

## South-east Asia as a theatre of India's struggle for freedom

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By the beginning of the 20th century many in India had come to believe that ultimately they would have to drive out the British rulers by force and that it was not so impracticable a proposition as it appeared so long. The spectacular achievements of some individual Indians in the West,<sup>1</sup> the sounding victory of Japan over Russia, and the so-called 'splendid isolation' of Britain in world affairs, especially the growing challenge she faced from Germany, convinced them that neither were they hopelessly weak nor were their opponents fearfully strong. But they felt that, like Italy and many other nations which achieved independence in the 19th century, they too would need help, in different ways, from Britain's enemies, and that enemy on the political horizon was Germany.

However, the British Navy still ruled the waves and it was beyond Germany's capability in the near future to intervene directly in Indian affairs. At best, in times of war, she might assist the Indian rebels with money, ammunitions and guidance, and to make full use of them the latter must have secure bases in friendly surroundings in neighbouring countries. From the armed raid could be carried out and arms collected there could be clandestinely smuggled into India. Burma (now Myanmar) was then a province of British-India and so Thailand and Malaya were then India's neighbours.

In the year 1909 two members of the Yugantar Party of Bengal, Nani Bose and Bholanath Chatterjee, were sent to Bangkok and Penang, respectively, to make desirable contacts and to establish bases for use in any future war involving Britain.<sup>2</sup> Malaya too being under British control. Chatterjee could do little beyond establishing contacts with the German engineers, like Lueders, and Indian technicians, like Amar and Narain Singh (both Sikhs), then working in the Bangkok-Butterworth railway under construction. So, in 1911, he too moved over to Bangkok with a job in the local water-works; but the contacts already made with the Germans and Indians in the Thai Southern Railway proved to be of immense value once the First World War had broken out.<sup>3</sup>

However, three years before the war broke out, Friedrich von Bernhardi had written a book, *Germany and the Next War*, wherein he

had suggested that, in the event of a war with Britain, Germany should aid, abet, and utilise the revolutionaries of Bengal against her enemy. That opportunity came after Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914. Indian patriots and students in Germany immediately approached the German Foreign Office. On 3 September a comprehensive agreement was signed between the German Foreign Office and the Indian Independence Committee at Berlin wherein it was decided that the former would initially allot ten million Deutsch Marks for the Indian cause.<sup>4</sup> The money was to be used mainly in two schemes i.e to procure arms in some neutral country for their secret shipment to India, and (2) to collect both arms and their uses on the Indian frontier in Thailand for contacting the Indian armed forces and mounting an attack through the Shan States.

In the meantime, the patriotic aspirations of the fast-growing Indian community on the Pacific Coast of Canada and the U.S. had found expression through the Hindusthane Association of the Pacific Coast. By the time the world war broke out they numbered around 10,000 (mostly Sikh ex-servicemen working in farms, orchards and saw-mills) and their movement had come to be known by their weekly mouth-piece, the *Gadar* (Revolution) which was being published from San Fransisco since 1 November, 1911.<sup>5</sup> Their leaders were informed of the Berlin agreement, and German legations all over the world were instructed to help different Indian groups in their revolutionary endeavour, in all possible ways.

In connection with the first scheme the New York agents of the Krupps were instructed to purchase 80,800 S. Springfield Rifles, 2400 carbines, 410 repeating rifles, 30,04,340 cartridges, 5000 cartridge-belts, 500 Colt Revolvers, and 100,000 cartridges for the same, and to dump those at the appointed sites on the Indian coast. These were loaded into a schooner, *Annie Larsen*, on 8 March 1915, when she left San Fransisco for San Diego where she was to transfer her cargo to S.S. *Maverick* which was to proceed to Java and therefrom to the Indian coast as per instructions received there. A senior member of the *Yugantar* group of Calcutta, Narendra Nath Bhattacharya (later famous as M.N. Roy of the Comintern), came to Jakarta in April to guide the *Maverick* to the appointed sites.<sup>6</sup>

Not to implicate the German embassy on the neutral soil of the Dutch Indies two German brothers, Theodor and Emil Helfferich of the Jakarta branches of Behn, Meyer and Co., and of the Straits and Sunda Syndikat, respectively, were put in charge of secret activities under the over all control of the German Embassy at Shanghai. However, for reasons not



yet known, the Maverick left for Socorro on 23 April, i.e. 45 days after Annie Larsen, and as a result failed to contact her. That was the end of the scheme, and the Maverick reached the port of Anjer near Jakarta on 20 July, 1915, without any arms. In disappointment, Bhattacharya had returned home in June. The arms on the Annie Larsen were sold to the Mexican rebel Villa.<sup>7</sup>

