CHAPTER SEVEN
During the Imphal campaign, about fifteen hundred I.N.A. soldiers were captured by the British Indian Army. (1) Many more fell into the British hands in Burma, Thailand, Malaya and Singapore. (2) The repatriation to India of the Indian soldiers who joined the I.N.A. started in May 1945 and continued till the first quarter of 1946. Although some of the I.N.A. prisoners who were captured during the Imphal campaign were at once court-martialled and punished, the need for the Government of India to formulate a definite policy towards the I.N.A. personnel arose after the war came to an end. (3) No step was taken by the Government of India against the civilian recruits of the I.N.A. from South-East and East Asia. This chapter discusses the repercussions in Indian politics of the decision to prosecute the former members of the Indian army who joined the I.N.A.


(2) According to Col. R.M. Arshad, the Chief of Staff to Col. Loganathan who was in charge of all I.N.A. soldiers left by Bose in Burma, about 5000 to 6000 I.N.A. soldiers surrendered in Rangoon in 1945. Col. R.M. Arshad, "What Happened In Rangoon After Netaji Left," Netaji Souvenir: A Nation In Arms (Kuala Lumpur, 1946) 1. The exact total number of the former members of Indian army who surrendered in Thailand, Malaya, Singapore and other parts of South East Asia in 1945 as a part of the I.N.A. is not known. The Secretary of the War Department of the Government of India, Mr. Philip Mason, stated in February 1946 in the Indian Central Assembly that in that month the Government had in prison camps 19500 I.N.A. soldiers who had been formerly in the British Indian army. Hindu (Madras) 8 February 1946, 4. Later, while writing the foreword to a book, Mason mentioned a different figure - 25,000. See Philip Mason, Foreword in Toye, n. 1, VIII. Hereinafter referred to as Mason.

(3) According to the Secretary of the War Department of the Government of India, 27 were court-martialled and punished and 9 hanged during war. Hindu, 8 February 1946, 4.
1. The policy of the Indian army authorities towards the I.N.A. prisoners

Within a few days after the end of the Pacific War, it was known that the India Office in London would leave it entirely to the Government of India to decide the policy towards the Indian soldiers who had joined the I.N.A. (4) The Government of India, more specifically the authorities of the Indian army, lost no time in taking up the task. (5)

Difference in the attitude of the British officers towards the I.N.A. prisoners

The British were generally hostile to the I.N.A. and more particularly to its officers who were considered responsible for having weaned over the ordinary ranks from their loyalty to the British Crown. Strictly speaking, there was no one view in the Indian army about the I.N.A. In fact, on the I.N.A. question, one can trace at least two different views in the Indian army. The attitudes of the British officers (6) have been accurately expressed in the following words:

(4) Hindu, 20 August 1945, 1.

(5) Within a week after the end of the Pacific War a press communiqué issued by the Government of India stated that they were "considering very carefully the treatment to be given to the Indian soldiers who joined the enemy." Hindu, 22 August 1945, 4.

(6) The attitude of the Indian officers towards the I.N.A. would be discussed later in this chapter.
The British, both in England and in India, were understandably hostile to the I.N.A. as a movement and to its members, particularly its officer corps. Their antipathy towards the I.N.A. ranged from tolerance born out of necessity to bitterness derived from hostility. The greatest official tolerance among the British to I.N.A. came from those who were working toward the independence of India as expediently as possible, notably the upper political and military leadership; the greatest hostility came from the British officers who had both a personal and a professional interest in seeing the I.N.A. punished as heavily as possible. For both groups, the trial of the I.N.A. officers served as a focal point and test of their relative strength. (7)

Attitude of the senior British officers of the Indian army.
The group hostile to the I.N.A. consisted mainly of the British officers in the Indian army, including the senior officers like the G.O.C. Eastern Command, the G.O.C. Southern Command and the Commanders of the Central Command and the North West Army and the Adjutant-General of the Army Headquarters. (8) As professionals, these officers held stability in the army and loyalty to the higher authorities as above everything in the army. (9) They were,


(9) Gen. Tuker, who can be taken as the representative of these officers, argues that discipline in the army should be maintained at all cost and no political consideration should be allowed to stand in the way of administration of discipline. He vehemently charged the I.N.A. officers of breaking the trust placed in them and characterised them as "rabble". The bitterness

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therefore, disposed to see the I.N.A. question by itself in isolation from any political consideration. They failed to foresee the political consequences that any vindictive measure against the I.N.A. might create in the country. In general, they viewed the I.N.A. question purely as a case of administration of military discipline and suggested "routine treatment" for I.N.A. personnel for the crime of throwing off the loyalty and waging war against the British Crown. (10) The logical corollary of this view would be the punishment of all the Indian soldiers who had joined the I.N.A. and at the end of the war, been recovered by the Indian army.

Attitude of the highest civil and military authorities. The higher military and the civil authorities of New Delhi (11) adopted a more cautious and considered view on the I.N.A. question. The possibility of the release of the I.N.A. prisoners without any trial was ruled out. In view of the known opinion of the

of this group of senior officers against the I.N.A. as a whole can be partially explained by the fact that many of these officers had encountered the I.N.A. in the front. The opinion of some of them was coloured by their disliking for the I.N.A.'s Supreme Commander. Tuker described Bose as "a plump Bangali Brahman [sic] of overweening personal ambition" who "permeated the core of the I.N.A. body with a rigid, utterly intolerant, tightly-closed and diseased mentality." See Tuker, n. 8, 69, 72; see also 53 and 58.

(10) Generals Tuker, O'Connor (Commander of the Indian North West Army), and Scones (the Commander of the Central Command of India) strongly argued against any leniency being shown to the I.N.A. officers. See Tuker, ibid., 54; see also General O'Connor to General Auchinleck, 24 November 1945 and General Scones to General Auchinleck, Connell, n. 8, 804-5.

(11) With the exception of the Adjutant-General of the Indian Army Headquarters, General Deeds, who supported the views of Tuker.
senior British officers - on whom the efficiency and to a great extent the existence of the Indian army ultimately depended - it would have been too great a blow to their faith in the higher authorities in New Delhi. (12) On the other hand, the views of the senior British officers were not entirely shared by the highest military authorities, as the latter believed that the treatment to be meted out to the I.N.A. was not merely a military question. It was partly political and the consequences of the official policy was bound to have its impact on Indian public opinion. To some extent, therefore, it would affect the prospects of a satisfactory post-war political settlement between the two countries. (13) The highest civil authorities in New Delhi supported the line of thinking of the Headquarters of the Indian army. (14)


(13) These considerations continued to influence the C-in-C's thinking when he was faced with the duty of confirming the findings of the court martial of the I.N.A. officers. It will be discussed later in this chapter.

(14) Mr. Philip Mason who had a great deal to do with the formulation of the official policy towards the I.N.A. officers as the Secretary of the Department of War, Government of India, thus wrote about the I.N.A. prisoners: "All were guilty of an offence legally punishable by death, but of course there could be no question of executing twenty-five thousand men. It would have been cruel, impassible and unjust." Mason, n. 2, VIII, Emphasis added.

The letters from Auchinleck to the Viceroy during October and November 1945 show that the Viceroy agreed in general with Auchinleck on the question of the I.N.A. trials. See General Auchinleck to Sir Evan Jenkins, 20 October 1945, General Auchinleck to Viceroy, 26 November 1945, in Connell, n. 8, 801-2, 806-7. (Jenkins was the Private Secretary to the Viceroy).
The modified formula for treating the I.N.A. prisoners

The policy of the Government towards the I.N.A., which was announced in a press communiqué on 27 August 1945, (15) embodied a modified attitude. There would be no mass-punishment for the I.N.A. It was decided that those who had joined the I.N.A. with the intention of deserting or sabotaging it, would be classed as 'White' and restored to their former position. (16) Those who "yielded to pressure" or were "misguided" to join the I.N.A. would be classed 'Grey', and treated "with mercy and generosity." (17) They would be "summarily tried, dismissed and released." (18) The 'Black' were those who had 'consciously' joined the I.N.A. They would be tried, dismissed and in most cases, their death penalty would be commuted for short imprisonment. (19) Those who were previously in responsible positions and later on not only joined the I.N.A. willingly, but committed atrocities to force others to join the I.N.A. were graded 'Blackest'. The Government would "allow law to take its course" in their case. (20)

(15) For the text of the communiqué see Kessing's Contemporary Archives, 1946-8 (London) 7821.

(16) Mason, n. 2, VIII.

(17) Kessing's Contemporary Archives, 1946-8, 7821.

(18) Mason, n. 2, IX.

(19) Kessing's Contemporary Archives, 1946-8, 7821 and Mason, Ibid.

(20) Ibid.
The first I.N.A. court martial. Three I.N.A. officers from the last category were chosen for the first I.N.A. court martial. Lt. Col. G.S. Dhillon, Lt. Col. P.K. Sahgal and Major-Gen. Shah Nawaz Khan were accused of waging war against the King, of murder and abetment to murder. (21) The C-in-C decided that the trial should be held in public so that facts revealed by the trial would horrify Indian public opinion. (22)

The first I.N.A. court martial opened at the Red Fort in Delhi on 6 November (1945) and continued till 31 December 1945. The court found all the three accused guilty of waging war against the King while Shah Nawaz Khan only was convicted on the charge of abetment to murder. (23) The Commander-in-Chief as the confirming officer expressed his satisfaction with the findings of the court. He confirmed the sentence of cashiering, forfeiture of pay and allowance of the accused persons as recommended by the court martial but remitted the heavier part of the punishment, namely, the sentence of transportation for life. Several other courts martial of the former I.N.A. members were held subsequently. Of these the cases of Abdul Rashid, Singhara Singh and Fateh Khan can be taken up as example. Abdul Rashid whose trial opened on 9 January 1946 was found guilty of waging


(22) Mason, n. 2, XI.

(23) Motiram, ed., n. 21, 303.
war against the King and acts of brutalities and sentenced to transportation for life, cashiering and forfeiture of pay. The sentence of transportation for life was commuted by the C-in-C to rigorous imprisonment. Singhara Singh and Fateh Khan whose trial opened on 9 January were found guilty of murder, acts of brutalities and of waging war against the King. The sentence of death passed by the court martial was commuted by the C-in-C to rigorous imprisonment. (24) All this indicated a change in the declared policy of the Government towards the I.N.A. What were the factors which would explain this change?

2. The nationalist reaction to the official policy towards the I.N.A.

The change was brought about by the nation-wide agitation against punishing the I.N.A. officers. In the emergence of a nationalist front against the Government's I.N.A. policy, the attitude of the Indian political parties, more particularly that of the Congress, had an important role to play. A brief analysis of the attitude of the parties towards the I.N.A. question will be pertinent.

