting and bayonet practice. They vied with young men in their enthusiasm for absorption in the fighting section of the liberation army. The Rani of Jhansi Regiment was to be the women's counterpart of the Indian National Army. The Japanese were at first dismayed at the sight of Indian girls wanting to bear arms and go to the front, side by side with the men of the I.N.A. The Japanese were extremely sceptical of the whole idea, and doubted whether the Rani of Jhansi Regiment could ever take real shape. However, their whole attitude underwent a transformation when they saw with their own eyes a striking parade of the Ranis with rifles on their shoulders, marching in high spirits.

The following night, October 23/24, the cabinet of the provisional government held its first meeting at Netaji's residence and unanimously decided to declare war on Britain and her ally, America. In a discussion before the

decision, Lieutenant-Colonel Loganadan expressed his doubts about the wisdom of bracketing America with Britain in the declaration of war. But Netaji convinced him of the correctiveness of the step, as America was an active ally of Britain in the war-time occupation of India. The Azad Hind government could not, therefore, flinch from antagonising America.

The following evening at a mammoth rally of the I.N.A. and Indian civilians, Netaji took a solemn pledge from them that they would give up their all, including their very lives, in waging the war on the Anglo-Americans for the liberation of India.

The provisional government, the I.N.A., and the Independence League were now fully geared to the tasks that lay ahead of them; recruitment and training of men for the I.N.A. and women and girls for the Rani of Jhansi Regiment went full steam ahead; collection of money and materials went on apace all over east Asia; Azad Hind Radio stations broadcast in a number of Indian languages specially beamed to India from Singapore, Bangkok, Rangoon, Saigon and Tokyo. The Singapore Radio Station of the Azad Hind government broadcast in English, Hindustani, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi, Gurkhali and Pushtu, night after night. The Azad Hind government published its own daily newspapers and weeklies for the local Indian communities in various languages.

At the same time as he was conducting the war of liberation, Netaji was also continuously planning for the future of Free India. The provisional government had an army of its own and had enough facilities to train Indian youth for the army, but it had no navy or air force of its own and could not, therefore, give Indian youth in east Asia naval or air force training. Netaji, therefore, personally selected a group of Indian civilian boys in their teens and sent them from Singapore to Japan for training in the Japanese navy and air force. These 'Tokyo boys', as Netaji

affectionately called them, were doing very well in their training when the Japanese surrender in August 1945 abruptly ended the cadets' training and they were later repatriated to India.

Having laid the foundations of the government, the League and the I.N.A. in Singapore, Netaji flew to Tokyo on October 28 to attend the Greater East Asia Conference as an observer because he did not wish to commit India to any of the decisions of the Conference. He wanted the hands of future Free India to be entirely free, unfettered by the deliberations or decisions of the Tokyo conference.

At this conference, Premier Tojo of Japan announced that Japan had decided to cede the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which the Japanese had captured early in the east Asia war, to the provisional government of Azad Hind. Thus, the government of Free India acquired its first territory, and later renamed and appointed Lieutenant-Colonel A.D. Loganadan as their first Indian administrator representing the provisional government.

Returning to Singapore towards the end of December after visiting China and the Philippines, Netaji left for the Andamans where he set foot on the first territory of Free India on December 31, 1943. The land had been sanctified by the incarceration and martyrdom of generations of Indian revolutionaries exiled by the British rulers of India. His setting foot on the Andamans was also a symbolic fulfilment of his promise of the previous September that the I.N.A. would stand on Indian soil before the end of the year.

Before leaving for the Andamans, Netaji had appointed a cabinet sub-committee in Singapore to work out a scheme of national unification of Indians in east Asia in matters of language, dress, food, greeting, emblem and ceremonies. Netaji attached great importance to this aspect of the movement with a view to bringing about abiding unity in the nation.

As a preliminary to future national unification, the cabinet sub-committee recommended that Hindustani shall

be the common language of India; '*Jai Hind*' (victory for India) shall be the common greeting and salutation between Indians; the Congress tricolour shall be the national flag of India; the song beginning with the words '*Subh Sukh Chain*' shall be the national anthem; the tiger shall be India's national emblem; '*Chalo Delhi*' shall be the national war-cry till the successful conclusion of the revolution; and '*Azad Hind Zindabad*', '*Inquilab Zindabad*' and '*Netaji ki Jai*' shall be the national slogans till the victorious conclusion of the revolution.

THE I.N.A. FIRES FIRST SHOT

From the Andamans, Netaji flew on to Burma and shifted the headquarters of the provisional government, the I.I.L. and the I.N.A. supreme command to Rangoon in the first week of January 1944. Thus, there were two headquarters—one in Rangoon and another, the rear headquarters in Singapore.

The shifting of Netaji's headquarters with the government, the League and the I.N.A. to Burma was of momentous importance to the movement. Only the border separated India from Burma; the eastern gates of India were within reach of Netaji and his liberation army; he had only to choose the hour to strike and march into India to drive the British out of his motherland. He, therefore, now concentrated all his attention and energy on turning Burma into a mighty base of operations. He was bent on making Burma the springboard from which to jump at the throats of the British in India.

Enthusiasm swept over Indians in Burma at the sight of battalions of the I.N.A. getting ready to march to the frontier. A Netaji Fund Committee was formed in Rangoon to mobilise the financial resources of Indians in Burma for Netaji's war-chest. Frenzied cheering greeted Netaji's public appeal to Indians to sacrifice their all in the war of freedom. He auctioned the garlands offered to him at the meetings, and each of the garlands was taken by a member of his audience for one lakh, two lakh and even five lakh rupees. A stunning offer of sacrifice was made by

Mr Habib, a citizen of Rangoon, who offered his whole property including land, houses and jewellery valued at over one crore of rupees. Netaji humorously called this the 'Habib mixture' and recommended the mixture to all Indians. Besides offering all his worldly possessions, Habib offered his services and placed his life itself at Netaji's disposal. Mrs Hemraj Betai of Rangoon also offered all her worldly possessions to Netaji. In recognising their self-sacrifice, Netaji decorated them with the 'Sevak-e-Hind' medal.

In the process of total mobilisation, Netaji expanded the government and the League organisation. He appointed new ministers of supply, manpower and revenue to strengthen the base of the government. The government laid down the broad policies but the day-to-day execution of the policies had to be carried out by the League organisation through its branches all over the region. Netaji, therefore, expanded the League headquarters departments which now numbered twenty-four, compared with twelve in Singapore.

The twenty-four departments of the I.I.L. headquarters in Rangoon were: finance; audit; Netaji Fund Committee; supply; supply board; purchase board; revenue; recruitment and training; women's affairs (including the Rani of Jhansi Regiment); publicity and propaganda; education; health and social welfare; national planning; intelligence; information; production; technical; telecommunications; agriculture and industries; reconstruction; housing and transport; overseas; labour; and branches.

The stage was set for the military operations soon after Netaji moved his headquarters to Burma; the I.N.A. had been moved from Malaysia all the way via Thailand and Burma upto the border with India.

Then came the thrilling news of the firing of the first shot by the I.N.A. in India's second war of independence when it opened a campaign on the Arakan front on February 4, 1944 and fought a successful action.

March 18, 1944 will remain a red-letter day in the annals of the I.N.A. for on that memorable day the I.N.A. crossed the border and stood on the sacred soil of India. This historic event was revealed to the world in a dramatic announcement by Netaji at a press conference on March 21. The twenty-first day of every month has become a sacred day for Indians in east Asia for on that day in October 1943, Netaji proclaimed the establishment of the provisional government of Azad Hind in east Asia.

Freedom's battle raged and the I.N.A. was now fighting on eight sectors of the Burma-India border, on the plains of Imphal and in the neighbourhood of Kohima.

A detachment of the I.N.A. under Colonel S.A. Malik penetrated deep into Indian territory and planted the Indian national tricolour at Moirang in Manipur on April 14, 1944, thus symbolically liberating a bit of Indian soil from the British rulers. This spot where India's tricolour was first planted on Indian soil by the I.N.A. has since been sanctified by a memorial constructed to martyrs of the Azad Hind Fauj (army). The complex is dominated by a bronze statue of Netaji and consists of a library, an I.N.A. museum and a spacious community hall. Moirang has become a place of pilgrimage to future generations of Indians who wish to pay their respectful homage to the martyrs who laid down their lives in India's second war of independence.

GOVERNOR-DESIGNATE FOR LIBERATED AREAS

While the I.N.A. was fighting on the Burma-India front, the provisional government was being strengthened in the rear and equipped in every way to cope with the impending task of rehabilitation and administration of the areas to be liberated on Indian soil in collaboration with the Japanese forces. From the very beginning Netaji made it clear to the Japanese that from the moment the I.N.A. and the Japanese army stepped on Indian soil, the provisional government of Azad Hind would exercise sole authority in the liberated areas. The provisional government would provide the necessary facilities to the Japanese forces fighting shoulder to shoulder with the I.N.A. against the Anglo-American forces entrenched in India. In short, Netaji clarified to the Japanese that the provisional government would be supreme from the moment the I.N.A. entered India and its writ alone would run in the liberated territory. In active pursuance of this policy, Netaji arranged the printing of currency notes of the Azad Hind government, and postage stamps were also got ready. Major-General A.C. Chatterjee was appointed the first governor-designate of the liberated territory. Japanese civilians and institutions moving into the liberated regions, including Japanese banks and firms, would come under the control of the governor-designate and would use only the currency notes of the Azad Hind government. The National Bank of Azad Hind would be the only authorised bank of the provisional government and the Japanese banks

and firms would operate under the control and direction of the National Bank.

The Japanese were in charge of overall war strategy and were the senior participants in the campaign as they provided the tanks, planes, artillery, rifles and ammunition. In contrast to their predominant position in the battle-field, they felt disappointed that they were subordinate to the provisional government if they entered India with the I.N.A. Netaji was adamant on this vital issue of principle and the Japanese had to bow to his decision. It was in keeping with this principle that Netaji unequivocally and finally rejected a Japanese proposal that a Japanese should be the chairman of a joint Indo-Japanese war cooperation council on Indian soil. Netaji was emphatic that either the chairman would be an Indian or there would be no chairman at all.