Bangkok, in the meantime, had emerged as a major centre of Indian revolutionary activities. Thanks to the work done by Nani Bose and Bholanath Chatterjee a revolutionary group had already taken shape there around Amar Singh and Buddha Singh Narula (he was hanged there in 1917 and his sons and grandsons now run business in textiles at Sampeng in Bangkok). They were in communication not only with the German engineers in the Thai Railways but also with their compatriots in China and, through them, with the German consulates there. In October 1914 Dr. Voretzsch, former German Consul at Hong Kong, came to Bangkok with DM100,000 to organise the Indian enterprise. Orders were immediately placed for large amounts of arms, while sufficient hush-money was paid to a few Thai newspapers to spread pro-Indian and anti-British sentiments in the country.<sup>8</sup> By December Satyendra Nath Sen and Vishnu Ganesh Pingley, two Indian emissaries from Berlin, arrived at Bangkok after meeting Dr. Sun Yat-Sen and their compatriots in China. Soon, three others, Atmaram Kapoor, Shiv Dayal Kapoor, and Santosh Singh, also came over from China. Thus links were established among different centres of Indian revolutionary activities and their German patrons in the U.S.A. and various East Asian countries.<sup>9</sup> They were also in touch with the Javanese leader Dr. Daus Dekker, then in exile in Germany, and through him with two Indian patriots in Java, Abdul Selam and Hari Singh.<sup>10</sup>

Around Christmas 1914 Sen and Pingley came to India with the latest information about developments in China and Thailand, while Atmaram Kapoor and Kumud Mukherjee (an Indian lawyer at Bangkok) followed them separately after a few weeks and months, respectively.<sup>11</sup> Rangoon, on their way, also had a small revolutionary group enjoying the active assistance of the Turkish Consul, Ahmed Mullah Daud (a local merchant), and disaffection mounted among the soldiers of the 130 Baluchi regiment posted there. They even planned a mutiny but, thanks to some informers, their efforts were nipped in the bud and many of them were punished.<sup>12</sup> Similar disaffection was visible among the Malay States Guides also, who in December 1914 refused to board the ship at Singapore for East Africa and were severely dealt with. However, a really

serious outbreak took place at Singapore when on 15 February 1915 the 5th Light Infantry composed mainly of Punjabee Muslims and a small contingent of Sikhs defied their officers, killed some of them and released over 300 German prisoners of war. They could be subdued after four days only with Japanese help.<sup>13</sup>

This so-called Singapore mutiny and reports of stirrings among Indian soldiers in northern India and Burma made both the Indian and Germans serious about the proposed armed incursion from Thailand. By early 1915 nearly a couple of thousands revolutionary volunteers had arrived in Thailand, a party of German military instructors led by one George Paul Boehm had been sent to Bangkok while another ship-load of arms worth 20,000 US Dollars had been sanctioned.<sup>14</sup> A small ship *Henry S.*, then waiting at Manila, was chartered for carrying 164 packages of arms from the holds of two war-bound German vessels, *Sachsen* and *Sueve*, to Bangkok and then to Chittagong near the Bengal-Burma border (now in Bangladesh). Again this mission failed because of the callous attitude of the concerned German officials. The ship left Manila for Pontianak on the western coast of Kalimantan (then Dutch Borneo) in the second week of July 1915, but could not proceed beyond Paleleh because of engine breakdown. There her entire cargo was confiscated.<sup>15</sup>

In the meantime, it was further planned that the war-bound German ships at Sabang in the north of Sumatra could be filled with arms and explosives and then used for sudden breaking of the British blockade to liberate the political prisoners at Port-Blair in the Andamans and to land them with arms on the estuary of the Rai Mangal (an arm of the Ganga in the delta, now in Bangladesh but not far from Calcutta), and on the coast near the Bengal-Orissa border.<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately, however, while the Indian revolutionaries kept watch for months at both the spots the arms-ships never left their port, because the Germans at the last moment developed cold feet. They thought that too blatant a violation of Dutch neutrality might affect their over all interest adversely.<sup>17</sup> By then the British authorities had come to know of these Indian movements and had alerted their Thai counterparts. Although there was considerable sympathy in Thailand for India (the land of the Buddha) their government was unwilling to antagonise the British. So, on 1 August 1915, the crackdown took place and most of the Indian activists were rounded up in and around Bangkok.<sup>18</sup> Only those in Chiang Mai or on the Burma border escaped immediate arrest. Most of them, though unprepared, entered Burma through the Shan States to contact