The adverse reaction of the Congress

The support of the Congress party for the I.N.A. was of

(24) Keating's Contemporary Archives, 1946-8, 7822.
the greatest importance in creating a country-wide popular opposition to the Government's I.N.A. policy.

Why did the Congress take up the defence of the I.N.A.? The support of the Congress for the I.N.A. was criticised by some as inconsistent with the Congress policy. (25) The I.N.A.'s attempt to achieve India's independence by force was at variance with the policy of peaceful and non-violent method adopted by Congress to win India's freedom. Moreover, two of the most important Congress leaders, Gandhiji and Nehru, had their own reservations about the I.N.A. for different reasons. (26) To a great extent, the political situation in India in the middle of

(25) This criticism was brought to the attention of Pandit Nehru by a press reporter who requested Nehru to give his comments. Nehru said that the Congress attitude towards the I.N.A. was the "outcome of the whole Congress outlook in regard to Indian freedom." But he did not explain his view. See Hindustan Standard (Calcutta) 3 November 1946, 1. See also Acharya J.B. Kripalani, "The I.N.A. and the I.N.C.: Quit India' Abroad and at Home," in Shri Ram Sharma, ed., Retail His Life and Work (Agra, 1948) 159.

(26) Nehru disapproved of Bose's plan of liberating India in co-operation with an army of a foreign power. He said in a press interview on 16 August 1945: "...if Subhas Bose led an army into India on the plea of liberating India" he would not have hesitated to resist the 'invasion' even though he was sure about Bose's patriotism and knew it well that he (Bose) was in "no way a mere tool of the Japanese." Hindu, 22 August 1945, 4.

On 23 September 1945 Nehru himself moved a resolution in the All-India Congress Committee which mentioned the I.N.A. which had "laboured, however mistakenly, for the freedom of India." An amendment suggested for the deletion of the words "however mistakenly" was not accepted. See Kripendra Nath Mitra, ed., The Indian Annual Register: An Annual Digest of Public Affairs of India (Calcutta) 2 (1945) 92-3. Emphasis added. Hereinafter referred to as Mitra, ed.

The I.N.A. posed a more serious challenge to Gandhiji's non-violence creed. The Congress had followed non-violence as

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1945 and the political objectives, which the Congress policy sought to achieve, shaped the Congress attitude.

Fravation in the political atmosphere in India. At the beginning of 1945 a Coalition Government was in power in Britain. Of the parties forming the coalition, the attitudes of the Conservative and the Labour parties towards the Indian question were important. The Conservative party, more particularly its leader, Winston Churchill, had an unfavourable attitude towards India's independence. (27) The Labour party, on the other hand, was sympathetic to the India's demand for the right of self-determination. (28) When the war ended, the question of India's freedom still remained to be settled as the attempt made by the British Government to reach a settlement while the war was on had failed. (29) The failure of these efforts had created

its policy for more than two decades. Would the I.N.A. and its popularity in India influence the Congress to deviate from its peaceful policy? In December 1945, Gandhi himself drafted a resolution in the meeting of the Congress Working Committee which reaffirmed non-violence as the Congress policy. The resolution which was adopted by the Working Committee warned that "the Congressmen must not forget that their support and sympathy to the I.N.A. do not mean that Congress has in any way deviated from its policy of attaining independence by peaceful and legitimate means." D.G. Tendulkar, Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Bombay, 1953) VII, 22-3.


(29) From the beginning of the Second World War the Congress party abstained from supporting the war efforts of the
considerable disappointment in India. With the coming of the Labour party to power in July 1945, there were fresh hopes

Indian Government and refused to take part in organizing India's defence on the ground that war had been declared in the name of India without consulting Indian opinion. To win the support of the Congress, the British Government made their so-called August (1940) offer. The right of the Indians to frame their country's constitution after the war was recognised for the first time. This was rejected by the Congress. With the advance of the Japanese towards India in the spring of 1942 the Labour party in the Coalition Government put pressure on the Conservatives to make a settlement with the Indian nationalism. The new offer of the British Government, known as the Cripps offer, promised India full dominion status with the right to leave the Commonwealth, and of a Constituent Assembly after the war and a pledge of the immediate reconstitution of the Viceroy's Executive Council. This offer also fell short of the expectations of the Congress. See R. Coupland, Indian Politics 1936-1942 (Madras, 1944) 311-2; V.P. Menon, The Transfer of Power in India (Calcutta, 1957) 92-3, 122-6.

After the failure of the Cripps negotiations with the Indian leaders the Labour party continued to press the Conservatives for securing India's acceptance of the Cripps offer. In May 1945 the Labour party left the Coalition Government. The Caretaker Government, in order to secure the co-operation of India in the prosecution of war against Japan which was still in progress, renewed their efforts to solve the Indian stalemate. The new offer was largely the result of the Viceroy's (Lord Wavell's) initiative. A conference between the Viceroy, the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League took place in Simla during May-June 1945 but it failed. The Viceroy's plan to reach a settlement with the Indian leaders envisaged: (a) reconstituting the Viceroy's Executive Council by giving balanced representation to the main Indian communities; (b) calling a conference of Indian leaders to frame a list of their nominees for the Executive Council; (c) Indianizing the Council entirely with the exception of the Viceroy, who would have the power of vetoing the Council's decisions, and of the Commander-in-Chief in charge of the defence of the country "as war member"; and (d) entrusting foreign affairs, finance and home affairs entirely to Indian hands and sending abroad fully accredited envoys representing India. See UK, House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, 411 (1944-5) cols. 1831-46. See also Coupland, India, A Restatement (London, 1945) 296-8; E.M.R. Lumb, The Transfer of Power in India 1945-7 (London, 1954) 43-58.
in India. (30)

These, again, proved to be short-lived. The proposal of the new Labour Government for solving the question of India's freedom - announced by the Viceroy on 19 September 1945 (31) - was essentially similar to those conveyed to India by Sir Stafford Cripps in 1942 and rejected by the Congress party. The rank and file of the Congress were not satisfied with the proposals as there was no categorical promise of immediate transfer of power to India. The All-India Congress Committee (A.I.C.C.) expressed its dissatisfaction with the Viceroy's new offer. (32) Moreover, the proposal had given rise to grave doubts in the

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(30) The coming of the Labour party to power in Britain was hailed in India. See Woodrow Wyatt, Into The DangerouS World (London, 1952) 97-8; Menon, n. 29, 216. Much of the hope roused in India as a result of the Labour party's victory was worked up by the promises of the Labour party leaders before the election. Mr. Bevin declared at the Labour Party Conference: "If we are returned, we will close the India Office and transfer this business to the dominions." Professor Laski, the Vice-Chairman of the Labour Party, also emphasised the need for immediate settlement with the Indian nationalism. See Tendulkar, n. 26, 6.

(31) According to the scheme outlined in the Viceroy's broadcast on 19 September 1945: (a) general elections were to be held in the winter of 1945-6; (b) responsible government in all the provinces was to be restored; (c) an Indian Cabinet enjoying the support of all the main political parties in the country was to be formed; (d) whether the Cripps proposals were acceptable or some alternative or modified scheme was preferable was to be discussed with the elected representatives of these assemblies and with the representatives of the Princes; (e) a constitution making body was to be convened as soon as possible and (f) preparations were to be made for a treaty between Britain and the Constitution making body. For the text of the Viceroy's broadcast see Mitra, ed., n. 26, 148-9.

(32) For the text of the Congress resolution on the British proposal see Mitra, ed., n. 26, 93.
mind of Congressmen over the prospects of success in reaching a negotiated settlement with the British Government on the question of Indian independence. (33) As a result, although the text of A.I.C.C. resolution was somewhat mildly worded, in the meeting more extreme demand were placed. According to Abul Kalam Azad, who was the Congress President at that time, the majority of the A.I.C.C. were of opinion that the Congress should withdraw from the political field and concentrate on the work of social and economic reconstruction of the country. "The majority, including Gandhiji," wrote Azad, "held that we must devote ourselves to exclusive constructive work. They believed that there was not much hope on the political plane."(34)

A.I.A. issue helped to achieve the objective of the Congress. The influential part of the Congress leadership,

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(33) The resolution adopted by the A.I.C.C. in September 1945 gave evidence of this feeling of frustration. It read: "Neither the end of the war nor the change of government in Great Britain appears to have resulted in any real change in British policy towards India." Mitra, ed., n. 23, 93. See also the resolution moved by Acharya Kripalani, Mitra, ed., n. 23, 88.

(34) Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, India Vies for Freedom (Calcutta, 1959) 126. Emphasis added. Dr. Rajendra Prasad mentioned in his memoirs that a section in the Congress did not like the Congress participation in the Simla Conference in June 1945 and "disapproved of the Congress activity in this connection thereafter." Rajendra Prasad, At the East of Mahatma Gandhi (Bombay, 1961) 226. Gandhiji was already devoting more time in social welfare. This had been the main field of his activities since the members of the Congress Working Committee were set free in June 1945. For the details of his activities during this period, see Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase (Ahmedabad, 1956) I, 133-61. If Azad's analysis of the attitude of the different sections of the A.I.C.C. and that of Gandhiji is to be accepted, there was a possibility that the Congress under Gandhiji's leadership might have withdrawn from the political field.
consisting of Azad, Nehru and Patel, who were actually left with
the direction of the Congress policy since their release from
prison in June 1945, (35) did not share the frustration and des-
pondency of the Congress ranks. They sensed that the retreat of
the British power from India was imminent. (36) After the
general elections which would be held at the end of 1945 and the
beginning of 1946, the Congress was expected (37) to be in power
in many provinces. The Congress high command, therefore,
favoured a peaceful transfer of power to India. With this end

(35) Tendulkar, n. 26, 17; Frank Moraes, Jawaharlal Nehru
(New York, 1956) 312.

(36) During the Simla Conference in June 1945 Azad reali-
sed that "the political issue between India and Britain seemed
on the point of solution." Having received the news of the
Labour party's victory in British general election, Azad wrote
that he was "convinced that the Labour Party would approach the
Indian problem from a fresh angle and I was optimistic about the

Moraes wrote in his biography of Nehru: "Labour had come
into power in Britain a few days before the conclusion of the
Simla Conference, and Nehru and Azad realized that freedom was
not far away. 'We are very near our goal'; said Azad, 'and the
next stage is the goal itself. It does not matter at all what
the intentions of the British Government are'." The same
biographer quoted Nehru to have said: "India would be free soon'-
of that he felt certain." Moraes, ibid., 310-1.

Sardar Patel too shared the feelings of Nehru and Azad.
Patel's biographer wrote: "He was convinced that the British
were sincere in their desire to quit India. They had become
reconciled to the inevitable. To those who talked of struggle
with the Government, he said that it was no use flogging a dying
horse, and, instead of fighting the British, the time had come 'to
help them to roll up their bedding and depart." Kewal L.
Panjabi, The Indomitable Sardar: A Political Biography of Sardar
Vallabhbhai Patel (Bombay, 1962) 113.