Thus, the Japanese knew all the time where exactly they stood with Netaji on issues affecting the independence, integrity and sovereignty of India. He told the Japanese in the clearest possible words that he would rather have another two centuries of India's slavery under the British than have the Japanese as masters in place of the British.

After a great deal of wrangling with General Isoda, the chief of the Hikari *kikan* (liaison office), Netaji finally got the Japanese consent to his setting up of the National Bank of Azad Hind to finance the I.N.A.'s operations. He opened the bank in Rangoon on April 5, 1944 and left the same day for the front, taking with him a contingent of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. The pride and enthusiasm of the girls knew no bounds as they were proceeding to the battle lines to fight shoulder to shoulder with the men of the I.N.A.

On the reconstruction side, the governor-designate was fully prepared to follow the I.N.A. into liberated areas and set up a civil administration and rehabilitate the people of the liberated regions. He had at his disposal a full-fledged contingent of the Azad Hind Dal which had undergone thorough training in all branches of civil administration.

Farmers, carpenters, blacksmiths, postmen, telegraphists, civil, mechanical and electrical engineers, wireless operators, truck drivers, road-builders and other craftsmen were all in the Dal, ready to tackle the task of reconstruction of war-devasted villages and towns and their reconstruction for normal civilian life.

Netaji had thought of every aspect of the military campaign and the civilian administration to be restored quickly after liberation from foreign rule. He had recruited and trained men for even the smallest job to be done in pursuit of reconstruction and restoration of normal civilian life without undue delay in transition. Even if the enemy carried out a 'scorched earth' policy and destroyed everything before retreating in the face of the I.N.A.'s victorious advance, the Azad Hind Dal was ready to swing into action. Improvised huts would be put up in no time by the civilian engineers; the mechanical engineers would energise pumps to water the fields to grow food; the electrical engineers would improvise street lighting; drinking water would be brought from the nearest wells or tanks; temporary roads would connect neighbouring villages; the postal system would deliver letters and money orders within the liberated areas; the Azad Hind Bank would supply enough currency to meet the urgent needs of the liberated people.

THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMY

Born in the storm of World War II, the I.N.A. was a revolutionary army, unique in its own way, and unlike many other armies engaged in the global war. It was an army organised on foreign soil, hundreds of kilometres away from its motherland, dependent on foreign powers for planes, tanks, artillery, rifles, ammunition and even lorries for the transport of soldiers to the front. It depended upon the patriotic fervour of its nationals scattered over east Asia, from Burma to Japan, for men, money, clothing, food and other civilian supplies. Its greatest asset was the spirit of self-sacrifice of the men who enthusiastically volunteered to lay down their lives with '*Chalo Delhi*' on their lips.

Netaji was a unique Supreme Commander of this unique army, unlike many other commanders on the battle-fields of Asia or Europe. Perhaps for the first time in the world's military history, Netaji spoke to his soldiers on the eve of their departure for the fighting fronts in a language not heard before in history. In effect he said to them:

"Even at this last moment before you leave for the front, I give you the freest choice to decide whether you really want to lay down your lives for the cause. If you have the least doubt in your mind about the sacredness of the cause, you may this minute step out of the ranks and stay behind. Do not hesitate to do so. I shall find you some other duties in the rear. I do not care for numbers. Even a smaller number of utterly dedicated soldiers

with the fullest faith in the cause for which they are going to fight are any day better than a large number of men with indifferent interest and vague ideas of what they are fighting for. I tell you in the plainest possible words that I promise you nothing but hunger, thirst, suffering and death. You are free to choose your path. You need not be ashamed to drop out here and now. I shall not blame you. I shall appreciate your honesty and find you some useful duties."

Netaji repeated these words to the men of the I.N.A. every time he addressed parades of soldiers before they left for the front, and not one man stepped out of the ranks and said he wanted to stay behind.

This was the burning spirit that swept the two divisions of the I.N.A. numbering over twenty thousand that were already in Burma. The first division was commanded by Major-General Zaman Kiani, and the second division command was taken over by Colonel Shah Nawaz in place of Colonel Aziz Ahmed, who was injured in a bombing raid on Rangoon on the eve of his proceeding to the front.

Netaji's clarion call to his liberation army on the eve of its march on the road to Delhi will echo and re-echo through the corridors of time. Standing on the border and pointing his hand towards his motherland, he urged his soldiers:

"...There in the distance beyond that river, beyond those jungles, beyond those hills, lies the promised land—the soil from which we sprang—the land to which we shall now return. Hark—India is calling...Blood is calling to blood. Get up, we have no time to lose. Take up your arms—we shall carve our way through the enemy's ranks, or if God wills we shall die a martyr's death. And in our last sleep we shall kiss the road that will bring our army to Delhi. The road to Delhi is the road to freedom. *Chalo Delhi.*"

Kohima fort and a cantonment on the Dimapur-Kohima Road were captured on April 8, and the following day saw the tightening of the encirclement of Imphal which was attacked from many sides on April 13. Imphal was then attacked from all sides on April 18 and the I.N.A. penetrated the north fortifications of the enemy. The battle for Imphal raged fiercely on April 22. The fighting continued into May and the siege of Imphal was further tightened on May 20. The enemy was holding out in a desperate struggle under orders from the Mountbatten headquarters to save Imphal at all cost. The I.N.A. was fighting against time, and the frightening monsoon of Burma was fast approaching.

The monsoon rains began on June 1, and came down in torrents. The monsoon deluge flooded the communication and supply routes of the I.N.A. on the front. The siege of Imphal was lifted on June 27; the enemy now began its offensive with its superiority in numbers, weapons and supplies; the I.N.A. was on the defensive. In the five months of fierce fighting, the I.N.A. had given ample proof of its superior fighting qualities, its memorable courage and intense devotion to duty.

When the I.N.A. was in the thick of the battle, Netaji made a memorable broadcast over the Rangoon Radio on August 4, 1944 and addressed a poignant appeal to Mahatma Gandhi. After reviewing the war situation at great length, Netaji said to Gandhiji:

"India's last war of independence has begun. Troops of the Azad Hind Fauj are now fighting bravely on the soil of India and in spite of all difficulty and hardship they are pushing forward slowly but steadily. The armed struggle will go on until the last Britisher is thrown out of India and until our tricolour flag floats over the viceroy's house in New Delhi.

"Father of our nation: In this holy war for India's liberation we ask for your blessings and good wishes. *Jai Hind.*"

In a special order of the day issued on August 14, 1944, Netaji said,

"...All preparations had been completed and the stage had been set for the final assault on Imphal when torrential rains overtook us and to carry Imphal by an assault was rendered a practical impossibility. As soon as all our preparations are complete, we shall launch our mighty offensive once again. With the superior fighting qualities, dauntless courage and unshakable devotion to duty of our officers and men, victory shall surely be ours."

Thrilling stories of the deeds of heroism of our officers and men on the battle-fields trickled through to the civilian population in the rear, far away from the fronts. At one of the inspiring parades in Rangoon, Netaji decorated some of the surviving officers and men for their bravery on the field of battle. He also announced many posthumous awards for those who had laid down their lives on the road to Delhi.

THE TRAGIC DEBACLE

There was no blinking the unpleasant fact that the I.N.A.'s failure to take Kohima and Imphal was a tragic debacle. If the I.N.A. had captured Imphal and Kohima, nothing could have stopped its victorious advance into Bengal and Assam; all of India would have risen to a man against the British rulers and opened the road to Delhi for the I.N.A.'s triumphant march.

But that was not to be. The torrential rains and the slush and quagmires, the disrupted supply lines, and lack of food and medicines played havoc, with the I.N.A. men retreating from the front. Cholera, dysentery and malaria took a heavy toll of the men's lives, but the survivors staggered back to the base hospitals, impatient to get well and pick up their rifles again and go back to the fighting front and lay down their lives there. They would only remember the exhortation of Netaji: "When you stand, stand as a rock, when you move, move like a steam-roller."

The full story of the operations on the Burma-India border and the battles of Imphal and Kohima and the individual deeds of heroism of the officers and men of the I.N.A. are exhaustively and vividly narrated by Major-General Shah Nawaz in his book *I.N.A. and its Netaji*. A detachment of the I.N.A. men on the Burma front who lived on jungle grass for eleven days and carried on their brave fight has passed into legend. And this is only one of the many legends that posterity will one day read with pride and admiration for the faceless heroes.

The debacle did not dishearten Netaji. He told the blunt and tragic truth of the I.N.A.'s failure to the civilian population in Burma and exhorted them to redouble their efforts to collect more money and more materials and recruit more men to renew the assault on Imphal. "We shall again attack Imphal, not once but ten times," Netaji roared. "I want you all to become freedom-mad. *Karo sab nichhavar, bano sab fakir* (sacrifice your all and become beggars)." The Indians were infected by Netaji's enthusiasm and intensified total mobilisation with ever greater vigour. There was no tinge of regret or disappointment in the minds of the people over the military reverses. They organised the celebration of a Netaji Week on a grand scale in Rangoon. Netaji stood on the dais flanked by his ministers. An unending procession of men, women and children walked up to the dais and presented him with trays laden with gold and silver, jewellery and trinkets. Some young men who had nothing else in this world to offer gave a pledge written in blood, offering their lives at the altar of their motherland. This was the symbolic response of Indian youth in all east Asia to Netaji's call: "Give me blood and I will give you freedom. (*Tum mujhe khoon do, main tumhe Azadi doonga.*)" He said to the three million Indians in east Asia that in the world's history no nation got its freedom without shedding its own blood. That was the price they had to pay and there was no shirking it.