Indian soldiers and policemen posted there. But operating in hastily-formed small groups and without proper coordination and preparations they could achieve little and were eventually rounded up and jailed.<sup>19</sup>

When Narendra Nath Bhattacharya and Phanindra Nath Chakravarty from Calcutta did not return, having again left for Java on 15 August 1915 and the expected ships never turned up their irate colleagues in Bengal sent Bhupati Majumdar and then Shantipada Mukherjee on their trail to knock at other doors for arms and to find out what had happened to their predecessors. While Majumdar was captured by a British man-of-war in the China Sea and was brought to Singapore, Mukherjee also got stuck in China.<sup>20</sup> Thus, by the middle of 1916, links between Indian revolutionaries at home and in East Asia got snapped and the British and their allies, including the neutral Dutch, had been sufficiently alerted.

In that situation nothing could be done by the Indians or their friends in S.E. Asia for the former's independence. Only the doyen of Indian revolutionaries abroad, Rash Behari Bose, who had escaped to Japan in May 1915 and had soon secured both a Japanese wife and citizenship, stayed on in Japan as a beacon light of Indian aspirations. Soon after the war he was joined by A.M. Sahay, A.M. Nair, and Devnath Das who helped him in keeping the voice of India heard in the east through a journal with the same name and the *Voice of Asia*. Devnath Das, among them, used to shuttle between Tokyo, Bangkok, and Calcutta maintaining links with Indian nationalists there.<sup>21</sup>

However, Indian nationalist activities in Thailand received a boost when in September 1932, a revolutionary intellectual, Prafulla Kumar Sen, better known by his monastic name Swami Satyanand Puri, reached Bangkok with a letter for the King of Thailand from the Nobel Laureate poet, Rabindra Nath Tagore. Outwardly, his main task was to reinterpret Indian culture but, in that process, he infused the growing Indian community there numbering around 10,000 by the mid-30s with self-confidence and a sense of purpose. Within a year he was joined by Giani Preetam Singh who too served the same purpose, mainly, among the local Sikhs.

Still, there was a visible difference between the political views of these two revolutionary holy men. While Preetam Singh was all admiration for the Japanese and her desired role as the liberator of Asia, the Swami was critical of Japan's imperialist ambition and her misdeeds in Korea and China.<sup>22</sup> However, Indian nationalist activities received a further boost when in 1934 Amar Singh, remembered for his revolutionary activities in Thailand during World War 1, was released from a



British prison and came over to Bangkok. He was soon joined by young local patriots, like Raghunath Sharma, Chanda Singh, Kushal Singh, Harnam Singh, Manohar Singh, and Narain Singh Chawla.

In 1939 Narain Singh Chawla came to India to study the national scene and to appraise like-minded leaders of the developments in East Asia.<sup>23</sup> Next year Devnath again visited Bangkok and the Swami availed of the opportunity to establish the Thai-Bharat Cultural Lodge to act as a centre of Indian activities and to promote Indo-Thai relations. They were also in touch with Col. Yotani of the Japanese Embassy at Bangkok who placed Major Fujiwara in contact with Preetam Singh's group on his arrival there in October 1941.<sup>24</sup> In the meantime, three veteran Indian revolutionaries had escaped from Hong Kong central jail to Canton and then to Bangkok and had implored the Japanese authorities not to let go the opportunity when Anglo-French forces were in shambles in the west and Indians at home and in South East Asia, along with the local population, were willing to fight for their freedom.<sup>25</sup> How far they really influenced Japanese decisions it is impossible to ascertain.