(37) See Azad, n. 34, 124.
in view, they were of the opinion that the Congress should "watch the course of events and carry on negotiations with the British Government." (38) As the general elections were going to be held, the Congress High Command was also convinced that they "must keep the spirit of struggle alive among the Indians people." (39) A new revolutionary slogan (like the 'Quit India' in 1942) or a nationalist issue vis-a-vis the ruling power would help the Congress to mobilize the nationalist opinion before the elections. Did any such issue exist in 1945?

Immediately after the release of the Congress leaders from the prison in the middle of 1945, the political atmosphere of the country was dull. (40) They had no political programme ready at hand to rejuvenate the country. (41) The Congress took

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(38) Ibid., 130.

(39) Ibid., 120.

With this same object of keeping the spirit up, a resolution of the A.I.C.C. praised "the courage and endurance" of the people shown during the August revolt of 1942. See the resolution moved by Nehru in A.I.C.C. meeting of September 1946. Mitra, ed., p. 26, 88-9.

The Congress leaders, particularly Nehru in many of his speeches in 1945 glorified the spirit shown by Indians during the August (1942) revolt. See J.S. Bright, ed., Before And After Independence (New Delhi, no date) 247-8, 255. The book is a collection of the important speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru during 1922-50.

(40) Describing the situation of India in 1945 Michael Edwards wrote: "The mass of the people was once again indifferent. There was nothing to hang with which popular indignation could be excited, no Jallianwala Bagh nor anything remotely resembling it." Michael Edwards, The Last Years of the British India (London, 1963) 92.

(41) The President of the Congress, Abul Kalam Azad, admitted this in his memoirs. See Azad, n. 34, 125.
up the case for the general amnesty of all the political workers who had been imprisoned during the Quit India movement of 1942. But the prisoners were set free even before it could be made into a hot issue. (42) For more than one reason it appeared that by taking up the cause of the I.N.A. officers the Congress would get an opportunity to organize an All-India nationalist front against the British. Here was a ready made issue.

The I.N.A. symbolised a revolution against foreign rule. The reports of a national army being raised for India in unprecedented circumstances in East Asia to seize freedom from the unwilling hands of her ruling power, its (I.N.A.'s) uncompromising attitude towards the Japanese to keep up its dignity and the tragic military campaign for the motherland's freedom were bound to create a deep emotional impact on India. The Congress high command correctly estimated that by defending the I.N.A. officers the Congress could achieve its object of reviving the revolutionary nationalist spirit in the country. (43)

(42) Ibid., 120-1.

(43) Nehru, in a letter to Sir Claude Aunchiebeck wrote about the I.N.A.: "I had not appreciated the political and international approach of some of the leaders of the Indian independence movement in South East Asia.... Nevertheless I felt kinship and sympathy for those people and I knew well what the reaction of the public mind in India would be. The possibility that some swift action by court martial might be taken against a large number of them filled me with apprehension not only because of the persons involved, but also because of the inevitable consequences in India. Sensing all this I made my first public reference to the I.N.A. and followed this up with subsequent references." Jawaharlal Nehru to Sir Claude Aunchiebeck, 4 May 1946, in Connell, n. 8, 615. Emphasis added.

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There are some more reasons which help to explain the sympathetic attitude of the Congress High Command towards the I.N.A. During 1945 the Congress had a very urgent need to prove that it had a secular character. (44) Being drawn from all the principal communities of India, the I.N.A. was genuinely non-communal in character. Of the three prisoners under trial at the first court martial, Shah Nawaz was a Muslim, Sahgal a Hindu, and Dhillon a Sikh. I.N.A.'s defence represented a secular cause. By championing it, the Congress could not only find an opportunity to reassert its secular character but strengthen and

Patel, who himself knew of the arrival of the I.N.A. prisoners in India in 1945-6, kept Gandhiji informed of it. A biographer of Gandhiji wrote that "It was the lynx-eyed vigilance of Sardar Patel that had brought the arrival of the Indian National Army prisoners in India under the blanket of military secrecy to Gandhiji's notice." Pyarelal, n. 34, 124. Azad seemed to be sure about the repercussion which the I.N.A. court martial would produce. He brushed aside the advice of an Indian civil servant that Congress should take no interest in the I.N.A. Immediately after the Government's policy towards the I.N.A. officers was announced he "decided straightaway that Congress should undertake the defence of the I.N.A. officers and immediately issued a statement to that effect." The Congress high command pressed the Government to permit the Congress to arrange for the legal defence of the accused I.N.A. officers and that the trial should be held in public. Azad, n. 34, 132-3.

(44) During the Simla Conference of June 1945 the Muslim League claimed that only it would have the right to represent the Muslim community of India. It also claimed the exclusive right to nominate the Muslim representatives to the Viceroy's Executive Council. The Congress refused to concede the claim of the League as the acceptance of that claim would have reduced it (the Congress) to a communal body. See Menon, n. 29, 206 and Azad, n. 34, 110. The Congress fought the elections of 1945-46 with two main principles, namely, secularism and freedom of India. Its election manifesto concluded with the words: "Therefore, in this election, petty issues do not count nor do individual or sectarian cries - only one thing counts: the freedom and independence of our motherland from which all other freedoms will flow to our people. For the text of the Congress manifesto see Mitra, ed., n. 28, 112. Emphasis added.
harness the secular sentiment in the country for its (the Congress') own benefit. The emphasis laid by the Congress leaders on the secular nature of the I.N.A. makes it clear that the importance of secularism in Indian politics received due consideration from the Congress leaders. (45)

The I.N.A. officers welcome Congress protection. Moreover, most of the leaders of Indian Independence movement in East Asia and the senior-most I.N.A. officers welcomed the sympathetic attitude of the Congress. Their favourable attitude towards the Congress removed the possibility of difficulty for the Congress to take up the defence of the I.N.A. (46)

(45) Jawaharlal Nehru, in course of a press interview on 16 August 1945, expressed views appreciating the non-communal character of the I.N.A. See Hindu, 22 August 1945, 4. Referring to the elimination of the communal question by the I.N.A. from its ranks, Gandhiji 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. The greatest among these was to gather together, under one banner, men from all religions and races of India, and to induce into them the spirit of solidarity and oneness to the utter exclusion of all communal or懈chial sentiment. It is an example which we should all emulate. If they did this under the glamour and romance of fighting, it was not much. It must remain in peace." This aspect of the I.N.A. was frequently reiterated by Gandhiji during the communal troubles of 1947. See Tendulkar, n. 26, 107-8, 354 and 370.

(46) The officers of the I.N.A. and the civilian Indian leaders of East Asia fully co-operated with the Congress in the latter's efforts to defend the I.N.A. officers. Many of the civilian leaders were followers and admirers of Gandhiji and Nehru before the War. S.A. Ayer who was the Minister for Publicity in the Provisional Government of Free India wrote that he and other I.N.A. officers were "thrilled" to know that Congress had decided to defend the I.N.A. officers. See S.A. Ayer, Unto Him A Witness (Bombay, 1951) 119-20, 134-5. A senior officer of the I.N.A. Shah Nawaz Khan was said to have expressed his desire to be "a humble soldier of non-violence in Congress ranks." Tendulkar, n. 26, 78. The writer learnt from Mr. N. Raghavan who

(Contd. on next page)
The decision of the Congress to take up the defence of the I.N.A. prisoners. Having adopted the cause of the I.N.A. issue the Congress President took a positive attitude at the A.I.C.C. meeting in September 1945 about the future course of action of the Congress. The proposal for boycotting the general election was brushed aside. (47) The majority of the A.I.C.C. who were of opinion that Congress should withdraw from the political field and concentrate on the social sphere of activities, were persuaded to agree with the opinion of the Congress High Command that the Congress should take part in the election. It is significant to note that the meeting of the A.I.C.C. which decided that "the forthcoming election be contested" also formally resolved to take up the defence of the I.N.A. officers. A Defence Committee was appointed to take the necessary measures for the legal defence of the I.N.A. officers. (48)

was for sometime the Finance Minister of the Provisional Government of Free India and Col. N.S. Gill who served in the I.N.A. during 1942 that there was a move in 1945 to form a new political party in India with the help of the men and officers of the I.N.A. and the Azad Hind Dal. The proposal was considered at a meeting of the I.N.A. officers in Kamore. The majority, most notably Gen. Bhonsle, Col. Gill, Mr. Raghavan were opposed to the proposal. The decision not to form any other political party was, to a great extent, due to their allegiance towards the Congress. Discussion with Mr. N.S. Gill in August 1963 at Bangkok; Discussion with Mr. N. Raghavan in April 1964 at New Delhi. Gen. Tuker also mentioned the proposal to organize such a party in his memoir. See Tuker, n. 8, 78.

(47) Azad, n. 34, 118-20.

(48) The A.I.C.C. adopted a resolution appointing a Defence Committee for the I.N.A. which consisted of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Bhulabhai Desai, Dr. K.N. Katju, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Mr. Raghunandan Saran and Mr. Asaf Ali. In the

(Contd. on next page)
The glorification of the object of the I.N.A. by the Congress. Having taken up the charge of the defence of the I.N.A. officers, the Congress High Command proceeded to glorify the motive of the I.N.A. The General Secretary of the A.I.C.C. issued a circular (49) on 25 October 1945 to the Provincial Congress Committees to explain the attitude of the Congress party towards the I.N.A. prisoners. The Secretary wrote that the I.N.A. prisoners were "motivated by as great a love of the freedom of India as the best of us." What was more significant, the circular expressed a tacit approval of the acceptance of military assistance by the I.N.A. from a foreign power. It said: "In all freedom fights the world over, patriots have sought outside help to free their country from the foreign yoke.... As long as foreign rule lasts in India, patriots in desperation will be

same resolution the A.I.C.C. expressed its concern over the fate of the I.N.A. prisoners and stated: "The A.I.C.C. is, however, strongly of opinion that for other additional reasons of far-reaching consequences and in view of the termination of the war, it would be a tragedy if these officers, men and women were punished for the offence of having laboured...for the freedom of India." Any punishment to these officers, continued the resolution, "will not only be unjustified but will cause sorrow in innumerable homes and to the Indian people as a whole, and will widen the gulf between India and England. The A.I.C.C., therefore, earnestly trusts that these officers and men and women of this army will be released." Nehru in a speech at that meeting 'warned' the British Government that any vindictive punishment to the I.N.A. prisoners was bound to create "tremendous discontent among the people of India" and "repercussion in the British Indian Army too." For the texts of the A.I.C.C. Resolution and the speech by Nehru see Mitra, ed., n. 26, 92.