But all this patriotic fervour went in vain. The relentless enemy with unchallenged superiority in numbers and planes, tanks, artillery, rifles and ammunition launched a massive counter-offensive the moment the I.N.A. began falling back. The counter-thrust was headed towards Meiktila and the ultimate target was, of course, Rangoon.

But the victorious forces had a foretaste of the fiery and undying spirit of the I.N.A. when they passed through Mandalay. They had strictly forbidden Indians in Mandalay from shouting the greeting 'Jai Hind' which symbolised everything that Netaji and the I.N.A. had stood for. Indian

boys and girls above the age of nine had received nine weeks of intensive military training at the height of the independence movement. In a spirit of utter defiance and in total disregard of the risk to their life and limb, they yelled '*Jai Hind*' into the ears of the British forces whenever they passed by them, and showed them a clean pair of heels when they tried to catch the young rebels. These Bal Senas and Balika Senas were organised throughout east Asia as auxiliaries to the I.N.A. and the Rani of Jhansi Regiment.

If it was to be only a matter of days before the British forces would reach Rangoon, then what should be Netaji's next move? A critical decision had to be taken by the government. The cabinet ministers present in Rangoon were unanimous in their view that Netaji must not fall into the hands of the enemy in any event; he must move away eastward to Thailand, Indo-China, Java, Phillippines or even Japan—anywhere farthest away from the advancing enemy. It was difficult to persuade Netaji. He was insistent that he must stay with his soldiers in Rangoon and share their fate. Ultimately, the cabinet convinced him that by leaving Rangoon he could reach somewhere to be free to continue the fight. Netaji reluctantly agreed to quit Rangoon. But his first and foremost concern was for the hundred odd girls of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. He was adamant that he would not leave Rangoon until the girls were first put on the road or rail to Thailand.

On the eve of his leaving Rangoon, in a special order of the day addressed to the 'brave officers and men of the Azad Hind Fauj', Netaji said:

"Comrades, at this critical hour I have only one word of command to give you, and that is, that if you have to go down temporarily, then go down fighting with the national tricolour held aloft; go down as heroes; go down upholding the highest code of honour and discipline..."

In a message to Indians and Burmese friends, he extolled the self-sacrificing spirit of the Indians and his deep gratitude to the government and people of Burma for all the help he had received at their hands in carrying on the struggle for India's freedom.

THE AGONY OF RETREAT AND AFTER

Rangoon got news on April 23, 1945 that the British spearhead had thrust south of Pyinmana in central Burma and it was only a question of hours before the enemy could hope to reach the capital of Burma. And, horror of horrors, Netaji was still in Rangoon at the time. Any further delay in his quitting Rangoon might prove disastrous. Urgent consultations round-the-clock followed with the Japanese authorities in Rangoon. They were themselves getting ready to evacuate Rangoon and destroying important records and arranging to blow up their own ammunition dumps to prevent their falling into the hands of the advancing British. The Japanese were thus in a state of chaos and confusion, if not demoralised and in panic. In striking contrast, Netaji was cool and composed and firmly insisted on getting the minimum necessary transport for the Rani of Jhansi and over a hundred officers and men of the provisional government and the I.N.A. who would be with him on the retreat.

On the moonlit night of April 24, a convoy of four cars and twelve lorries carrying Netaji and party including the Rani of Jhansi Regiment girls left Netaji's residence on the unforgettable twenty-one-day trek to Bangkok—a mere two-hour journey for Netaji if he had accepted the Japanese offer of a plane for him from Rangoon to Bangkok. But he rejected the offer out of hand and told the Japanese that he would move with his whole party even if he had to walk all the way from Rangoon to Bangkok. It so happened that he actually walked with his men all night for at least three

nights. He made sure that his entire party got some transport, and he was the last to board a lorry for the rest of the trek to Martaban.

The cars and lorries were used only for two or three days after the retreat from Rangoon began, and they had to be abandoned on the river banks at Waw and Sittang for want of ferries to take them across the rivers to the other bank. The forced march, blistered feet, hunger and thirst for Netaji and the whole party began when they hit the road to Martaban from Sittang. The march in the night was often interrupted and the column had to disperse and take cover on the roadside every time enemy planes flew overhead. But the retreat was orderly. Netaji set a classic example of military discipline by asking Major-General Zaman Kiani to take over command of the column on the march, and Netaji, the Supreme Commander of the I.N.A., placed himself also under Kiani's command during the forced march. He walked at the head of the column with Major-General Bhonsle, Chief of Staff, Major-General Chatterjee and civilian ministers of the provisional government, followed by Ranis of Jhansi and men of the I.N.A.

It was three whole weeks of agony for the column on retreat, with only one meal a day, constant bombing and machine-gunning by enemy planes, day after day all the way, on the move all night, and taking cover in the jungles all day to avoid attracting enemy planes.

The worst baptism of fire from enemy planes was at Sittang where a devastating air raid fatally wounded Lieutenant Nazir Ahmed, Major-General Chatterjee's A.D.C.

After Moulmein the journey was comparatively easier and Netaji and party reached Bangkok and civilisation on May 14.

From the very next day Netaji got busy. He called a formal or informal meeting of the ministers present in Bangkok day after day at his residence. The most important question discussed was: What next? The World War situation, the situation in east Asia and the situation in

India as gleaned from world radio stations were discussed from all angles. News of the collapse of Germany had reached Bangkok a week before Netaji and party arrived there. How long now could Japan hold out against the Anglo-Americans? What should the I.N.A. do if Japan also collapsed? From where then can Netaji continue the fight? Should Netaji try to contact Russia (undivided then) through the good offices of Japan which was still on terms of neutrality with Russia? How far would Japan relish the idea of Netaji contacting the Russians? How would the Russians react to Netaji's overtures in view of his collaboration with Russia's mortal enemy, Germany? If the Japanese sponsored Netaji's approach to Russia, how far would it adversely affect the chances of Japan getting favourable terms of armistice if she had to sue for peace through Russia? Thus, the whole question of Netaji contacting the Russians with a view to enlisting their aid bristled with many difficulties. But Netaji was a born optimist. He was bent on pressing the Japanese hard to put him in touch with the Russians. He was prepared for a rebuff from the Russians. He was prepared even to be immobilised after reaching Russian territory. So, it was finally decided that Netaji must keep up the effort to reach Russia anyhow.

In the middle of June 1945 came news from India that the British viceroy, Lord Wavell, had made an offer to the Congress high command to take some more Indians on his executive council in return for India's active cooperation in the British war effort. Netaji immediately flew to Singapore and broadcast to India for a month, appealing to Gandhiji and other top-ranking Congress leaders not to arrive at a compromise with Wavell, but to keep India's independence as an international problem and not a domestic issue of the British empire. He pleaded with the Congress high command to wait for the British Labour Party to come into power in the impending general election, in the hope of getting a much better deal than from Churchill. The Wavell conference in Simla failed and Netaji heaved a sigh of relief.

CRUEL FATE

It was now mid-July 1945 and Netaji left Singapore for Seramban in Malaysia where some urgent I.N.A. affairs demanded his attention. There was no radio set in the guest-house where Netaji was staying in Seramban. He received news of Russia's declaration of war on Japan on the trunk telephone on August 10, 1945. What did the Japanese expect Netaji to do now?

Did they expect him to declare war on Russia, as he was an ally of Japan? Netaji's acid test was not what Japan expected him to do. His only test was what would be in India's interest. He decided that it would not be in India's interest to declare war on Russia and lose his only chance of continuing the struggle for India's freedom. In the meanwhile, the Russians were advancing fast into Japanese-occupied Manchuria.

At 2 a.m. on August 12, Dr Lakshumiyah and Ganapathy reached the guest-house where Netaji was staying in Seramban after a non-stop drive all the way from Singapore and broke the stunning news that Japan had surrendered. That was the darkest hour in the I.N.A.'s two-year struggle for India's liberation. The staggering news at one stroke shattered all of Netaji's dreams. Everything looked bleak for the I.N.A. If Japan has been knocked out of the war, how can the I.N.A. carry on alone the war against the Anglo-Americans? The I.N.A. may stop fighting for want of military hardware, but it shall not surrender. The I.N.A. may be taken prisoner, but the officers and men would not

admit defeat or show the white flag. The I.N.A. would keep the flame of patriotism burning bright. This was Netaji's immediate reaction to the news of Japan's surrender and its disastrous implications for the I.N.A. Netaji kept awake till 5 a.m., quietly thinking out the next steps to be taken. Urgent instructions were issued to the entire Independence League organisation and the I.N.A. units throughout east Asia, except, of course, Burma which the British had reoccupied. A visionary dreaming glorious dreams of Free India of the future, Netaji was a down-to-the-earth realist when it came to quick planning and immediate action to deal with the tragedy following Japan's defeat. What should the three million Indian patriots in east Asia do now? Their sacrifices and sufferings had few parallels in the history of nations fighting for liberation from alien rule. The rich had offered their wealth and the poorest of the poor including labourers, hawkers and cobblers had offered all they had in this world, and also their lives. At Netaji's bidding they had all gone literally freedom-mad. Their enthusiasm had been raised to fever-pitch. They had expected any moment to march into Free India.

Cruel fate brutally rang the curtain down on their dreams. Suddenly they had to adjust themselves to the psychological shock. But the shock was only momentary. They looked round and saw the I.N.A. standing with its head erect though it had ceased fighting. Its spirit of defiance was undiminished. And its Supreme Commander stood supreme among commanders of the World War. He did not consider himself beaten, because he was Supreme Commander of a revolutionary army which would never admit defeat. The reverse was only temporary. Netaji had told his army over and over again: "Only that army is defeated which *thinks* it is defeated." A truly revolutionary army would defy any power or combination of powers on earth. That is the spirit that animated the entire I.N.A. when World War II ended with the surrender of Japan.