However, the great day for Indians in South East Asia dawned when, on 8 December 1941, Japan declared war on Britain and the U.S.A. and marched into Thailand. The following day Thailand accepted Japanese protection as an ally and Pritam took the lead in establishing the Indian Independence League to be the mouth-piece and coordinator of all Indian nationalist activities in Japanese occupied Asia. At the same time, Japanese forces landed near Kota Bahru on Kelantan coast, while their main army group rushed down the Kra Peninsula to cross into Malaya by the 10th. By the 12th 1/14 Punjab Regiment had been completely surrounded and by-passed in the jungles of western Perak and their senior most Indian officer, Major Mohan Singh, being left in the lurch by his British seniors, joined the Japanese on the 14th. His fateful meeting with Major Fujiwara took place on the 15th at Alor Star and it was decided between them that the former would be in charge of all Indian P.O.W.s, take care of Indian interests, and maintain peace in the rear, while Japan would give him all possible help to organise a national army out of the Indian civilians and P.O.W.s available there.<sup>26</sup>

The next important event was the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942. On that day Lt. Gen. A.E. Percival surrendered with 85,000 troops 45,000 of whom were Indians. Mohan Singh had already under him over 10,000 Indian P.O.W.s and now these 45,000 too were placed in his charge at a meeting at Farrer Park, a few days later. There the proposal to build an Indian National Army was accepted with applause.<sup>27</sup> On 16

February, Gen. Tojo made a speech in the Imperial Diet and said, 'Japan expects that India will regain its proper status as India for Indians and she would not stink herself in extending assistance to the patriotic efforts of the Indians'.<sup>28</sup> Rash Behari Bose immediately called on senior Japanese functionaries and called a meeting of representative Indians from different parts of Japanese-controlled Asia in Tokyo at the end of March. The meeting took place in Tokyo although both Swami Satyanand Puri and Giani Pritam Singh were killed in an air crash on their way to this conference and a larger one met at Bangkok, from 15 to 23 Jun, 1942, for organising the Indian Independence League (IIL) and the future Indian National Army (INA) for their common and ultimate aim of liberating India.<sup>29</sup>

However, these conference and virtually every week that passed only brought to surface the differences and difficulties that plagued all plans and promises. It was apparent that, no matter what Fujiwara might have assured Mohan Singh, the Japanese had no intention to treat Indians with respect or to allow them to organise their own fighting force. They wanted to use Indians as labourers, sentries or, at best, as spies. Nor were they prepared to forward to Tokyo any request seeking a declaration in favour of Indian's independences at the end of the war.

So, the initial enthusiasm among the Indians gave way to suspicion and cynicism about Japanese intentions. No one, after all, was interested in a change of masters.<sup>30</sup> Besides, the civilian Indian intelligentsia suffered from another mental block, i.e. the attitude of their national leaders at home. The congress was not only wedded to non-violence, it was known to be opposed to fascistic militarist powers, like Germany, Italy and Japan. Then, what should Indian do without hearing from their leaders in India?<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the growing suspicion for Japan affected the attitude of many towards their President, Rash Behari Bose. He was in Japan since 1915, had married a Japanese, was a Japanese citizen, and his only son, Masahide (moon of India), was a Lt. in the Japanese army. So, he and other Indian members on the council of Action from Japan were suspected to be Japanese puppets. Professionally successful people, like S.C. Goho, N. Raghavan, K.P.K. Menon, or S.N. Chopra, were not beholden to the Japanese arguments, assurances, and Rash Behari's leadership without scrutiny. Lastly, there were differences between the army wing of the movement led by Mohan Singh and the elderly civilians leaders of the I.I.L.<sup>32</sup>

Still, progress was made towards the common aim. During the conference at Bangkok all the Indian organisations in Japanese occupied



Asia were merged into the I.I.L. Around 40,000 Indian P.O.W.s had agreed to join the future INA by the autumn of 1942, and on 1 September the 1st division of the I.N.A. came into existence consisting of 16,300 officers and men.<sup>33</sup> An institution had already been set up under Raghavan for training chosen P.O.W.s in espionage and sabotage work, at Penang, and Mohan Singh was working hard to raise the 2nd Division. However, the last word was with the Japanese authorities. They were the conquerors and they had the resources and funds, and the I.N.A. was consistently prevented from being equipped and used like a modern army. They would often issue orders and act without any reference to the concerned Indian leader or agency. These led to a show-down, in the first week of December 1942, in which three members of the highest Council of Action resigned. Mohan Singh disbanded the I.N.A., and was taken into custody on 8 December.<sup>34</sup> The first I.N.A. has ceased to exist and a chapter in India's struggle for freedom in S.E. Asia was closed.

Rash Behari Bose, however, like a life-long revolutionary persisted with this effort to keep the movement alive and now the Japanese also showed signs of recognition of Indian aspirations. Right from the day Mohan Singh had met Fujiwara almost every Indian on all occasions had demanded that Subhas Chandra Bose, then in exile in Germany, should be brought over to the East to lead the Indian movement. Indians believed that he would be able to influence the Japanese while the latter hoped that he would be able to exercise a stronger leadership than the old Rash Behari. So, now they took up the matter seriously with the Germans who allowed him to leave Kiel by a submarine on 8 February 1943.