(49) For the text of the circular of the General Secretary to the A.I.C.C. to All Provincial Congress Committees, see Mitra, ed., n. 26, 105-6.
obliged to seek foreign help." (50) To style "such undoubted patriots" as the enemy of the country, concluded the circular, was "morally and politically unjustified." (51)

**Attitude of the political parties other than Congress towards the I.N.A. issue**

Besides the Congress, most of the other political parties in the country, for one reason or the other, came out in support of the I.N.A. The Socialist leaders - as some of them were engaged in underground anti-British activities during the war - had no qualms of conscience to approve the method of using the enemy's difficulty for one's own advantage. Sri Jay Prakash Narayan was not impressed by the strength and efficiency of the I.N.A., but he strongly defended the acceptance of foreign military assistance by Bose for India's independence. (52)

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(50) In an indirect way, the A.I.C.C. circular endorsed the acceptance of the Japanese military assistance by the I.N.A.

(51) The I.N.A. Defence Committee which was appointed by the A.I.C.C. wrote a letter to the Viceroy on 15 October 1945. In it, the Committee suggested that the activities of the I.N.A. were to be considered as a part of India's freedom movement. It claimed that the trials should be abandoned. If the trials were to be held at all, the wishes of the Indian people should be ascertained by the Government. For the text of the Defence Committee's letter see Hindu, 27 October 1945, 4. The C-in-C of the Indian army advised the Viceroy to turn down these requests. The Government accepted the C-in-C's suggestion. See General Auchinleck to Sir Evan Jenkins, 20 October 1945, in Connell, n. 8, 203-2.

(52) Jay Prakash Narayan described Bose "a fervent patriot." Moreover, there is a striking similarity between Narayan's own ideas of using the opportunity offered by the Anglo-Japanese conflict for the benefit of India's freedom and Bose's plan. See Jaya Prakash Narayan, *Towards Struggle: Selected Manifestoes, Speeches And Writings* (Bombay, 1946) 44-5.
Akalı Dal, mainly because a considerable part of the I.N.A. hailed from the Sikh community, passed a resolution in September 1945 urging the Indian Government not to punish the I.N.A. prisoners. (53) The Hindu Mahasabha asserted that the Government should abandon the I.N.A. court martial. (54)

The two main principles which the I.N.A. stood for, namely, secularism and freedom of India, were at variance with the programme of the Muslim League in 1945-46. The demand for Pakistan, which involved the division of India along a communal line, was given the first priority in the programme of the Muslim League. But the fact that half of the officers, to be brought under trial, were Muslims (55) made it difficult for the Muslim League to remain completely indifferent about the trial. In a statement to the Press, M.A. Jinnah, the President of the Muslim League, pleaded that the I.N.A. prisoners should be "dealt with leniency." (56)

Among all the Indian political parties, only the Communist Party of India (C.P.I.) completely disapproved of Bose's association with the Axis Powers. (57) The association of the Soviet

(53) For the text of the resolution see Mitra, ed., n. 26, 171.

(54) The President of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukherji demanded the abandonment of the trial of the I.N.A. prisoners. See Hindu, 6 November 1945, 4.

(55) Hindu, 4 October 1945, 4.

(56) Hindu, 17 September 1945, 5.

(57) In elucidating his party's attitude towards the I.N.A., Mr. P.C. Joshi, the General Secretary of the C.P.I. said: "Bose
Union with the Allies against the Axis Powers explains the C.P.I.'s disapproval of Bose's efforts for winning India's independence with Axis help. But the view of the C.P.I. was not an important factor as the vast majority of the Indians saw the I.N.A. in a different light. Moreover, a Communist writer, R. Palme Dutt, later recognized the tremendous impact of the I.N.A. on the mind of the Indians. (58) Peculiarly enough, although the C.P.I. chose to differ from the main trends of the Indian opinion on the I.N.A., some of its (the C.P.I.'s) activities later on helped in the process of creating a revolutionary temper in the country which was the principal consequence of the I.N.A. trials. (59)

Thus, before the court martial of the I.N.A. officers started, all the major political forces of the country, except the Communists, had aligned themselves against the Government's policy towards the I.N.A. prisoners. A unanimous opinion was growing in the country which glorified them as patriots and stood against their victimization.

went out of India to secure the support of the Axis.... Only very few had the illusion that the Indian liberation could come with the aid of the Fascists.... Bose's pact could not but lead to India's passing from the British to the Japanese hands.... To think only of his motives and forget the pro-Fascist policy that he pursued is to lose the confidence and respect of democratic elements." Hindu, 30 August 1945, 3.

(58) Mr. Dutt said that Bose's 'propaganda' of liberating India could have no effect in a free India. But Dutt conceded that "In relation to an India held subject, it had a certain measure of inevitable effect." See R. Palme Dutt, India Today (Bombay, 1949) 3.

(59) This will be discussed later in this chapter.
The role played by the nationalist press. In creating this unanimous pro-I.N.A. opinion among the people with different political loyalties, the nationalist press played no small role. Following the removal of the press censorship in September 1945, (60) it (the nationalist press) highlighted to the Indian people and their leaders the story of the I.N.A., which was mostly unknown during the war. (61) Soon after the Government policy towards the I.N.A. was known, the nationalist press pleaded for general amnesty towards the I.N.A. prisoners and went on advocating this. (62)

Factors turning the I.N.A. issue to an emotional one

Moreover, a number of factors helped to raise the I.N.A.

(60) Keynes's Contemporary Archives, 1943-6 (London) 7634.

(61) The reports on the events which led to the organisation of the I.N.A., the pledge the soldiers of the I.N.A. used to take and the part played by the army in the Imphal campaign were reported. See for example, Hindu, 10 October 1945, 4 and Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), 9 October 1945, 5; and 5 November 1945, The I.N.A. Supplement, 1. Achieving of India's independence was acknowledged as the aim of the I.N.A. and the possibility of the domination of India by the Japanese army was dismissed by the Indian press as impossible. See Hindustan Standard, 9 October 1945, 5. The "Story of resistance to Jap Demands" was reported which put the whole blame for the I.N.A. crisis in 1942 on the Japanese. See Hindu, 12 October 1945, 4. The "adventures" of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment were narrated elaborately. See Hindu, 15 October 1945, 4. A large number of the speeches and "Orders of the Day" of Subhas Chandra Bose were reproduced. See Hindustan Standard, 5 November 1945, 1, 3 and 11 November 1945, 9-11.

(62) See the editorials of Hindu, 20 August 1945, 4, and 27 October 1945, 4.
issue to an emotional plane. The selection of the Red Fort in Delhi, which symbolized the past glory of India, as the venue of the tribunal to court martial the three I.N.A. officers was bound to hurt the pride of the Indians. (63) Moreover, this historic citadel had all along been hailed as the goal in the I.N.A. battle-cry. The selection of the same place as the venue to try its officers was to appear to the people as a "deliberate taunt, an insolent and provocative act of triumph over the vanquished." (64) The selection of a Hindu, a Muslim and a Sikh officer — who hailed from the three principal communities of India — for court martial could be taken as a challenge to all the three. The presence of a number of important Congress leaders, including Nehru in the court-room for defending the accused, created an impression that India's national prestige was at stake in the case.

The outbreak of violence. The commencement of the trial on 5 November 1945 immediately brought about protests from

(63) The Red Fort was the seat of the Mughal rulers. Associated with it, were the memories of the pomp and splendour of the Mughal rulers. Nehru described beautifully how those memories would charge the I.N.A. issue with emotion. See Forward by Jawaharlal Nehru in Motiram, ed., n. 21, iii-iv.

Red Fort was also the venue where the last ruler of the Mughal dynasty was tried in a court martial in 1858 by the British on the charge of conspiracy against the British rule. The place of the I.N.A. court martial, therefore, easily linked the I.N.A.'s efforts with the famous revolt which took place against the British in 1857.

(64) Mason, n. 2, IX
different parts of the country. (65) "It has created," reported a press correspondent on the opening day of the trial, "the keenest interest of the people from one end of the country to the other." (66) On 6 November (1945), the court adjourned for two weeks. During this period, public opinion against the Government's policy towards the I.N.A. became more and more emphatic in the country. (67) The existing food scarcity in the country further worsened the situation. A spark was needed to cause an explosion. This was supplied by a provocative speech of Nehru. On 11 November 1945, in course of a speech, Nehru

(65) There were protests against the I.N.A. trials in the various parts of the country. In Madura police fired on the crowd protesting against the I.N.A. court martial. The 'I.N.A. Day' was observed in many parts of the country to protest against the trials. See Hindustan Standard, 5 November 1945, 1.


(67) During the adjournment of the court martial, the Punjab Branch of the All India Women's Conference passed a resolution declaring that "an alien government has no right to try the men and officers of the I.N.A." See Hindustan Standard, 5 November 1945, 5. The students of Calcutta demanded the abandonment of the trial. See Hindustan Standard, 13 November 1945, 4. The educationists too voiced a similar demand. See Hindustan Standard, 11 November 1945, 7.

The unanimous demand which arose opposing the Government's policy of prosecuting the I.N.A. was a rare event. Nehru observed on the eve of the court martial: "I can think of no other important issue on which there has been such complete unanimity of Indian opinion. Every political organization as well as non-political groups have sided with Congress with this issue. Even in remote villages I had seen expressions of sympathy and sometimes petty donations to the I.N.A. defence fund were forthcoming. So far as I know Indian members of the regular army are anxious about the fate of the I.N.A. officers and men... This general sympathy is based on the belief in the bonafides and patriotic motives that had inspired these people...." See Hindustan Standard, 3 November 1945, 1.
said: "it was India's duty to 'revolt' and if the country was not prepared for a revolution to free itself it was a dead nation." (68) When the court reassembled on 21 November (1945), the country was ready for a resort to violence on a large-scale.

Between 21 and 24 November (1945) there was the first overt expression of the mood of revolt in the country in the serious rioting that broke out in Calcutta soon to be followed in Bombay, Karachi, Patna, Allahabad, Beharas, Rawalpindi and other places. (69) In Calcutta the British and the American military establishments were attacked. About the nature of rioting in Calcutta the correspondent of the New York Times wrote that although there were attacks on the American troops and military establishments, the disturbances were "predominantly anti-British. Local Indian political leaders thus far, however, have been emphasising Hindu-Muslim unity. Jammed trucks cruising the city flying Indian Congress party and Moslem League flags side by side." (70)

The pressure of British opinion against official policy regarding the I.N.A.