With three million high-spirited Indians and the

unbeaten I.N.A. behind him, Netaji stood firm as a rock. He faced the harsh realities of the military failure of his life's mission. But he was supremely confident of the spiritual success of his military effort. He had no doubt in his mind that when the whole truth of the I.N.A.'s heroic fight under the Azad Hind government's leadership against the heavily armed British, and the planting of India's national tricolour in Moirang (Manipur) on April 14, 1944 came to be known to the people of India, the hearts of India's millions would swell with pride. And that would bring about a psychological revolution throughout the country and shake the British empire in India to its foundations.

After hearing of Japan's surrender when he was in Seramban, Netaji, the man of action, had not a moment to lose. He immediately dashed by car to Singapore on August 12, 1945, reached there in the evening and after a hurried wash and dinner went into marathon conferences with his ministers and advisors. As in Rangoon, so in Singapore, the question again was: What should Netaji do? Should he stay with his troops in Singapore and allow himself to be taken prisoner? If not, where should he go? Would the Japanese help him to contact the Russians? No final decision was taken though the cabinet was more or less in continuous session day and night from August 12 to 14. The cabinet discussed Netaji's possible fate in his presence as if it was discussing somebody else, and Netaji himself also participated in the talks in an impersonal, objective way. One of the ministers said: "Sir, if you are taken prisoner in Singapore and tried here or in India and ordered to be shot for waging war against the British king, that moment all India would rise against the British and India would be free. If, on the other hand, the British leave you free, that would also suit India. Either way India will gain." Netaji still insisted that he would remain with his soldiers and be taken prisoner. This was a tentative decision.

But the situation underwent a sudden change when

A.N. Sarkar, legal advisor to the provisional government, unexpectedly arrived from Bangkok on the evening of August 14 with an important message from the Japanese military authorities for Netaji. The cabinet members more or less guessed that the Japanese had promised to extend facilities to Netaji to reach the Russian-occupied territory in Manchuria. Thereafter, their responsibility would end and Netaji would be on his own. It would be up to him to contact the Russians in Manchuria and take the risk of being taken prisoner. But Netaji was confident that the Russians in Manchuria would take the earliest opportunity to transfer the custody of such an important Indian national leader to the highest authorities in Moscow. That was all he wanted. That was what he had tried to do four years earlier, in 1941, when he made frantic efforts to contact the Russian ambassador in Kabul and ask for a passport to Moscow. Because he failed to enlist the Russian ambassador's help, he had to be satisfied with the Italian embassy's help to reach Germany as the second best arrangement. But he never abandoned his plan to make Moscow his base of operations one day, if all his other plans failed.

ADVENTURE INTO THE UNKNOWN

On August 15, 1945, Japan's surrender was officially announced by the radio stations of the world. Netaji and his cabinet unanimously decided that he must leave Singapore the next morning for Bangkok, enroute to the Russian-held territory in Manchuria. Netaji sat up all night on the 15th, issuing exhaustive orders to all units of the I.I.L. and the I.N.A., as to how the civilians must be protected by the I.N.A., how the I.N.A. must conduct itself vis-a-vis the victorious Anglo-Americans and how the girls of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment must be looked after and provided with adequate rations and funds to see them through the anguish of enemy reoccupation of the territory.

Earlier in the day, Netaji sent for Colonel C.J. Stracey and gave him clear instructions to finish the erection of a memorial to the martyrs of the Azad Hind Fauj on the sea-face in Singapore, where Netaji had laid the foundation stone on August 8. Stracey solemnly promised to have the memorial erected before the British landed in Singapore. One of the first acts of the British after landing in Singapore was to demolish the memorial to the war-dead of the patriotic army—a piece of vandalism without parallel in civilised warfare.

Before leaving Singapore, Netaji issued his two last special orders of the day on August 15, 1945. In one, addressed to the I.N.A. on the surrender of Japan, he assured the I.N.A.: "The roads to Delhi are many, and Delhi still remains our goal." In another, a special message

addressed to Indians in east Asia, Netaji said:

"In this unprecedented crisis in our history, I have only one word to say. Do not be depressed by our temporary failure. Be of good cheer and keep up your spirits. Above all, never for a moment falter in your faith in India's destiny. There is no power on earth that can keep India enslaved; India shall be free and before long. *Jai Hind.*"

It was nearly the dawn of August 16 when Netaji rose from his desk and did a little hurried packing of his few personal belongings including a cloth bundle for what he called his "adventure into the unknown". He was leaving Singapore for the last time and he took with him on this fateful journey Colonel Habibur Rahman, Deputy Chief of Staff, Colonel Pritam Singh, and the present writer. We took off in a bomber plane after 10 a.m. and landed in Bangkok the same afternoon. News of Netaji's arrival in Bangkok spread among the entire Indian community in the city in a matter of minutes, and from then on till Netaji and party left for the airport the next morning, Netaji's residence and its approaches were filled with milling crowds of Indians, anxious to know about Netaji's next move and his next destination. He had his dinner around midnight and met and talked to military and civilian officers and local Indian leaders till the early hours of the morning before snatching a little sleep.

Early on the morning of August 17, 1945, Netaji left for the Bangkok airport after a round of tearful farewells to those who had stayed on overnight at the bungalow. These included Parmanand, the supplies minister, Major-General J.K. Bhonsle, Chief of Staff, P.N. Pillai, Netaji's personal secretary at the Singapore and Rangoon headquarters, and Bhaskaran, Netaji's confidential stenographer from the day the leader landed in Singapore in July 1943. Netaji's party on the flight from Bangkok to Saigon now included Colonel Habibur Rahman, Colonel Gulzara Singh, Colonel Pritam

Singh, Major Abid Hasan, Netaji's only Indian companion in the ninety-day submarine voyage from Germany to Japan in 1943, Debnath Das, advisor and general secretary of the League headquarters in Rangoon, and the present writer. General Isoda, Mr Hachiya and Mr Negishi, the Japanese interpreter, were also in the party. We were in two planes and landed at Saigon around 10 a.m. and drove straight to the residence of Naraindas, an officer-bearer of the League in Saigon. From the airport, General Isoda flew immediately to Dalat, a health resort and headquarters of Field Marshal, Count Terauchi, the supreme commander of the Japanese forces in the south-eastern region. General Isoda returned from Dalat early in the afternoon and drove straight to Netaji's residence.

Perhaps the most poignant moment of his life was when he had to decide in a matter of minutes whether he should accept a single seat offered to him in a Japanese bomber to go on his last known flight. The bomber was waiting at the Saigon aerodrome with its engines running and ready to take off at a minute's notice. Not far away from the aerodrome, in the house where Netaji had moved in only a few hours earlier, hurried consultations took place with all the participants standing. All formalities had been cut down. Nobody asked anybody else to sit down or have a glass of water though they were all thirsty because of the strain and the heat of the day. The Japanese were adamant that they could not offer him more than one seat; it was a case of take it or leave it. If he took it, he would be going alone without even one of his associates accompanying him; no Indian would know at first hand if anything happened to Netaji on that flight. If he did not take that seat and get away from Saigon, then the victorious Anglo-American forces, expected to land in Saigon any day, would surely take him prisoner. That would be the end of all his plans to get away from the Anglo-American forces and continue the freedom fight from congenial soil. So, it was a most agonising decision he had to take. In his own mind, he took it; his

advisors reluctantly agreed when he pressed them for a quick answer; he decided to go alone without even one of his associates accompanying him. At the last moment, the Japanese offered one more seat and Colonel Habibur Rahman accompanied him on that last known flight from Saigon.

LAST KNOWN FLIGHT

Netaji and Habib said '*Jai Hind*' to the five of us left behind, before they entered the bomber. The Japanese had promised Netaji that they would provide us with a plane to join him as early as possible. We were stranded in Saigon for two days with no news of Netaji. Then on the 19th the Japanese offered to fly one of us to Japan and the others to Hanoi. They gave us the impression that the one flying to Japan would soon be joining Netaji and the others would be with him later. They left it to us to decide which one of us would take the seat in the plane to Japan. My comrades insisted that I should. I did.

The plane took for Japan at about 11 a.m. and a few moments before it was airborne a couple of Japanese hinted to me that something had happened to Netaji. I was hurrying to board the plane and had no chance to ask them any questions. When the plane landed at the Canton airport for refuelling in the evening, the Japanese Colonel who was escorting me broke to me the stunning news that Netaji had died as a result of a crash on Formosa Island the day after he had left Saigon. I told the Colonel point-blank that no Indian in east Asia or India would believe the Japanese story of Netaji's fatal plane crash unless they took Netaji's body to Singapore or at least to Tokyo. When I reached Tokyo on August 22, 1945, Japanese foreign ministry officials with tears in their eyes repeated the story of the crash and sought my help in drafting an announcement of Netaji's plane crash over Tokyo Radio for the first time. Indians in

east Asia heard the news with a shock but refused to believe it, just as I had warned the Japanese.

HISTORIC TRIAL

When the Anglo-Americans reoccupied east Asia, the British took the I.N.A. officers and men as prisoners and transported them to India and lodged large numbers of them in the Red Fort, Delhi, and the Kabul lines in the New Delhi cantonment. That was an irony of fate. About seventeen thousand men of the I.N.A. were brought to India as prisoners-of-war. They were to have marched into Delhi as victors, hoisted the national tricolour on the viceroy's house and held a victory parade inside the Red Fort. Instead, they found themselves prisoners-of-war inside the Red Fort, awaiting trial for waging war against the British king. This was the position in October/November 1945.

The I.N.A. no doubt failed to win the war of freedom on the battle-field; but, in what Major Hugh Toye in his book *The Springing Tiger* calls its "thunderous disintegration" after reaching India, the I.N.A. positively hastened the end of British rule in this country.

World War II ended in mid-August 1945. Then whispers were heard in India that some twenty thousand men of the I.N.A. were confined in the Red Fort, Delhi, and that six of them had already been shot. The subject was too dangerous for public comment in India when the war was still on. But on August 20, Jawaharlal Nehru in his first statement to the press said:

"...Now a very large number of the Indian National Army, as it is called, are prisoners and some of them at least have been executed...At any time it would have

been wrong to treat them too harshly but at this time—when it is said big changes are impending in India—it would be a very grave mistake leading to far-reaching consequences if they were treated just as ordinary rebels. The punishment given to them would in effect be a punishment to all of India and all Indians and a deep wound would be created in millions of hearts...”