After transferring himself to a Japanese submarine east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean Bose reached the island of Sabang on 6 May after the longest submarine journey, so far, by any individual. A special plane took him to Tokyo on 16 May where his presence was deliberately kept a secret for a month. The Tokyo Radio announced his arrival in Japan on 18 June.<sup>35</sup> The Syonan Shimbun editorially commented that 'the arrival of Subhas Chandra Bose marks another milestone in the progress of India in her fight for freedom'.<sup>36</sup> In the meantime, Bose had two meetings with Prime Minister Tojo and Foreign Minister M. Shigemitsu on the 10th and 14th of June, and both of them were charmed by Bose's personality and programme of action. The Japanese Government now accepted his plea for setting up a provisional government of Free India, and Bose went to Singapore on 2 July to face his long sought after challenge.<sup>37</sup>

The formal transfer of authority of the I.I.L. and the movement from the older (Rash Behari) to the younger (Subhas Chandra) Bose took place



on 4 July. The immediate task before him was the reorganisation of the I.I.L. and to set up a provisional government which could deserve recognition of, at least, some friendly states. Hitherto the semi-defunct I.I.L. had five departments which, on the 13th, he expanded to twelve.<sup>38</sup> He was invited to be present at Burma's national day of independence on 1 August 1943, and Bose left for Rangoon via Bangkok on 25 July. Soon he established a personal rapport with Pibulsonggram and Ba Maw, the P.M.s of Thailand and Burma, respectively, and with Lt. Gen. Nakamia the chief of Japanese forces in Thailand.<sup>39</sup> These went a long way in protecting the honour and interests of Indians in those countries and in securing assurances of local support in mobilising all possible resources for the impending assault on India. It took him some time and great effort to persuade R.M. Terauchi, the C.I.C. of the Southern Expeditionary Forces, to allot a combat role to one I.N.A. regiment (equivalent to one brigade of the British Army) in the ensuing campaign for Imphal and to take a decision about other regiments in future on the basis of the former's performance.<sup>40</sup> So, he personally took over command of the army as its Supreme Commander on 25 August, and the existing three regiments were grouped into the 1st Division under a Muslim officer, Lt. Col. M.Z. Kiani.<sup>41</sup> They were soon sent to north Malaya for intensive training. But they remained ill-equipped and the obvious discriminatory conduct of the Japanese irked the Indians and affected their morale. Bose insisted that the I.N.A. should be a body 50,000 strong, but the Japanese said that they could equip 30,000 only, at best. However, because of Bose's persistence and contact at certain levels the I.N.A. numbered 45,000 when it virtually disintegrated at the end of the war.<sup>42</sup>

While the maximum attention was given to the task of mobilising the resources of the local Indians in Thailand and Malaya and of recruiting and training civilians for the I.N.A. the necessary ground work was done and the Provisional Government of Free India (Azad Hind Sarkar) was announced before a large gathering in the Cathay Cinema Hall, in Singapore, on 21 October, 1943.<sup>43</sup> Apart from Bose, who became both the head of state and the government, there were four other ministers, S.A. Ayer, A.M. Sahay, A.C. Chatterjee, and Mrs. Lakshmi Swaminathan. Besides, there were to be 16 advisers, 8 from the army and 8 from among the civilians.<sup>44</sup> Within a few weeks nine states on the side of the Axis Powers sent their recognition of the Azad Hind Sarkar (herein after referred to as the Sarkar). On the 23rd the Sarkar declared war on Britain and her European allies.<sup>45</sup> It was also decided that Indians would pay for all their civilian activities, recruitment, and training, while Japan would

pay for the arms and the maintenance of the Indian P.O.W.s. unfortunately, the rich Indians were not as generous as the rest and a certain amount of coercion had to be exerted before levying 10 to 20 percent of their assets in the name of 'total mobilisation' for the war of independence.<sup>46</sup>