There was also an unofficial but strong pressure of opinion


(69) In Calcutta alone 188 U.S. and British military and police were wounded and one killed. Among the public, 32 were killed and 150-200 wounded due to police firing. A total of 49 U.S. and British military vehicles were destroyed and 97 damaged by the rioters. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1946-8, 7823.

in Britain in favour of the I.N.A. officers. While a section of the British intelligentsia and influential men in public life were reported to have favoured the release of the I.N.A. officers because they recognised the sincerity of their (the I.N.A. officers') motive, (71) some M.Ps. of the Labour Party opposed the trial mainly on the ground that it would strain the post-war relationship between England and India. (72)

Revision of policy towards I.N.A. prisoners

In holding the trials in public the Indian army command had proceeded with the assumption that as the trials would bring out acts of brutalities committed against Indian soldiers

(71) Mrs. Ethel Mannin, the famous writer and her husband Mr. A. Reynolds stated that the I.N.A. had fought for "the cause of the Indian Independence." They also asserted that "it should be officially recognized that the men cannot be considered as traitors to a regime which has no moral claim on their loyalty...."

It was also reported that high-ranking jurists had expressed that from moral and international stand-point the I.N.A. was "fighting for the independence of their country and not to share the exploit of the Fascist aggression. It is commonly recognised that to fight for one's own country is a noble and a moral obligation of each person. One may deplore their policy, but cannot stigmatize their motive as treacherous." It was also reported that important personalities like Sir Stafford Cripps and Lord Louis Mountbatten had in their "private talks" recognized the patriotic motive of the I.N.A. officers under trial. See Hindustan Standard, 5 November 1945, I.N.A. Supplement, IV.

(72) Professor Harold Laski, the Chairman of the National Executive of the British Labour Party, Mr. Reginald Sorensen, a Labour M.P., Mr. F. Brockway, the leader of the Independent Labour Party and Mr. W.G. Cove, Labour M.P., were reported to have expressed such views. Hindustan Standard, 5 November 1945, I.N.A. Supplement, IV.
by the accused, the Indian public would recognize 'the justice' in the Government's policy. (73) But the opposite result which the trial produced — the countrywide nationalist upsurge in India against the trial of the I.N.A. and the pressure of the British opinion — forced a change in the policy of the Government not only with regard to the I.N.A. officers who had been brought under trial at the Red Fort but those who were still awaiting the trial. Gen. Auchinleck later had the occasions to point out the factors which received his considerations in revising the previous policy towards the I.N.A. It is evident from Gen. Auchinleck's writings that the country-wide agitation against the I.N.A. trials had convinced him that the usual punishment for waging war against the British Crown, viz., death or transportation for life, could not carried out either in case of the first I.N.A. trial or in all such trials in future. Faced with the task of carrying out the punishment of transportation for life which was recommended by the first I.N.A. trial to the I.N.A. officers, the C-in-C felt the necessity of taking into account "the probable result" of his act "on public opinion in India and on the Indian army." (74) He wrote:

I believe that to confirm the sentence of transportation on these two officers would have the effect of making them into martyrs and of intensifying the

(73) Mason, n. 2, IX. Mr. Mason as an Additional Secretary to War Department of the Government of India was aware of the Government's attitude.

(74) Auchinleck's own conclusions on the findings of the first I.N.A. court martial. See Connell, n. 8, 807.
political campaign of bitterness and racial antipathy now being waged by Congress in connection
with the 'I.N.A.' trials. I think too that to commute the sentence to a lesser term of imprison-
ment would have the same effect and that there is no compromise between the confirmation of the full
sentence and the complete remission of it. I think we must also bear in mind the fact that if
the sentences of imprisonment are confirmed they are almost certain to be remitted should an
Indian National Government come into power. (75)

In February 1946 the C-in-C, in a personal and secret
memorandum to all the senior British officers of the Indian
army, reiterated the same argument for a change in the policy
towards the I.N.A. He wrote that the confirmation of the
sentences of the accused officers the first I.N.A. trial "would
have resulted in violent internal conflict."(76)

The revised policy towards future I.N.A. trials. The
revised policy towards the I.N.A. officers was latter announced.
The new policy towards the future I.N.A. trials was declared in
a communiqué on 6 December 1945. (77) The communiqué clearly

(75) Although it was the most important argument of Gen.
Auchinleck in support of a lenient policy towards the I.N.A.
officers, he had some other arguments also. Nothing should be
done which would make the task of political settlement between
India and Britain more difficult by working up the racial feel-
ings. Moreover, the available evidence had made the C-in-C re-
recognize the patriotism and sincerity of the accused officers.
It would be wrong to expect from the Indian officers, he wrote,
"the same standard of loyalty to their allegiance as from the
British troops" to the British Crown. Ibid., 308.

(76) The photostat copy of the secret and personal memora-
dum of the C-in-C of the Indian army, Gen. Sir Claude Auchinleck,
to the four C.Os. C-in-C, and the Area, Districts and Divisional
Commanders of the Indian army in India and abroad, February 1946,
1. Photostat copy of the document obtained by the writer from
Sir Claude.

(77) For the text of the communiqué see Keesing's Contem-
porary Archives, 1946-5, 7321.
implied that the charge of waging war against the King would not be brought against the I.N.A. officers in future. The communique stated that those Indian officers who had "joined the I.N.A. either through the persuasion of enemy propaganda, under the compulsion of threats, or because they were persuaded that it was in their best interests to do so" would be given pay from the date of their recovery and would be demobilized and sent home. But those who had "gone over to the enemy with the clear intention of helping the Japanese in an invasion of India," would be "dismissed from the Army and forfeit their pay, but otherwise would not be proceeded against." (78) In conclusion, the communique stated that a small number of persons had committed "acts of gross brutality, resulting in some cases in the death of their fellow-countrymen who were P.O.W.s. or members of the I.N.A. "Trial by court martial of such persons, but of no others, will therefore take place." The number of such persons, the communique assured, would be between 20 and 50. (79)

(78) Emphasis added.

(79) The decision that those who had intentionally joined I.N.A. would be removed from the army, and no other punishment would be inflicted on them, implied the recognition of the I.N.A. officers by the Indian Government as P.O.W.s. of a separate army. Philip Mason stated that the Government had decided that the I.N.A.'s "patriotic motive would be taken at its face value and its members would be treated as though prisoners of war." Mason, p. 2, X. The implied recognition of the I.N.A. officers as P.O.W.s., as far as it went, excluded them from the jurisdiction of the Indian Army Act and they could not be tried under it. This made the Government's intention to try and punish those members of the I.N.A. guilty of 'gross brutalities' appear anomalous. The Government were aware of this. One of the C-in-C's advisers and Secretary to the Defence Department of the Government of India, Mr. Dundas suggested to the C-in-C that

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The sentences of the first I.N.A. court martial commuted. The policy envisaged in the communiqué of 6 December 1945 was not applicable to the three I.N.A. officers brought under trial in Red Fort. As it was probable that the charge of waging war against the three accused would be proved, the Viceroy, by issuing an ordinance, equipped the C-in-C with the authority of commuting sentences of death and transportation for life, about a week before the first I.N.A. trial finished its work on 31 December 1945. (80)

The findings of the first I.N.A. court martial (81) having been communicated to the C-in-C, the latter, as the confirming officer, formally decided to set free the three I.N.A. officers only with cashiering and forfeiture of their pay and allowances. The C-in-C's communiqué of 3 January 1946 made this decision public. It stated that in taking such a decision "the prevailing circumstances have been taken into account by the confirming

"...there is a distinction to be made between brutalities inflicted on those who had subjected themselves to the 'I.N.A.' code and had therefore cut themselves off from the right to our protection, and brutalities inflicted on people who were not members of the 'I.N.A.'" The C-in-C wrote: "I see the force of this" argument, but he did not like to declare any further change in the official policy. He wrote: "...but I should be sorry to introduce another distinction which would be hard to explain to the public." For the views of Mr. Dundas and the C-in-C, see General Auchinleck to Viceroy, 19 February 1946, Connell, n. 8, 814-5.

(80) See Keeling's Contemporary Archives, 1946-8, 7822.

(81) The court, as it has been already pointed out, found all the three accused guilty of waging war. Shah Navaz Khan was found guilty of the charge of abetment of murder. All the three accused were recommended transportation for life, cashiering and forfeiture of pay etc. No separate sentence was passed upon Khan. For the recommendations of the first I.N.A. court martial see Motiram, ed., n. 21, 303.
3. Impact of the I.N.A. court martial

The release of three I.N.A. officers earned appreciation for the C-in-C's action in certain quarters. (83) But far from satisfying the nationalist sentiment, it was destined to create a more powerful impact on the mind of the nation.

The political significance of the first I.N.A. court martial

The first I.N.A. court martial had a revolutionary lesson for the country. The Defence in the trial sought to supply a legal basis to the right to revolt for freedom, - the right which had been already claimed by some political leaders. The Defence Counsel asserted:

When you are nominally fighting against the King but really fighting to liberate the country, then the point is whether the question of allegiance can arise at all. Unless you sell your soul, how can you ever say that when you are fighting to liberate your own country, there is some other

(82) For the text of the communiqué see Motiram, ed., n. 21, 305.

(83) Dr. M.C. Davar, the Secretary-General of the United Party of India, addressed a letter to Auchinleck thanking the latter for his "kindest act", "most astounding courage", "Christian spirit" and "noblest deed". Sir Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, a distinguished Indian scientist wrote to Auchinleck that a fitting tribute to his (Auchinleck's) act would be the award of the Noble Prize for Peace. See Dr. M.C. Davar to General Auchinleck, 3 January 1946 and Sir Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar to General Auchinleck, 4 January 1946, Connell, n. 8, 810-1.
allegiance which prevents you from so doing.
... If that happens there is nothing but permanent slavery. (84)

This lesson of the I.N.A. court martial was of great political significance. The court martial was viewed by the Indian political leaders as a "trial of strength between the will of the Indian people and the will of those who hold power in India." (85) When the three I.N.A. officers, accused of waging war against the ruling power, were released - the act was interpreted by the nationalist leaders as the acceptance by law of the right of the subject people to revolt for freedom. Even law, wrote Nehru in January 1946, "strait-laced as it is by convention and precedent, was compelled to recognize the right of a people to fight for their freedom." (86) What was more significant - it was thought that in the tussle over the court martial, Britain, with all its military might and pomp, had suffered a defeat. Nehru wrote: "And it was the will of the Indian people that triumphed in the end. Therein lies its (87) significance, therein lies the promise of the future."(88)

(84) Bimalabha J. Desai, I.N.A. Defence (Delhi, ?)
72. This book contains only the address delivered by Bimalabha J. Desai, the Defence Counsel in the first I.N.A. court martial.

(85) See the Foreword by Jawaharlal Nehru in Motiram, ed., n. 21, iii.

(86) Ibid.

(87) It refers to the significance of the court martial.