This set the tone for the whole country and the I.N.A. immediately became a burning topic throughout the land and public opinion demanded the release of the men. The government tried to mollify public opinion by promising lenient treatment to the rank-and-file of “those soldiers who yielded to pressure” and “were so misguided as to join the forces raised by the enemy”. But this was a futile and unrealistic face-saving device, as all the seventeen thousand odd men were totally unrepentant and were fully prepared to take the worst punishment for deliberately waging war against the king.

The Congress Working Committee met in Poona in mid-September and declared that “it would be a tragedy if these officers and men were punished for the offence of having laboured, however mistakenly, for the freedom of India. They can be of the greatest service in building up a new and free India.” The Committee urged the release of the men and women of this army. A week later the Congress Working Committee consisted of national stalwarts like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Bhulabhai Desai, Kailas Nath Katju, Jawaharlal Nehru, Asaf Ali (convenor) and Raghu Nandan Saran with powers to co-opt. Others among defence counsel were Rai Bahadur Badri Das, Kanwar Sir Dalip Singh, ex-judge, Lahore high court, Bakshi Sir Tek Chand, ex-judge, Lahore high court, and P.N. Sen, ex-judge, Patna high court. So, it was a galaxy of Indian legal talent that spontaneously ranged itself in defence of the I.N.A.

Mahatma Gandhi, who was then staying in the Harijan

Colony in Delhi, met I.N.A. officers both inside and outside the Red Fort.

When I met Jawaharlal Nehru in Delhi on December 1, 1945 while waiting to give evidence for the defence and told him about the I.N.A. men all over east Asia still waiting to be repatriated to India, he said, "I do not want these men to be lost in the vast sea of Indian humanity when they reach here."

In a foreword to Moti Ram's classic documentary record of the historic Red Fort trial of Shah Nawaz, Sehgal and Dhillon, Jawaharlal wrote on January 17, 1946:

"The trial dramatised and gave visible form to the old contest 'England versus India'. It became...a trial of strength between the will of the Indian people and the will of those who held power in India. And it was that will of the people that triumphed in the end."

This is the psychological backdrop against which Shah Nawaz, Sehgal and Dhillon were tried by a military court presided over by Major-General Blaxland on the second floor of the dormitory inside the Red Fort. Sir N.P. Engineer, Advocate-General of India, was counsel for the prosecution. The trial was open to the press and the public and the country was literally flooded with columns and columns of newspaper reports of the proceedings, day after day. British and American newsagencies and newspapers also sent their men to Delhi to report the trial.

The Red Fort proceedings absorbed public interest to the exclusion of everything else. As the saga of the I.N.A. was revealed to the public for the first time, public enthusiasm broke all bounds; the country was aflame with a sense of pride and regained self-respect. The whole nation felt its manhood vindicated by the fact that a liberation army organised, officered and led wholly by Indians had given battle to the alien ruler on many fronts on the Burma-India border and had come within an ace of driving the British out of Assam and Bengal, and possibly out of India.

WAGING WAR AGAINST THE KING

The court martial began on November 5 and ended on December 31, 1945. The three accused, Shah Nawaz, Sehgal and Dhillon, were in their uniforms minus badges of rank. The court described them by their original ranks in the British army and referred to them as Captain Shah Nawaz, Captain Sehgal and Lieutenant Dhillon. To the rest of India, they were known by their I.N.A. ranks, namely, Major-General Shah Nawaz, Colonel Sehgal and Colonel Dhillon.

The charge-sheet was read out to them and there were many charges against each of them individually. But the one common charge against all the three of them was that they had waged war against the king. They pleaded not guilty. Donning his barrister's robe after a lapse of some thirty years, Jawaharlal Nehru was the cynosure of all eyes in the court-room. In view of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's indifferent health, Bhulabhai Desai was entrusted with the responsibility of conducting the defence in close consultation with his other colleagues of the defence committee.

Day after day, Bhulabhai went to the Red Fort and there, in a tented enclosure, he met Shah Nawaz, Sehgal and Dhillon and a number of other I.N.A. officers detained in the Red Fort, for preparing the case for the defence. The comings and goings of these I.N.A. officers provided the occasion for highly emotional reunions of those who had lost touch with one another on the war fronts, and the inside of the Red Fort reverberated to the shouts of '*Jai Hind*' and warm greetings and individual embraces

among officers. An outstanding and romantic figure inside the Red Fort those days was General Mohan Singh, the creator of the first I.N.A. in 1942, who defied the Japanese and preferred to remain in detention till the war was over.

Sitting in the tent, Bhulabhai waded through masses of documents relating to the origin, organisation, disbandment, rebirth and valiant achievements of the I.N.A., the formation of the provisional government of Azad Hind, its recognition by world powers and its leadership of the I.N.A. according to international law which ensured for the I.N.A. the status of prisoners-of-war when the British captured the liberation army. As he gathered more and more documentary evidence of the whole set-up of the provisional government and the I.N.A., Bhulabhai was amazed at the far-sightedness of Netaji and his marvellous organising capacity. The thoroughness with which Netaji had attended to every little detail in the midst of waging a revolutionary war left Bhulabhai Desai sometimes speechless. By working day and night in spite of his indifferent health, Bhulabhai Desai had armed himself with an unsailable case for the defence. He was fully ready when the trial opened on November 5, 1945.

Between November 5 and December 31, 1945, that is, in the course of fifty-seven days that the trial lasted, thirty witnesses gave evidence for the prosecution and twelve for the defence. Prosecution witnesses took more than a month and defence witnesses were before the court for a period of a week.

The day before the witnesses for the defence began giving evidence on December 8, the three officers on trial made statements before the court.

The man in the street was ignorant of the niceties of military and civil laws. He was hardly interested in them. But he was tremendously interested in the fate of the three officers who symbolised the I.N.A. and all that Netaji stood for, and could be sentenced to death on one or all the

charges against them. Feelings ran high throughout the country and passions had been roused in men's breasts. Threats were held out in the name of the Indian public that if even a hair on the head of the three officers was touched, no Britisher's life in India would be safe.

The court martial took its methodical legal course inside the Red Fort, but outside the Red Fort, a psychological upheaval shook the country from end to end.

The prosecution was out to prove that the three accused officers were guilty of waging war against the king, and of some other crimes also which were punishable under the Indian Army Act. The defence was out to justify the action of the accused under the international law, and under the Indian National Army Act. The I.N.A. fought under the leadership of a duly constituted government. This government was recognised by nine world powers, and the I.N.A. was controlled by its own code under the Indian National Army Act.

Bhulabhai addressed his arguments for two full days and he spoke extempore.

Sir N.P. Engineer took four hours to read out his written address.

Between the periods of evidence for the prosecution and evidence for the defence, the three accused officers made statements before the court which stirred the soul of the country to its very depths.

Shah Nawaz said:

"Born in traditions of loyalty to the British Crown, I had known India only through the eyes of young British officers. When I met Netaji and heard his speeches for the first time in my life, I saw India through the eyes of an Indian...In Netaji I found a leader and decided to follow him...The question before me was—the king or the country. I decided to be loyal to my country and gave my word of honour to Netaji that I would sacrifice myself for her sake."

Sehgal in his statement said:

"We felt that the British government had on its own cut off all the bonds that bound us to the British Crown and relieved us of all obligations to it...We bonafide believed that the British Crown, having ceased to provide any protection to us, could no longer demand allegiance from us."

Colonel Dhillon recalled that in the Chetwode Hall in the Military Academy at Dehra Dun were engraved the words:

"The honour, safety and welfare of your country comes first. ...I felt that if a strong and willing national army could be raised at that juncture, it would not only liberate India from foreign rule, but could also resist the Japanese in case they should try to go back upon their word and instead of helping us to win our freedom, should seek to exploit our country for their own purpose."

The inspiring statements of the three officers created a thrill in the minds of millions of Indians throughout the country who were closely following the day-to-day proceedings of the court martial. The evidence of prosecution witnesses that was tendered before the officers' statements and the evidence of the defence witnesses that followed assumed comparatively less importance and held less interest for the general public. This is not to say that the public read with less avid interest the voluminous evidence that filled the pages of all the newspapers throughout the country.

BHULABHAI'S CLASSIC ADDRESS

The crowning glory went to Bhulabhai Desai whose classic arguments lasting two days will find a place of honour in the history of such trials in any part of the world.

His words that had a resounding echo in the heart of the entire nation were: "What is on trial before the court now is the right to wage war with impunity on the part of a subject race for their liberation." Bhulabhai was not only asserting international law but was also in effect invoking the divine law that all men are born free and have a right to remain free.

Bhulabhai claimed that it had been established beyond doubt that a provisional government had been formed, it was duly organised government, it had been recognised by the Axis powers. The government had an army which was properly organised and had its own distinctive badges and emblems and functioned under regularly appointed officers, and it was regulated by an I.N.A. Act.

The government had the right to declare war for the purpose for which it intended to fight "and the government having the right to declare war, its armies are subject to its orders".

Bhulabhai maintained that,

"...Any war that was made for the purpose of liberating oneself from foreign yoke is completely justifiable by modern international law and it will be a travesty of justice if we are told... that Indians may go as soldiers and fight for the freedom of England against Germany,

against Italy, against Japan, and yet a stage may not arise when a free Indian State may not wish to free itself from any country including England herself. Therefore it is that we maintain that this particular war requires no justification."

Bhulabhai emphatically asserted that shooting in the prosecution of a war between two States could not be treated as murder and could not be dealt with like a crime under the civil law. In short, Bhulabhai's two-day arguments were a monumental vindication of all that Netaji and the I.N.A. had stood for in their armed fight for India's liberation.