On 25 October 1943, Bose again went to Tokyo for discussions with the imperial authorities and to take part in the Assembly of the Greater East Asian National, as an observer, on 5 and 6 November. He did not accept full membership because that might mean India's inclusion in the proposed Co-prosperity Sphere.<sup>47</sup> During his stay there the Imperial Government agreed to hand over to the Sarkar the administration of all Indian evacuee property in Burma as well as of the two groups of islands in the Bay of Bengal, the Andamans and Nicobar. These were promptly renamed Sahid and Swaraj islands, respectively, and Lokenathan was sent there as its Chief Commissioner.<sup>48</sup> Thus the Sarkar received, more or less, at the same time recognition from nine states and a territory to govern. Her own head-quarters were shifted from Singapore to Rangoon on 7 January 1944<sup>49</sup> and, soon thereafter, the third requirement of an independent state was met when Hachiya was sent there as the ambassador of Imperial Japan.<sup>50</sup> It was also agreed upon between Bose and Lt. Gen. Kawabe of the Burma Area Army that, henceforth, courtesy between Japanese and I.N.A. officers (former prisoners) would be determined by seniority alone, and that the lower ranks of the Japanese Military Police would have no authority over I.N.A. personnel. These removed to a great extent the irritants that had affected Indo-Japanese relations for so long.<sup>51</sup>

Early in 1944, the Japanese planned an offensive into eastern India not so much to conquer the country but to strengthen their own defence of Burma against Anglo American counter-offensive. The 55 Division of the Imperial Army was the first to open the offensive on the Arakan front, in the last week of January, with the support of around 200 members of I.N.A.'s Bahadur Group who specialised in reeve and subversion. They were led by Major L.S. Mishra and even British generals and authors admit that it was mainly owing to the subversion of an Indian outpost by Major L.S. Mishra, the I.N.A. Commander in Arakan, that the 7th Indian Division and the entire 15 Corp were completely cut off from the rest of the British, Indian Army and had to fall back rapidly.<sup>52</sup> This, obviously, raised the stature of the I.N.A. in the eyes of Japanese generals and two battalions of I.N.A. regulars and two companies of the Bahadur Group were included in the 33rd Japanese Division which struck at Imphal front



on 8 March 1944. Between 4 February and middle of May the I.N.A. crossed into Indian territory in a couple of sectors in the Arakans and around Bishenpur in the Imphal front. However, the disparity in the resources of the two opposing armies was so wide that Japanese efforts were bound to fail after the initial surprise. The maximum strength of the 15th and 33rd Japanese Divisions, including around 8000 I.N.A. personnel, was 61,000 as against 90,000 of the British-Indian forces present there. Besides, the latter's strength was growing weekly and they enjoyed the crucial 10:1 superiority in the air. By May 1944 it was clear that the offensive had failed but, because of the disastrous delay caused by certain formalities in the Japanese Southern Army Headquarters, the order for withdrawal could be issued by Lt. Gen. Kawabe only on 9 July. Because of the monsoon which, by then, had broken with full force, and the near total failure of logistics the retreat eventually became a rout and the Allied forces continued with their advance to Rangoon and beyond till Japan surrendered in August 1945.

Small in number, poor in resources, and never taken seriously by Japanese commanders, the military role and responsibility of the small I.N.A. force involved in these campaigns was minimal. It had been fondly hoped that the appearance of the I.N.A. on the front and the establishment of a provisional government by Bose himself, somewhere near his home province Bengal, would cause large-scale desertions from the British-Indian ranks and something like a general uprising, at least, in north-eastern India. Except on a couple of occasions the first did not happen, while the Japanese forces never succeeded in capturing any Indian town, like Imphal, Dimapur or Kohima, where such a provisional government could be established. British counter-espionage, censorship of the press, and buzzing of the radio stations of the Sarkar and of the Axis Powers were so successful that not many in India knew in those years what was actually happening in South East Asia, and British propaganda could paint the few I.N.A. soldiers on the front as Japanese puppets and traitors to their oath. So, the desired reaction never took place especially when, after the suppression of the August revolt of 1942 (Quit India agitation), India lay prostrate, defeated and dispirited. So, the I.N.A. movement, like a ripple raised on the crest of wave, fell into a trough along with their Japanese allies. Militarily its role was extremely restricted, performance rather poor, and defeat beyond doubt.