(88) Foreword by Jawaharlal Nehru in Motiram, ed., n. 21, iii.
India's moral victory in the first I.N.A. court martial created a deep political consciousness in the vast mass of her people. In this respect the I.N.A. was a living force in India even after its disintegration. The demonstration of the new force was to take place in the violent protest against sentence of an officer of the I.N.A. in February (1946).

The Rashid-Pay: a limited exercise of the right to revolt.
On 4 February 1946, an officer of the I.N.A., Capt. Abdul Rashid, was sentenced to seven years imprisonment by a court martial. (89) As it has been pointed out, the I.N.A. was then at the zenith of its popularity and the memory of their recent political victory in the remission of the sentence upon the first three accused was very fresh in the mind of the people. The country was in no mood to allow another "martyr for freedom" to suffer. (90) The initiative, it is interesting to note, came from the Muslim League which was at first indifferent and then lukewarm about the I.N.A. One reason for Muslim League taking interest in the I.N.A. court martial, as it has been pointed out, was the knowledge that a number of I.N.A. officers under trial were Muslims. No leader of the League, including Mr. Jinnah, ever pleaded for

(89) It has been already mentioned in this chapter.

(90) The great popular feeling in favour of the I.N.A. at this time was recorded by New York Times. Its correspondent wrote from New Delhi: "Although the 'Indian National Army' has been disbanded following the futile attempt to 'liberate' India with Japanese support, it is still an explosive political issue and more emotionally surcharged than any to be found here. This issue... now appears certain to play a vital and perhaps violent part in Indian politics." New York Times, 8 February 1946, 13.
the abandonment of the trial. The fact that the League later on took exception to the sentence passed by the court martial on Rashid and that it was ready to fight for undoing the sentence of the court martial could be explained by the remarkable political victory which the nationalists, more particularly the Congress, had scored over the first I.N.A. court martial.

The Muslim League called for a 'Rashid Day' which was followed by four days (from 11 to 14 February 1946) of violent rioting in the three principal cities of India, namely, Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi. (91) These events are of great significance. The February disturbances were distinctly joint resorts to violence against British by the two most powerful communities of the country. (92) The Muslim community, usually branded as pro-British in its attitude, had made a common cause with the country's pro-I.N.A. sympathy. This was brought out by New York Times on 17 February 1946:

In spite of the uncompromising struggle between the two factions, last week for the first time since 1921 Moslems and Hindus together staged street protests and riots against the British in Calcutta,

(91) Among these places the most serious mob rioting took place in Calcutta. In that city alone 38 civilians were killed. According to New York Times report the number of dead was 45. See New York Times, 16 February 1946, 4. About 527 were injured, apart from the 62 police. The Governor of the Province announced that 'mob rule' had broken out and he proclaimed martial law. Kaesin's Contemporary Archives, 1946-8, 7823.

(92) During the disturbances mobs shouting "Jai Hind" (the slogan of the I.N.A.) set lorries and tram-cars ablaze, set fire to a Methodist Church, broke into and looted European homes, ransacked shops and railway booking offices. Many Europeans and some U.S. soldiers were attacked. Kaesin's Contemporary Archives, 1946-8, 7823.
Bombay and New Delhi. The catalytic agent in this case was the Indian National Army, organized by a Japanese collaborator named Subhas Chandra Bose.... (93)

The first I.N.A. court martial brought out the objective of the I.N.A.

The first I.N.A. court martial was significant for another reason. It helped to exalt the role of the I.N.A. in Indian politics by dissociating it (the I.N.A.) and its leaders from the Fascist ideology. The Defence of the court martial upheld that the Provisional Government of Free India was a real Government which fulfilled all the norms required by International Law to be so, that the I.N.A. was a separate army governed by its own Military Code and controlled by the Provisional Government and that the army fought for no other purpose than the independence of India. (94) The three accused officers of the first I.N.A. court martial stated before the court that their motive was to achieve freedom for India. (95) This was never disputed in the course of the trial. The Counsel for the Prosecution

(94) See the Judge Advocate's summing up of the Defence's arguments. Motiram, ed., n. 21, 271.
(95) The statements of Shah Nawaz Khan, P.K. Sahgal and G.S. Dhillon before the first I.N.A. court martial, Motiram, ed., n. 21, 103-16.
observed that the object of the army was 'immaterial' in the context of the Prosecution's specific charges of murder and abetment of murder against the accused. (96) But the witnesses for the Prosecution were more positive on this point. The chief witness for the Prosecution, D.C. Nag, in answering the question why the I.N.A. was formed, told the Court: "It was formed to fight for the liberation of India." (97) "The whole of the Indian National Army was trained by Indian officers and not by the Japanese officers. It was entirely and throughout officered by Indian officers and not by Japanese officers." This was repeated by other witnesses for the Prosecution. (98)

By bringing out the real objective of the I.N.A., the first I.N.A. court martial upheld before the country a new image of the I.N.A. The alleged link-up of the I.N.A. leaders with the Fascist ideology and their alleged intentions of subordinating India's interests to those of Japan - the belief which the wartime propaganda of the Allies had succeeded in creating - were no longer to be believed. The country was awakened from her torpor to hear a unique story of the fight for her freedom which had taken place recently beyond her borders and about which nothing was known.

(96) The Opening Address of the Prosecution Counsel in the first I.N.A. court martial. Motiram, ed., n. 21, 5-6.


(98) The witnesses for the Prosecution, Subedar Ram Swarup and Major Babu Ram before the first I.N.A. court martial. Motiram, ed., n. 21, 227, 244.
until very recently. For the first time a national army had been raised, equipped for modern warfare, manned and officered by the Indians. This army had fought for liberating India and had failed. Even then, there was something for India in its (I.N.A.'s) example to be proud of. Bose and his I.N.A. had relieved "India's deep inferiority complex by meeting the West on its own ground - that is, on battlefields with the force of armies...." (99)

**The unprecedented popularity for the I.N.A. and Bose**

By February 1946, eleven thousand I.N.A. prisoners had been released after the interrogation by the Indian Army Headquarters. (100) They hailed from the remote villages of India. With their return to their own villages, the stories of adventurous endeavour for the country's freedom by India's own revolutionary army and those of the departed glory of the Provisional Government and its Netaji (the revered leader) reached every corner of India. The nationalist press also gave a faithful coverage to the proceedings of the court. The two media - the released I.N.A. and the nationalist press - presented the stories of the I.N.A. to the vast multitude of the Indian masses as the saga of India's battle for freedom.

The reaction among the Indians was deep and wide. Unprecedented popular enthusiasm was created in the country. (101) Bose

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(99) Clare and Harris Wofford, *India Afire* (New York, 1951) 211.


(101) Instances of the popularity of the I.N.A. are not rare.

(Contd. on next page)
and his I.N.A. were riding the crest of this wave. Even some of the Congress leaders who seemed to have foreseen the impact the I.N.A. issue would create in the country were surprised by the actual nature of it. (102) The correspondent of the New York Times reported:

Indian Nationalists are working day and night to build up Bose as the 'George Washington' of India. This is particularly true of the revolutionary element in the Congress party, which spares no efforts to eulogize Bose, create a 'Bose legend' and wrap his sayings and beliefs in sanctity. (103)

Gandhiji wrote in his Harijan: "The hypnotism of the I.N.A. has cast its spell upon us." (104) "For a moment," wrote Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the I.N.A. officers "overshadowed the names of national leaders. It looked as though the I.N.A. itself eclipsed the Indian National Congress and the exploits of war and violence abroad threw into obscurity the victories of non-violence at

Lieut. Gen. Tuker described an incident when "three I.N.A. men of the darkest political hue", who were in transit by train from the I.N.A. prisoners camp in Calcutta to that of Delhi under armed escort, were seized (together with the guards) by the crowd at a railway station. The I.N.A. prisoners were taken round the city in procession with the popular battle-cry of the I.N.A. and then returned to the station. See Tuker, n. 8, 77-8. For other instances see Nripendra Nath Mitra, ed., The Indian Annual Register: An Annual Digest of Public Affairs of India (Calcutta) 1 (1946) 28. Henceafter referred to as Mitra, ed.

(102) In his letter to Sir Claude Auchinleck Nehru admitted that although he sensed before the trials its emotional impact on the Indian people he was surprised by the "depth and extent" of the actual response from the people. Jawaharlal Nehru to Sir Claude Auchinleck, see Connell, n. 8, 818.


(104) Tendulkar, n. 26, 77-8.
home." (105) The pro-I.N.A. sentiment reached an unprecedented height in the country. The British-owned Times of India wrote that it was "indeed unprecedented in the history of British India." (106)

4. Impact of the I.N.A. on the Indian armed forces

The impact of the I.N.A. on the Indian armed forces was considerable. To affect the loyalty of the soldiers of the Indian army was a part of the I.N.A.'s strategy. It is said that Bose stuck to this part of the strategy even after the defeat of the I.N.A. on the battle front. (107) There is, however, hardly any evidence to show that Bose could foresee how the I.N.A. would fulfill this mission even after its disintegration. But later events bore out Bose in so far as it was impossible to keep the


(106) Times of India (Bombay) 4 January 1946, 6.

(107) Bose's biographer wrote about him: "...he certainly counted on the disbanded I.N.A. to influence the Indian army in Burma after he left it...he knew that Indian struggle would soon be renewed and he had urged his followers to remain steadfast in the faith he had given them, believing that, somehow or other, they would have their part to play." Toye, n. 1, 175. One of the Bose's most trusted officers, Shah Nawaz Khan, told the writer that Bose believed that the men of the I.N.A. on their return to India at the end of the war would affect the loyalty of the Indian ranks of the British Indian army. He (Bose) was said to have told his commanders in 1945 that the I.N.A.'s surrender to the Indian army or its (I.N.A.'s) capture by the Allied forces would be a change of tactics in the I.N.A. fight for freedom. Discussion with Shah Nawaz Khan at New Delhi in February 1963.
Indian armed forces isolated from the tremendous revolutionary
ferment created in the country by the I.N.A. trial during 1945-6.

The existing discontent in
the armed forces

In 1945 the Indian armed forces were to some extent
prepared for unrest due to various reasons. In all the services
there were a number of grievances among the Indian ranks at the
end of the Second World War. The existence of grievances among
the Indians over racial discrimination, slow rate of Indiani-
zation and discrimination in pay and other facilities between
the British and the Indians in the Indian army before the out-
break of the Pacific War have already been mentioned in an
earlier chapter. (108) Conditions of Indian men and officers in
the army did not improve during the war. In the Royal Indian
Air Force the problem of racial adjustment and discrimination in
the service conditions caused acute dissatisfaction among the
Indian ranks. (109) But in no other service the conditions of
Indian men and officers were worse than those in the Royal Indian
Navy. (110)

(108) See chapter two.