On January 3, 1946, the court martial found all the three accused officers guilty of waging war against the king-emperor and sentenced them to transportation for life, cashiering and forfeiture of arrears of pay and allowances. The Commander-in-Chief remitted the sentence of transportation for life against all the three accused but confirmed the sentence of cashiering and forfeiture of arrears of pay and allowances.

All the three officers were released the same day. The country went delirious with joy and the heroes of the Red Fort trial were overwhelmed by the uproarious welcome wherever they went and were lionised by the masses.

The curtain was thus rung down on the Red Fort drama, but the curtain rose on the final act of the British regime in India which came to an end eighteen months after the Red Fort trial.

The impact of the arrival of the I.N.A. in India and the repercussions of the Red Fort trial affected the Indian personnel of the armed forces in the country. The authorities found out from their intelligence sources that they could no longer rely on the Indian army to continue to rule India.

The navy and the air force mutinied against authority and shook the British empire in India to its foundations.

The British government in London then decided to quit India with the least delay, and sent a Cabinet Mission to India to work out a scheme for the withdrawal of the British authority from India. Lord Louis Mountbatten succeeded Lord Wavell as the last British viceroy of India and worked out and put through a schedule of withdrawal of the British rulers from India.

He witnessed the hauling down of the Union Jack and the hoisting of the Indian national tricolour at the stroke of midnight on the night of August 14/15, 1947. He stayed for some time as independent India's first Governor-General and was succeeded by C. Rajagopalachari in that office. Jawaharlal Nehru became independent India's first prime minister on August 15, 1947.

I.N.A.'S PLEDGE REDEEMED

August 16, 1947 was a highly emotional occasion for the I.N.A. On that day, free India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, hoisted the national tricolour on the ramparts of the Red Fort. The same day, the government of independent India officially released a picture of the historic occasion with the caption, 'In one of the most impressive ceremonies connected with the declaration of independence, the national flag of free India was hoisted over the turreted battlements of the historic Red Fort of Delhi on August 16 by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru while the old guard of the India National Army rallied to redeem an unfulfilled pledge.' The four-year-old pledge of the I.N.A. was to hoist the national tricolour on the viceroy's house in Delhi and to hold a victory parade inside the Red Fort. To the civilian masses in east Asia who heard that pledge from Netaji's own lips, it was a sentimental dream; to old revolutionaries like Baba Amar Singh and Baba Osman Khan, it was an aim; to the I.N.A. it was a military goal to be reached at any cost. Though beaten on the battle-field but wearing its sanctified I.N.A. uniform, a contingent of the I.N.A. personnel participated in the Red Fort function.

When all the excitement and hero-worship following the Red Fort trial died down, and independent India settled down to its new role of a free nation in the comity of nations, the I.N.A. found itself in the wilderness. When the wave of admiration for the I.N.A. was sweeping over the country, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, addressing a public

meeting in Calcutta, said that the I.N.A. would form the nucleus of the army of independent India. But that was not to be. The I.N.A. Inquiry and Relief Committee, with Sardar Patel as president and Sri Prakasa as general secretary, did its best to find employment for the rank-and-file of the I.N.A. But the I.N.A. was not absorbed in independent India's army. Its officers and men were told that they were free to apply for appointment *de novo*; in other words, they could all start at the lowest rungs of the ladder. The reason given was that otherwise there would be "structural difficulties in the armed forces".

When the British started bringing the I.N.A. prisoners from east Asia into India at the end of the war, they classified them into three categories, namely, white, grey and black. Those who did not join the I.N.A. were white, those whom the British considered as misguided in joining the I.N.A. were labelled as grey and those who were aggressively unrepentant and would fight against the British again if they got a chance were marked as 'black' and dismissed from the Indian army and their arrears of pay and allowances were forfeited. The blacks, of course, were in an overwhelming majority, and the British wreaked their vengeance on these patriots who had caused the downfall of their empire in India.

The I.N.A. felt that this was a punishment for their patriotism. The central and state governments in independent India found odd jobs for I.N.A. officers and men, ranging from junior ministerships and ambassadorships to ranks in the Provincial Armed Constabulary. But the I.N.A. as a body was only fit for the army and it was not absorbed in the army.

An I.N.A. rally at Bombay in 1949 urged the Government of India to accept their sacred obligation to the families and dependants of the I.N.A. men who had laid down their lives in the war of liberation, and to the wounded and the disabled; the rally also urged the government to provide an opportunity to all ranks of the I.N.A. to serve

free India by reabsorbing them in their proper ranks in the armed forces of India and to pay them their just dues.

Two years later, in April 1951, at a joint meeting of the All-India I.N.A. Inquiry and Relief Committee and the I.N.A. Advisory Committee at the Government of India secretariat in New Delhi, under the chairmanship of the prime minister, a memorandum on behalf of the I.N.A. was presented to the prime minister by the I.N.A. representatives. The memorandum referred to the fifteen thousand officers and men of the I.N.A. who had reached India from east Asia by the first quarter of 1946. Their arrears of pay and allowances since the fall of Singapore in February 1942 had been forfeited by the then British government of India. Since then about seven thousand of these officers and men had managed to find some employment or other. The remaining eight thousand officers and men were destitute and in a pitiable plight. If the absorption of the I.N.A. in independent India's army was still considered impracticable, then the memorandum urged that as a symbolic gesture, five thousand jawans might be reinstated, obviating any structural difficulties that might perhaps follow the reinstatement of senior and junior officers. If even this was considered impossible, then the I.N.A. might be employed in the border police, the armed police, the ordinary police, intelligence, the home guards or customs and excise.

A melancholy but somewhat amusing sidelight on this conference was the presence of Colonel Gulzara Singh of the I.N.A. who was an ex-minister of the provisional government of Azad Hind, and one of the six trusted associates whom Netaji took with him upto Saigon on his last known flight and "adventure into the unknown". On reaching India, Colonel Gulzara Singh decided that he would only be a soldier in independent India also, and applied for a commission in the army *de novo* as a lieutenant. He joined as a lieutenant, and as a lieutenant in independent India's army, he attended the conference of the I.N.A. with the prime minister.

Two days after the conference, ministers of the Government of India including Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, N.V. Gadgil, C.D. Deshmukh, Hare Krushna Mahatab, and R.R. Diwakar were among the sixty guests at a dinner at the Constitution Club, New Delhi, hosted by Dr Punjabrao Deshmukh, H.V. Kamath and Sonavane, members of parliament, to felicitate Major-General J.K. Bhonsle and others who had attended the joint I.N.A. meeting with the prime minister. Replying to the felicitations, General Bhonsle said it was the dynamic leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose that inspired the three million Indians in east Asia to give their all for the freedom of their motherland. The I.N.A. problem had been hanging fire for the previous five years; he and his colleagues felt that half the battle had been won when they prevailed upon the prime minister to accept the chairmanship of the I.N.A. Relief Committee. The remaining half of the battle could be won with the help of those present at the gathering, and the press and the public. He emphasised that the condition of the rank and file of the I.N.A. was extremely pitiable.

JUSTICE FOR THE I.N.A.

Active and dedicated officers of the I.N.A. formed the Azad Hind Fauj Association in Delhi with the sole aim of keeping Netaji's memory and ideals alive; at the same time it worked hard to get justice done to the I.N.A. personnel through the removal of the stigma of the British days, and for the restoration of arrears of pay and allowances. In May 1967, in an appeal to the members of parliament in a pamphlet entitled *Facts Regarding the Indian National Army Today*, the Azad Hind Fauj Association marshalled facts and figures to show how the I.N.A. had fared at the hands of the government of free India since 1947, and what more remained to be done by way of fuller justice to the ex-members of the liberation army.

The gains of the I.N.A., according to the Association were:

- In April 1948, the government of independent India declared that no stigma should be attached to the members of the I.N.A.; certain monetary payments including lump-sum grants ranging from Rs 400 to 800 were made.
- In 1950, *de novo* commissions were provided for the re-employment of I.N.A. officers. Other ranks were permitted to join at the lowest rank.
- In 1961, the government declared the I.N.A. movement a national movement and its participants at par with other political sufferers.

- In 1963, a financial relief of about Rs 30 lakhs was granted.

But the most important demand contained in the appeal related to the arrears of pay and allowances forfeited by the British regime to penalise the I.N.A. and deprive the freedom fighters of their hard-earned life-time's savings. The forfeited amount totalled two crore rupees in 1946, and by 1967, with compound interest, it must have swelled to five crore rupees even by modest reckoning. As against the five crores, the government had disbursed only 68 lakh rupees.

The Azad Hind Fauj Association intensified its agitation for the restoration of the arrears of pay and allowances, and met the government authorities more than once to press this claim.

At long last, the agitation bore fruit after sixteen years of unrelenting efforts of a handful of I.N.A. officers in Delhi, the moving spirit behind them being Captain L.C. Talwar, the indefatigable general secretary.

In a circular dated November 28, 1970, addressed to all I.N.A. personnel, the Azad Hind Fauj Association conveyed the happy news that the Government of India had finally decided to settle the question of arrears of pay and allowances to the satisfaction of the I.N.A., though this involved a number of complicated calculations affecting the various categories of officers and other ranks. The Association claimed that if it had not agitated since 1954, the forfeited pay and allowances would not have been restored and would have continued to remain a dead loss.

IS NETAJI ALIVE?

The question of Netaji's disappearance from east Asia in 1945 is still a matter of controversy in India.

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's government in April 1956 appointed an official committee of three, comprising Major-General Shah Nawaz Khan, Suresh Chandra Bose, elder brother of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, and S.N. Maitra, I.C.S., Chief Commissioner of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The government asked the Committee "to enquire into and to report to the Government of India on the circumstances concerning the departure of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose from Bangkok around August 16, 1945, his alleged death as a result of an aircraft accident, and subsequent developments connected therewith".