Yet, despite its failure on the battle-front, the I.N.A. in defeat proved to be a tremendous psycho-political force that shook the foundations of the British Empire in India. For once in modern times the British-Indian

soldiers as captors felt small before the captives of the I.N.A. and ashamed of their victory on behalf of their alien masters. They listened with reverence to all that the I.N.A. personnel said in exaggerated terms of their struggle, sacrifice and Netaji (as Bose was known to and addressed by Indians abroad), i.e. the leader. The virus of nationalism spread fast among Indian soldiers, sailors and airmen alike. Netaji Bose's portraits appeared on the walls of barracks and officers messes. The entire nation was electrified with an unimaginable euphoria of expectation and confidence, and prayed for the honourable release of the first three accused, Captains Shah Nawaz Khan, P.K. Saigal, and G.S. Dhillon. Though the judges found them guilty the King granted them pardon under pressure from all quarters. In late February 1946 the ratings of the Royal Indian Navy mutinied both at Bombay and Karachi, and a similar mutiny of airmen followed at Jabalpure, a few weeks later. The British rulers realise that Indians were no longer prepared to accept their rule and to fight and die for them. It has been rightly said that the ghost of Bose (who is believed to have died in an air crash at Taipeh on 18 August 1945) influenced virtually every political decision at all levels in England and India, and India was totally free within two years of the I.N.A.'s resounding failure inspiring echoes of which became louder and louder as they reached millions of Indian homes hundreds of miles away from the scenes of battle, South-East Asia played its part as the base for the liberation of most of South Asia.

#### Keys to Abbreviations

- H.P. = Home Political records of the Govt. of India in the custody the National Archives of India at New Delhi (N.A.I.)
- DAA = Records of Deutsche Auswartiges Amt (German Foreign Office) available with the National Archives of India in reels of microfilms
- Roll = Microfilmed rolls of proceedings of the Hindu Conspiracy Trial at San Fransisco and Chicago in 1917-18 (with N.A.I., New Delhi).
- Rowlat = Report of the Sedition Enquiry Committee of 1918 presided over by Justice Rowlatt
- F.P. = Foreign and Political records of the Govt. of India with N.A.I., New Delhi
- I.I.L. = Indian Independence League
- I.N.A. = Indian National Army formed in S.E. Asia
- Sarkar = Azad Hind Sarkar, i.e. Provisional Govt. of Free India established at Singapore on 21 October 1943
- D.C.I., = Director, Criminal Intelligence, Govt. of India



NOTES

1 Swami Vivekananda (32 years) was the most acclaimed speaker at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in October, 1893. In 1895 Prince Ranji of Jamnagar in western India was acknowledged as the best batsman in England. In 1897 Atul Chatterjee stood first in the Indian Civil Service examination in London. In 1899 R.P. Paranjpe became the Senior Wrangler in Cambridge. J.C. Bose's experiments with wireless telegraphy in London in 1896 and with plant psychology in Paris in 1901 were sensational.

2 J. Mukherjee, *Viplabi Jeebaner Smriti* (Bengali) (Reminiscences of a revolutionary life), Calcutta, 1956, p.29.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 30 Also, British Minister at Bangkok to Secretary, Foreign and Political, India, on 25-10-1915, H.P. 1915 Nov. 254-257B. Also Report from British Legation, Bangkok, dated 22-3-1915, H.P. 1915 Jun 10-88B.

4 A.C. Bhattacharya, *Europey Bharatiya Viplaber Sadhana* (Bengali), i.e. Efforts for an Indian revolution in Europe, Calcutta, 1958, pp. 133-47. Also, Herbert Mueller's letter to the author, dated 18-3-1959. He was actively associated with these negotiations.

5 S. Chandrasekhar, 'The Indian Community in the United States', *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol. 14, No. 11 (6-6-45), pp. 147-48. Also, R.K. Das, *Hindusthanee Workers on the Pacific Coast*, Berlin, 1923, pp. 4-10.

6 G.T. Brown, 'The Hindu Conspiracy and the Neutrality of the United States, 1914-1917', unpublished M.A. thesis of the University of California, 1941 (in rolls of microfilm with the N.A.I., New Delhi, pp. 32-33. Also, E.E. Sperry, *German Plots and Intrigues in the U.S.A. during the period of Our Neutrality*, Washington, 1918, pp. 46-47.

7 Letters of Emil Helfferich and of the former Vice-Consul, Erich Windels, to the author, dated 17-9-1956 and 1-11-1956, respectively.

8 Report from German Consulate, Canton, dated 15-10-1914, DAA, Reel 398, file 12-31.

9 Note by Albert Bernstorff, German Ambassador at Washington, dated 18-1-1915, DAA, Reel, 398, File, 1-11. Also, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 28-2-1918, p. 9.

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