(109) For a detailed discussion of the unfavourable ser-
tice conditions of the Indians in the Royal Indian Air Force see
Nandan Prasad, Expansion of the Armed Forces and Defence Organi-
zation 1939-45, General Editor, Bisheshwar Prasad, Official His-
tory of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War 1939-45,
Combined Inter-Services Historical Section, India and Pakistan
(place not mentioned, 1956) 166. Hereinafter referred to as
Nandan Prasad.

(110) The pay of the Indian ratings in the Royal Indian
Navy was very low and it threatened to dry up the recruitment to

(Contd. on next page)
The vast expansion of the Indian armed forces during the war (111) was significant for various reasons. It was now almost physically impossible to keep such a vast force completely secluded. The expansion of the Indian armed forces during the war was important for another reason. Realising that a loyal army was the mainstay of the British power in India, the recruitment to the pre-war Indian army was made strictly from certain classes.

This service. There were grievances as regards leave and promotion of the ratings. During the war only 17 Indian ratings were promoted to the commissioned ranks. Due to these adverse service conditions 33½ to 50 p.c. of the recruits were lost to this Service by desertion during the war. Nandan Prasad, ibid., 127-8. Moreover, from 1942 to the end of the war there were nine mutinies in the Royal Indian Navy. "The ostensible reasons for these mutinies, according to the findings of an official enquiry commission, were the "grievances regarding pay, scale and quality of rations, bad cooking,..." etc. Government of India, The Gazette of India, Extraordinary, 21 January 1947 (Delhi) 115.

(The Extraordinary Gazette contains the report of the Commission headed by Sir S. Fazl Ali appointed by the Government of India in April 1946 to enquire into and report on the causes of the mutiny in the Royal Indian Navy in February 1946). Hereinafter referred to as Gazette of India.

(111) The nature of expansion of the three Services of the Indian armed forces between the years 1939 and 1945 will be clear from the following figures of the personnel strength.

In October 1939 the Indian army consisted of 194373 officers and other ranks (excluding Indian State Forces, auxiliary and irregular forces and British officers and other ranks). In July 1945 there was a total of 2065534 officers and other ranks (including 16351 men of the Indian State Forces but excluding the British Units).

The rise of the strength of the Indian Air Force between October 1939 to July 1945 was from 285 officers and men to 29201 officers and men.

The rise of the strength of the Royal Indian Navy during the same period was from 1848 officers and ratings to 30473 officers and ratings. See Nandan Prasad, n. 109, Appendix I, 398-9.
These classes, mainly Punjabi Muslims and Dogras, were believed to be untainted by the political consciousness and called the 'martial classes'. (112) With the large-scale expansion of the army during the war the martial classes proved inadequate to supply the total requirements of the army's vast expansion. Recruitment had to be made from the sections of the population which had little association with the army before the war. Because of their urban and educational background, these sections were politically oriented. (113)

Contacts with the Indian nationalism in East Asia create new political consciousness

After a short period of hurried training in India the recruits were sent for overseas service in the countries of South East Asia. The Indians in the British Indian army had seen the I.N.A. fighting and later on surrendering as a separate force and there were instances of perfect discipline and high morale to impress them. (114) Moreover, close contacts between the Indians in the I.N.A. and in the Indian army could not be avoided as in

(112) Nandan Prasad, ibid., 84.
(113) Ibid., 93. See also Tuker, n. 8, 66.
(114) It has already been mentioned that after the withdrawal of the Japanese army from Rangoon about six thousand I.N.A. troops under Col. R.M. Arshad maintained perfect law and order in the city and saved it from looting and destruction. See note 2 of this chapter. The Indian brigade commanded by Brigadier K.S. Thimayya was first to enter the city. They were struck by the discipline maintained by the I.N.A. See Humphrey Evans, Thimayya of India: A Soldier's Life (New York, 1960) 229.
many cases it meant the reunion of the men of same family or locality.

The Indians in the Indian army came into contact with the Indian community which had passed through intensive nationalist activities during the war. There was an unsettled period between the surrender of Japan and the effective occupation of Thailand, Malaya and Singapore by the Allied forces. During this period the leaders of the Indian Independence League had not been arrested and under their direction an effective underground nationalist propaganda was carried out among the Indian ranks of the Indian army. (115) Speeches and photographs of Bose and small photo-albums containing photos of the I.N.A. were reprinted in large numbers and secretly distributed among the Indian ranks. (116) These contacts with the I.N.A. and the Indian community were bound to leave their effect on the Indian troops in the Indian army and more particularly on the vast majority of recent recruits. About the impact of these contacts on the Indian army Hugh Toye, a British officer of the Indian army, wrote:

In the eleven months which had then elapsed since the first contacts of the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force with the mass of the I.N.A. in Rangoon,

(115) The writer got this information from Mr. U.C. Sharma the former General Secretary of the Bangkok branch of Indian Independence League who himself was an active member of the underground unit which carried out this propaganda among the Indian ranks of the Indian Army. This was confirmed by Pandit Raghunath Sharma, once the Chairman of the Indian Independence League, Thailand Branch. Discussions with Mr. U.C. Sharma at Bangkok in July 1963; Discussions with Pandit Raghunath Sharma at Bangkok in July 1963.

(116) One such photo album, titled "Freedom is our Birth Right", was presented to the writer by Pandit Raghunath Sharma,
there had been widespread fraternisation.... Its result was a political consciousness which the Indian Servicemen had never before possessed. (117)

This new consciousness led them to react more actively not only to the existing grievances in the Service but to the outstanding political issue of the post-war India.

The post-war stresses on the loyalty of the armed forces

At the end of the war, the loyalty of the Indian men and officers in the Indian army was subjected to great stress. The Government of India had adopted a plan to demobilize by April 1947 a major part of the armed forces - in all 1553167 men from the three Services. (118) This plan of swift and substantial contraction of the strength of all the services created a sense of tremendous insecurity among the Indian ranks with a consequent unsettling effect on their loyalty to the superior authorities. On the other hand, it was apparent to the Indian men and officers

(117) Toye, n. 1, 170. The writer submitted the information about the secret nationalist propaganda among the Indian troops in East Asia, to Field-Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck for his (Sir Claude's) views. Referring to the nationalist propaganda among the Indian troops in East Asia and the reports of fraternisation among the Indian soldiers in the British Indian army and in the I.N.A., Sir Claude wrote: "This may be so, but I do not remember hearing any reports of it. I do not recall any reports of fraternisation but it is obvious that many of the ex- 'I.N.A.' soldiers must have met relatives and friends in the 14th Army." The fourteenth Indian army was responsible for the recapture of Burma from the Japanese. Sir Claude's reply to the writer's questionnaire, November 1964. Emphasis added.

(118) Nandan Prasad, n. 109, 209-11.
in the Indian Army that the image of the Indian army in the Indian mind was hardly favourable. It was viewed, in fact, as an instrument of the British imperialism to keep India and other Asiatic countries in subjugation. (119) They saw how the I.N.A. was glorified before and during the court martial and how readily the country came out to defend it. In the light of their newly acquired political consciousness, these events were bound to react on the minds of the Indians in the British Indian army. Were they on the right side in the tussle between the nationalists and the ruling government? Such a doubt was likely to rise in the mind of the Indian men and officers because, in the hey-day of the I.N.A.'s popularity they had come under the popular stricture. (120) If, however, they wanted to clear themselves of the popular suspicion, the issue of the I.N.A. officers' trial, on which the nationalist sentiment of the country and the ruling authorities were sharply divided, offered them an opportunity.


(120) This was clear from one incident when the leader of the European Group in the Indian Central Assembly supported the Government's attitude towards the I.N.A. prisoners and said: "Do you think it would have been good thing or a bad thing if the whole of the Indian Army had followed the example of the I.N.A. men and joined the Japanese?" Immediately there were cries of "They never joined the Japanese" and "we would have admired the Indian Army if they had joined the I.N.A." Hindustan, 12 February 1946, 4. An Indian officer wrote how the glorification of the I.N.A. was received by the Indian ranks. He wrote that Indian soldiers "felt chagrined at the publicity given to the I.N.A. soldiers, his prestige was stolen from his sails. He wanted to emulate the I.N.A. soldiers and unconsciously became a fighter for the independence of India." Brigadier Rajendra Singh, Far East In Flames (Delhi, 1961) 28; see also Edward, n. 40, 93.
Contacts with the nationalist leaders. There were many indications at the end of the war that the armed forces of India had been affected by the spirit of nationalism. It was no longer isolated from the current of nationalism. There were increasing contacts between the Indian elements of the armed forces and the nationalist leaders. Abul Kalam Azad, the then Congress President, mentioned in his memoirs about the various occasions when the members of the Indian Army, Navy and Police forces expressed their support and loyalty to the Congress disregarding the attitude of the senior British Officers. About one such occasion in 1945, Azad wrote:

When I went to Karachi a group of naval officers came to see me. They expressed their admiration for the Congress policy and assured me that if the Congress issued necessary orders, they would come over to us. If there was a conflict between Congress and the Government, they would side with the Congress and not with the Government. Hundreds of naval officers in Bombay expressed the same feelings. (121)

Later, these contacts with the nationalist leaders became more regular. A biographer of Gandhiji wrote that in early 1946:

There was hardly a day, when a group of Indian military men did not contact him. They met him during his morning walks, they were at his evening prayer gatherings. 'We are soldiers', they said apologetically and added, 'but we are soldiers of Indian freedom'. (122)

(121) Azad, n. 34, 126.
(122) Tendulkar, n. 29, 28-9.
The same feeling was expressed by the Indian officer representing the Indian Army in the Indian Central Assembly, Col. Himmat Singhji. Referring to the attitude of the Indian soldiers he said:

I can tell you here today that every officer and man is just as anxious for the freedom of this country as you are in this House or outside. (123)

The Royal Indian Air Force express sympathy for the I.N.A. prisoners. With the approach of the first I.N.A. officers' trial the pro-I.N.A. sentiment of the Indian section of the armed forces and its dislike for the Government's policy towards the I.N.A. began to get expression. The Royal Indian Air Force (R.I.A.F.) stationed at Calcutta openly came out against the court martial of the I.N.A. officers. During the first I.N.A. officers' trial, they sent their subscription "for the defence of brave and patriotic sons of India forming the I.N.A." In a message to the Bengal Congress Committee the R.I.A.F. not only praised "the noble ideal" of the I.N.A. but described the method adopted by the latter as "commendable and inspiring". They (the R.I.A.F.) recorded their "strongest protest against the autocratic action of the Government of India and, in effect, that of British Government in trying by court martial these brightest jewels of India." (124)

(123) Times of India, 11 February 1946, 6.