The Committee examined sixty-seven witnesses in Delhi, Calcutta, Bangkok, Saigon, and Tokyo and General Shah Nawaz and S.N. Maitra came to the conclusion "that Netaji met with his death in an aircrash, and that the ashes, now at Renkoji Temple, Tokyo, are his ashes". Suresh Chandra Bose publicly disagreed with his two colleagues and categorically stated that the evidence collected by the Committee "does not warrant the conclusion" arrived at by his colleagues. Not only Suresh Bose but also some other members of Netaji's family even today do not believe that Netaji met with his end in an aircrash in Formosa on August 18, 1945 and that the ashes kept in a temple in Tokyo are Netaji's. In deference to the sentiments of Netaji's family, the Government of India refrained from

acting on the recommendations of General Shah Nawaz and S.N. Maitra that the ashes "be brought to India with due honour, and a memorial erected over them at a suitable place".

Eleven years later, in December 1967, about three hundred and fifty members of parliament submitted a memorandum to the President of India urging, among other things, that a "further inquiry be made with the collaboration of the governments of Japan and Taiwan (where the plane crash took place)...Nothing but such an inquiry will satisfy public opinion by removing the mystery that hangs around Netaji".

There was a communication from Rashtrapati Bhavan to Prof. Samar Guha, member of parliament, convenor, National Committee on Netaji, in May 1968. The following month, Prof. Guha addressing a press conference declared that "a fresh inquiry into the Netaji mystery is a national obligation which cannot remain unfulfilled indefinitely".

The Azad Hind Fauj Association, in September 1968, widely distributed a printed pamphlet reproducing the memorandum of the members of parliament to the President and subsequent correspondence, and reiterated the demand for a fresh inquiry into the disappearance of Netaji.

The Government of India, in a notification dated July 11, 1970 appointed "...a Commission of Inquiry consisting of Shri G.D. Khosla, retired chief justice of the Punjab high court, as sole member".

The notification said "the Commission shall inquire into all the facts and circumstances relating to the disappearance of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in 1945, and the subsequent development connected therewith and make its report to the Central Government..."

The Commission recorded the evidence of a number of witnesses in Delhi, Calcutta, and Bombay and visited Japan to examine witnesses there, including survivors of the aircrash. Finally it visited Taiwan for enquiries on the spot. The Second Commission concurred with the findings of the

First Commission that Netaji passed away as a result of injuries sustained in the aircrash and the ashes preserved at Renkoji temple in Tokyo are his.

NETAJI'S MARRIAGE

Because he was engaged in a life-and-death revolutionary struggle for the liberation of three hundred and eighty million of his countrymen, Netaji deliberately relegated his personal affairs into the distant background. He considered them of no importance whatsoever in the context of the national struggle in which he was so deeply involved. He was never heard openly discussing with anybody in east Asia any member of his family in India—not even his revered mother nor his dearest elder brother, Sarat Chandra Bose. He was most devoted to most of them. He held to the principle that his personal affairs were entirely his own and must never be allowed to intrude into national affairs which were absorbing his time and energy all his waking hours. It was against this background of his thinking that he parried questions from foreign newspapermen in east Asia about his marriage. He was strongly of the view that the question of his marriage was a purely personal matter that concerned himself alone in his individual capacity, and it must never be allowed to distract the attention of the nation or of himself when they were engaged in a national struggle for the country's freedom.

Even those who came into very close contact with him in east Asia from 1943 to 1945 did not know whether Netaji was married. After the war was over and after his disappearance in east Asia, various versions of his marriage began appearing in the newspapers in India. Then, in April 1951, the chairman and members of the I.N.A. Advisory

Committee, in a statement to the press, said that they had so far deliberately refrained from saying anything publicly because they considered it an entirely personal affair.

It is now known that Netaji married Emilie Schenkl, a Viennese lady who was his closest collaborator and co-worker in Europe since 1934, at Badgastein in December 1937. In a letter, he wrote to his brother, Sarat, in February 1943, just on the eve of his departure for east Asia, Netaji asked him to look after his wife and daughter in case he did not survive the war.

Netaji's letters to Emilie were published in a special volume of his collected works in 1995 by the Netaji Research Bureau. She passed away in 1996. Their daughter Anita grew up to be a distinguished economist and is a professor at Augsburg University in Germany. She is married to Martin Pfoff, also an economist and who is now a member of German parliament. They have two sons and a daughter.

THE I.N.A. LIVES

The I.N.A. lives in the hearts of India's millions. Year after year since 1946, the country has been celebrating the birthday of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on January 23. Naturally, his home state of Bengal has been foremost in the elaborate scale and enthusiasm of the celebration of the day. January 23 is also observed as a holiday in Bengal for many years past and the people assemble on that morning to offer floral tributes at the foot of the imposing bronze statue of Netaji on the spacious Calcutta *maidan*. Meetings are held all over the country every year to recall the sacrifices of the I.N.A. in the war of liberation which lasted from 1943 to 1945.

The Azad Hind Fauj Association of Delhi has been keeping alive the memory of Netaji and the I.N.A. by organising Netaji's birthday celebrations year after year on an increasingly elaborate and impressive scale. The capital is reminded at least once a year of the man and the liberation army whose war-cry was '*Chalo Delhi*' and whose aim was to hoist the national tricolour on the viceroy's house and to hold a victory parade inside the Red Fort. Men may come and men may go, but history runs its immortal course. First Jawaharlal Nehru, then Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi and others as independent India's prime ministers, in succession have climbed to the ramparts of the Red Fort in Delhi on the morning of August 15 to hoist the national tricolour and to remind the vast gathering and the nation of the sacrifices of millions of Indians, including

Netaji and the I.N.A. in the cause of India's freedom.

The Azad Hind Fauj Association of Delhi gathers the citizens of the capital from morning till evening on January 23 to remind them in a striking manner how Netaji and the I.N.A. held the torch of freedom aloft during the darkest days of India's national struggle.

The radio and other media of communication of independent India make their own contribution through their networks all over the country on Netaji's birthday.

Netaji Bhavan at Lala Lajpat Rai Road, Calcutta, once the ancestral home of Netaji's family, has been donated to the Netaji Research Bureau by his family to propagate the ideals of Netaji. Sarat Chandra Bose, elder brother of Netaji, front-rank nationalist leader in his own right and undying source of inspiration to Netaji, founded the Bhavan in 1946. The Bhavan has become a national shrine, housing the Netaji Archives and Library and the Netaji Museum. The Bureau has grown up over the years as an internationally known institute of history, political science, and international affairs. Dr Sisir Kumar Bose, Netaji's nephew who helped his uncle escape from his Calcutta home on the night of January 17, 1941, is the moving spirit of Netaji Research Bureau, who toils to make the Bhavan an international centre for research and studies on socio-economic development of independent India and for promoting peace and cooperation among nations of South and Southeast Asia. Netaji Research Bureau attracts scholars from many parts of the world who wish to conduct researches on Netaji's life and the I.N.A.

The Bhavan was the scene of a historic and solemn event on March 19, 1967, when in the presence of a large gathering, Lieutenant-General Fujiwara of Japan formally gifted to the Netaji Museum the sword presented to Netaji by the Japanese in east Asia in 1943. General Fujiwara was a major in the Japanese army that landed in Malaysia in 1942 and helped General Mohan Singh to organise the first Indian National Army in that year. Since that day, nearly

thirty years ago, Fujiwara has taken an abiding and active interest in India's freedom, happiness and prosperity—a rare example of loyalty to the cause of another nation.

Netaji Research Bureau has organised exhibitions on Netaji's life in Bombay, Delhi, Port Blair and other places, international history conferences and more recently, conferences for promotion of peace and cooperation in Asia.

An outstanding event of national importance was the countrywide celebration on October 21, 1968, of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the historic proclamation of the provisional government of Azad Hind by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at Singapore on October 21, 1943.

The main function was held at Moirang, 27 miles (40 km) south of Imphal in Manipur, a spot sanctified by the planting of the national tricolour for the first time on Indian soil on April 14, 1944 by Colonel S.A. Malik of the I.N.A., who administered that territory for some two and a half months in the name of the Azad Hind government, with Moirang as his headquarters. This 'first national shrine' has an I.N.A. museum, library and a large community hall. The Indian National Congress laid the foundation-stone of the memorial in 1955. On the advice of Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri, the previous schemes were revised to spend five to seven lakh rupees on the memorial. The then prime minister, Indira Gandhi and the then chief minister of Mysore, S. Nijalingappa, agreed to give one lakh rupees each; and the chief ministers of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Orissa, Tripura and Gujarat also agreed to donate to the memorial fund.

The following are among the many tributes paid to Netaji on the occasion of the silver jubilee of Azad Hind movement in 1968:

"...The Azad Hind government's action in planting freedom's flag on Indian soil in the Andamans was truly a symbolic precursor of what happened when the tricolour was hoisted atop Delhi's Fort on the August 15th, 1947..." Dr Zakir Husain, the late President of India.

"...The contributions of Subhas Bose to our freedom struggle are well known and form a glorious part of our history..." Dr S. Radhakrishnan, former President of India.

"...Among the galaxy of architects of modern India, Subhas Chandra Bose, whose friendship and association I had the privilege of knowing and enjoying myself closely, is the foremost..." V.V. Giri, the late vice-president of India.

"Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose is a symbol of flaming patriotism and dynamism. His life and his message will remain an inspiration for generations to come. Twenty-five years ago, he founded and led the Azad Hind government. This is a notable event in our history..." Smt Indira Gandhi, the late prime minister of India.

"On this occasion, I make a special plea to all our people—old and young, men and women, boys and girls—to emulate this great son of India in their sense of duty to serve our motherland as true, loyal sons and daughters of the land to keep for ever our hard-won independence as a free people in this land of ours in a fully and truly democratic way..." General K.M. Cariappa, the late Commander-in-Chief, Indian army.

Soon after the I.N.A. reached India in 1945, Mahatma Gandhi said:

"Though the I.N.A. failed in their immediate objective, they have a lot to their credit of which they might well be proud. Greatest among these was to gather together, under one banner, men from all religions and races of India, and to infuse into them the spirit of solidarity and oneness to the exclusion of all communal or parochial sentiment. It is an example which we should all emulate."

On January 23, 1970, inaugurating the seventy-fourth birthday celebrations of Netaji at the Parade Ground,

Delhi, the late President V.V. Giri, in the course of his speech said:

“...I deem it a great privilege to have enjoyed Netaji’s friendship. He was a valued comrade and a leader of the freedom movement...The best tribute that we can pay to the memory of Netaji is to forge unity and strengthen our country and make India achieve its rightful place in the comity of nations.”

Some of the unforgettable scenes witnessed in east Asia during the I.N.A. days more than twenty-five years ago were re-enacted on a modest scale at Madurai in Tamil Nadu on October 11 and 12, 1969.

About two thousand ex-I.N.A. personnel including a hundred ex-members of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment met in Madurai in a rally organised for the first time by the Tamil Nadu I.N.A. League. An amazing sight was the marchpast at which Colonel G.S. Dhillon of the Red Fort trial fame took the salute of the ex-I.N.A. and Rani of Jhansi personnel of whom no fewer than fifteen hundred were in the uniform they had treasured for twenty-five years since the war of liberation. This was an extraordinary reunion of the I.N.A. after nearly a quarter of a century and a wave of emotion swept the rally for two whole days.

Over the past twenty-five years the appeal of Netaji and I.N.A. to the new generations of Indians has grown rather than diminished. Indians born after 1947 are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of Netaji’s teachings and legacy in the socio-economic development of the country. In his birth centenary celebrations all over the country people, regardless of region, religion, language, age or sex took an active part. The Government of India set up a national committee under whose auspices a national programme was held at the Red Fort on January 23, 1997 and commemorative stamps and coins released. The Netaji Research Bureau published a centenary volume of *The Essential Writings of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose* which was

ceremonially released by the President of India. Celebrations on an increasing scale will continue till January 1998. A centenary conference on 'Asian Relations—Past, Present and Future' organised by Netaji Research Bureau in Calcutta in January 1997 became the forerunner of a number of international meetings during the year.

NETAJI IN PERSPECTIVE

The spiritual strain in Subhas Chandra Bose dominated his mind from early boyhood. Saint Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his spiritual heir, Swami Vivekananda, were the greatest influences on the life of Subhas. At fifteen he had read about their lives and teachings and they profoundly influenced him at that impressionable age.

Even from the age of five, he was seen to be shy, reserved and aloof, taking little interest in sports and games, unlike other, normal boys. As a teenager, he was more interested in social service and running after ash-laden sadhus who visited the countryside. Politics as such had no special attraction for him even after he entered college at Calcutta, and terrorist activities of the youth of those days attracted him still less. He was actively interested in constructive national service through education for which he and like-minded college boys began preparing blueprints.

After Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, the next great influence in the life of Subhas came in the shape of Chittaranjan Das (C.R. Das), prince among men, who gave up a fabulous legal practice and dedicated himself to the service of the nation. Subhas decided to follow Das to the last. It was the colossal sacrifice and utter selflessness of Chittaranjan that swept Subhas off his feet.

There is no doubt that from the age of twenty-three, Subhas found himself in the thick of stormy politics, but his inner spiritual storm never abated. He found his strength

and solace in the *Bhagavad Gita* which he read every night before retiring and tried his best to practise at all hours of the day. Physically he was always in the middle of a crowd because of politics, but his soul yearned to be alone and to be in communion with God. On the public platform he would make long speeches. Off the platform, he sought the earliest opportunity to be all by himself, not wanting to speak to anybody. In east Asia, after dinner if he was relaxing in the open and asked anyone to come and sit with him, he would still hardly utter a few words in a whole hour. He needed silence more than company to meditate. Those were the hours during which he recharged his spiritual battery and reinforced his inner strength to wrestle with mundane problems. His greatest hour in the twenty-four hours of the day was when he went to bed at 2 or 3 a.m. and read his *Gita*, night after night, before going to sleep. The strength and serenity that his face radiated when he got up from bed was the result of his spiritual conclusion of the day's hectic activities.

At Singapore, it was a practice with him either to send his car to fetch the *swami* in charge of the Ramakrishna Ashram very late at night or to go there himself, change into a silk *dhoti*, bare above the waist, shut himself up in a room all by himself, meditate for some time and return to his residence for snatching brief sleep before starting the next day's rounds. His revolutionary activities and spiritual meditation went side by side, the one never interfering with the other. If there was any contradiction in this, it was more apparent than real. Basically, he was a *karma yogi* who put the teachings of the *Gita* into practice. And he merely happened to be a politician to the outside world, but the core of him was a *karma yogi*. *Karma yoga* taught him to do his duty with fullest faith in God, whatever the result.

His political differences with Gandhi were acute and uncompromising but he was second to none in his personal regard for the Mahatma. There was no mistaking the sincerity in his tone when he addressed Gandhi over the

Rangoon Radio as the 'Father of our Nation' and sought his blessings. After the war ended in the defeat of the Axis powers and victory for the Allies, Gandhi warned the Allies not to get swollen-headed over their victory. Subhas referred to this in the course of an intimate chat with his cabinet colleagues and said,

"There isn't another man in all India except Gandhiji who will have the courage to say this to the British on the morrow of their victory."

If he had to oppose Gandhiji in the open, he did it with the utmost regret and sensitiveness, but did it uncompromisingly as an inescapable duty. His convictions were deep; he had the courage of his convictions and was always ready to pay the price. He paid the price without flinching when he had to resign the Congress presidentship, and was later debarred from holding any elective office for three years.

He did not change his living habits ever after he became head of state and prime minister of the provisional government of Azad Hind and Supreme Commander of the Azad Hind Fauj. His living habits were simple to the point of austerity. For himself he insisted on having only the same quality of rations as were supplied to the jawans. The jawans more or less knew that they were eating the same food as their Supreme Commander. The rations had necessarily to be different when he had to entertain top-ranking foreign guests.

He was convinced that nothing but the force of arms could dislodge British rule from India, and that the force of arms could be organised only outside India. He, therefore, exiled himself in 1941 at great personal risk and suffering and exposed himself knowingly to the calumny of British propaganda that he was a stooge of the Axis powers. A patriot among patriots, he was dubbed a 'quisling' by war-time enemy propaganda. He was not in the least perturbed, because his convictions were too deep to be

disturbed by abuses or slander. He knew what he wanted and he was determined to get it—armed assistance from outside India to liberate the country.

But Netaji never had any exaggerated notions of his own humble contribution to the nation's freedom struggle. It had begun nearly one hundred and fifty years before he was born and had not ended when he boarded a bomber plane in August 1945 at Saigon on his last known flight. He, therefore, never tired of recalling the sacrifices of the revolutionaries who went to the gallows during the previous century and a half. Time and again, he reminded the I.N.A. and the Indian civilians in east Asia of the unequal and unarmed fight against alien rule under Gandhiji's leadership inside India since 1918, culminating in the 'Quit India' movement of 1942. Netaji told the I.N.A. and Indian civilians in east Asia repeatedly and in plain language:

"Remember that we have opened only a second front to supplement the main fight of the unarmed men, women and children inside India who face British bayonets. You are out of the reach of those bayonets and you are lucky. You have also bayonets of your own with which to fight the enemy on the battle-field. Even if all of you, the three million Indians in east Asia, sacrifice all that you have in this world and also your very lives for the liberation of three hundred and eighty million of your countrymen at home, that is nothing. You have this privilege of your lifetime. Do not miss this golden opportunity. Let not posterity say that you failed your motherland at the most critical hour of her history."

Basically, he was a humanitarian, in the sense that he was prepared to sacrifice his own life in an attempt to liberate the people of India. He was compassionate to a fault. His heart would bleed at the sight of a soldier in agony in hospital. But he had no hesitation in calling upon hundreds of thousands of his countrymen to shed their

blood as the price of freedom. He was sensitive to individual suffering but, at the same time, he deliberately called for suffering and sacrifice on a national scale. He would lead a revolutionary army on the blood-stained road to Delhi, but once the objective was achieved he would be ready to withdraw himself to the Himalayas and to meditation—his first love.

It is too early even now, fifty-two years after his disappearance from east Asia, to see Subhas Chandra Bose in the correct perspective; the dust of controversy around his personality has not yet settled.

Eminent scholars are at the moment engaged in writing the history of India's struggle for freedom including the role played in it by the I.N.A. The central figure in the I.N.A. was Netaji. His figure is bound to emerge in the correct perspective as a result of the labours of eminent historians.

Did spiritualism or politics dominate the life of Subhas? Was he ambitious personally when he struck out on his own path and went into self-exile in war-time? Did he practise all that he preached? What was the real secret of his undoubted courage and bravery? Could he have prevented the Japanese from impinging on India's sovereignty if they had helped him liberate the country? What was the sanction behind him to prevent such a contingency? Was he really and totally uncommitted to the Nazism of Hitler and militarism of Tojo when he solicited and accepted their aid for his cause?

At home, what was his real attitude towards Gandhi and Nehru? Did he consider himself a serious rival to them in the freedom struggle, and did he want to become a dictator if he found himself in free India?

These are some of the questions asked by intellectuals who are not active political partisans but genuine students of public affairs who are anxious to have satisfactory answers.

Above all, Subhas Chandra Bose had unshakable faith in his own destiny as a dedicated soldier in the cause of

India's freedom. He had supreme faith in India's destiny—
"India *will* be free and before long."

In short, what is the true place of Subhas Chandra Bose
in India's history?

Time alone can tell.

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Born in Tamil Nadu in 1898, the author started his career as a journalist in Bombay in 1918 and became Reuter's special correspondent in Thailand in 1941. He joined the Indian Independence League in Bangkok a year later and was minister of publicity and propaganda in the provisional government of Azad Hind. He accompanied Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose from Singapore to Saigon on his last known flight on August 16/17, 1945. After a visit to Japan in 1951, he submitted a report to Jawaharlal Nehru on Netaji's disappearance.

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