(124) The message of the Royal Indian Air Force stationed in Calcutta to the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, see Hindustan Standard, 11 November 1945, 5.
The glorification of the I.N.A. by the nationalists worried the Indian army authorities about its probable effect on the morale of the Indian section in the Indian army. Some measures were taken to counter the nationalists' propaganda. (125) In spite of these measures, many secret decisions of the army authorities regarding the I.N.A. officers were divulged to the public during 1946. Lieut. Gen. Tuker, the Commander of the Eastern Command, mentioned one such incident in his command which was "the beginning of many exposures of the secret military informations" about the I.N.A. (126) These events caused grave concern in the army authorities as these (the exposures) clearly suggested where exactly lay the sympathy of the most responsible Indian officers in the army headquarters. "It was alarming for the future", wrote Tuker, "for the only person who could have got at them (127) was some Indian officer employed on the staff." (128)

(125) For the details of these measures see the copy of the Political propaganda on behalf of the I.N.A. - possibility of counter Measures, extract from G.H.Q. (1) A.G.'s Branch Simla. The I.N.A. Files Jamabhoomi Press, Bombay. On 1 January 1946, the Commander-in-Chief of Indian army issued a confidential note to all the commanding officers of the Royal Indian Navy, Indian Air Force and the Indian Army warning them that the "months ahead...will inevitably a period of strain and upheaval." Certain measures were suggested to keep the armed forces firm to their allegiance. Copy of the note from Gen. Auchinleck to All the Commanding Officers of the R.I.N., I.A., and R.I.A.F., The I.N.A. files of the Jamabhoomi Press, Bombay.

(126) Tuker, n. 8, 48.

(127) These refer to the secret decisions of the Army Headquarters about the I.N.A.

(128) Tuker, n. 8, 48.
To what extent precisely was the Army affected? As all the required official records are not available, it is difficult to know the exact strength of the Indian men and officers who disliked the official policy towards the I.N.A. officers. The remarks of some responsible British officers of the Indian army help us to form some idea as regards the strength of this section. The account of Lieut. Gen. Tuker suggests a grim picture. He wrote: "...the I.N.A. affair was...threatening to tumble down the whole edifice of the Indian army..." (129) Tuker, however, did not quote any figure regarding the strength of the pro-I.N.A. section in the Indian army.

An attempt can, however, be made to find out the strength of the pro-I.N.A. section among the Indian officers. Lieut. Gen. Tuker, in his narrative of the post-war events in India, analysed the attitude of the different sections of Indian officers towards the I.N.A. According to him, of the Indian officers recruited prior to 1939, the Sandhurst graduates due to their education in English public schools and close contact with the English way of living "held precisely the same view as the British officer." (130)

(129) Tuker also wrote: "...never, I believe, has the loyalty and soldierly spirit of any army been subjected to such a strain and to such determined and ingenious pressure to subvert it and to destroy its pride in itself." Tuker, n. 8, 43, 95.

(130) The British officers, as it has been pointed out earlier, wished that the I.N.A. officers should be tried and, if found guilty, punished condignly.
To the graduates of the Indian Military Academy, because of too little contact in their case with the British outside the Academy, "the I.N.A. were patriots and much to be praised." The war-time recruits, because of their political consciousness, were of the view that the accused I.N.A. officers were "patriots and to be treated leniently...." (131)

The numerical strength of the different categories of officers would roughly indicate the strength of the pro-I.N.A. section in the whole army. The strength of the Indian officers in the combatant sections of the Indian army in October 1939 was 396 (132) of these, the larger number were the products of the Indian Military Academy. (133) But the overwhelming majority of the Indian officers in 1946 were recruited during the war and their strength was 7,604. (134) Assuming that Tuker's analysis of the attitude of the different sections of the Indian officers towards the I.N.A. was correct, approximately seventy-six out of every eighty Indian officers were opposed to the prosecution of the I.N.A. officers in 1945. If the pro-I.N.A. group among pre-war officers are taken into account, the number of Indian officers

(131) Ibid., 64-6.

(132) See Nandan Prasad, n. 109, 182.

(133) Before the establishment of the Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun in 1932 only 20 seats were reserved for the Indians in the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. (The number of seats were raised from 10 to 20 in 1926) Since 1932 sixty cadets used to trained up from the Indian Academy. Ibid., 170-6.

(134) The total number of Indian officers at the end of the war was 8,000. Ibid., 182.
supporting the army authorities policy towards the I.N.A. would be less than four in every group of eighty.

The C-in-C fails to ignore the pro-I.N.A. sentiment in the army. The senior British officers of the Indian army under-estimated the strength of the pro-I.N.A. officers in the army. (135) Thanks to the findings of the "Special Organisation" which had been set-up in the Indian army headquarters to probe into the real feelings of the Indian men and officers towards the I.N.A. officers, the C-in-C made a realistic assessment of the position of the Indian officers. On 26 November 1945 he communicated his views to the Viceroy:

I do not think any senior British officer today knows what is the real feeling among the Indian ranks regarding the 'I.N.A.'...there is a growing feeling of sympathy for the 'I.N.A.' and an increasing tendency to disregard the brutalities committed by some of its members as well as the forsaking by all of them of original allegiance. (136)

It is certain that the assessment of the actual feelings of the officers of the Indian army towards the I.N.A. officers did influence the C-in-C in taking this decision of commuting the sentence of the three I.N.A. officers of the first I.N.A. court martial. The secret memorandum, circulated by the C-in-C among the senior British officers to remove the misgivings created in their mind for the commutation of the sentences of I.N.A. officers

(135) See General Scoones to General Auchinleck, 24 November 1945; General O'Connor to General Auchinleck, 24 November 1945, see Connell, n. 8, 803-5.

(136) From Auchinleck to the Viceroy, 29 November 1945, ibid., 806.
of the first I.N.A. trial, clearly suggested strength of the opposition regarding the trials of the I.N.A. officers from the Indian officers. Referring to the reaction of the Indian officers to the leniency shown to the first three accused I.N.A. officers, the C-in-C wrote: "Except for a few recovered prisoners of war who have suffered much at the hands of their fellow countrymen who joined the so-called 'I.N.A.', the vast majority, almost without exception, however much they may like and respect the British, are glad and relieved because of the result of the trial." All Indian officers were sure that "any attempt to force the sentence would have led to chaos in the country at large and probably to mutiny and dissension in the army culminating its dissolution...." (137) Similarly, referring to the reaction of the V.C.O.s. and the rank and file of the Indian army on the same point, the C-in-C wrote:

The great majority are, I think, pleased that leniency has been shown for a variety of reasons.

Many of them have relations and friends from the same villages amongst the 'I.N.A.' Many think that, as the war is over, bygones should be bygones and a fresh start made.

Others are genuinely nationalistic in outlook and have been affected by agitation and propaganda. (138)

The R.I.A.F. 'strikers' sympathise with the I.N.A. prisoners

In January (1946) the Royal Indian Air Force (R.I.A.F.),

(137) From Auchinleck to the senior British officers, February 1946, n. 76, 1.
(138) Ibid., 2.
following the strike of the Royal Air Force, went on strike. (139) It put forward its various grievances and expressed its sympathy with the I.N.A. (140) It is difficult to conceive what exactly might have been the consequences of the pro-I.N.A. sympathies in the army, but for the timely step-down in the face of the powerful pro-I.N.A. sentiment by the C-in-C by commuting the punishment of the three I.N.A. officers. But the most dangerous explosion was to take place in the Royal Indian Navy (R.I.N.) during the latter half of February 1945.

The R.I.N. mutiny

The details of the mutiny (141) and the different political versions of it (142) can be found elsewhere. Here, an attempt will be made to bring out the basic features of the mutiny and assess the role of the political factor in it.

The mutiny, in fact, involved the whole Navy (R.I.N.). Seventy-eight ships of various description stationed in Bombay, Karachi, Madras, Calcutta, Cochin, Vizagapatam, Mandapam, Delhi and Andamans and almost all naval shore establishments in the

(139) According to the press report 5200 airmen were involved in the strike. See Bombay Chronicle, 19 February 1946, 5.

(140) Tuker, n. 8, 84.

(141) For the events leading to the mutiny and the happenings during it see Gazette of India, n. 116; Kasing's Contemporary Archives, 1946-8, 8745; Mitra, ed., n. 101, 285-327.

(142) For a typical British officer's version of the incidents see Tuker, n. 8, 84-8. For a communist version of the events see Dutt, n. 58, 536-42.
country joined the mutiny. Only 10 ships and two shore establishments of the R.I.N. remained unaffected. (143)

The mutiny was short-lived. It lasted for seven days in Calcutta and 6 days in Bombay, two days in Karachi and one day in Madras. (144)

In Bombay and Karachi there was exchange of firing between the ratings and the military. Elsewhere the mutineers were non-violent. They went on hunger strike or refused to work. The real danger arising out of the naval mutiny was underlined in the warning of the naval authorities to put down the mutiny even at the cost of the navy. (145) Strong naval reinforcements were swiftly despatched to meet any exigency. (146)

The I.N.A. issue infuses fresh political consciousness in the R.I.N. Was the naval mutiny influenced by the existing revolutionary condition in the country which, to a great extent, was created by the I.N.A. officers' trial? There existed various grievances among the Indian ratings at the end of the war which

(143) Gazette of India, n. 110, 117.

(144) Ibid.

(145) See the Vice-Admiral Godfrey's warning to the ratings. Godfrey deplored that a "state of open mutiny prevails" in Bombay. See Times of India, 22 February 1946, 7.

(146) The Press quoted a spokesman of the General Headquarters in Delhi to say that strong naval, military and air reinforcements were on their way to Bombay, Poona and Karachi. Times of India, 22 February 1946, 7. This was confirmed by Prime Minister Attlee in the House of Commons. See UK, House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, 419 (1946-6) cols. 1310 and 1441. Hereinafter referred to as H.C.C.
had been mentioned earlier. These grievances were serious enough to cause repeated unrest in the Service during the war. But the mutiny of February 1946 had a political complexion which none of the war-time mutinies had.

The quarterly reports on the morale of the ratings of the R.I.N. since July 1945 suggest a change in the traditional apathetic attitude of the ratings towards contemporary political issues. The report of the quarter ending in July (1945) mentioned no political influence at work among the ratings. (147) Even at the end of September (1945) the attitude of the Indian ratings did not substantially change. They were "either indifferent to politics or interested in it in an unhealthy way." (148) The first I.N.A. court martial which started in November 1946 brought about a change in the attitude of the Indian ratings. The ratings of the R.I.N. were also influenced by the political agitation over the I.N.A. officers' trial.

The report on the morale of the ratings pointed out at the end of December (1946): "...ratings politically conscious; keenly aware of relative lack of amenities for themselves and their families as compared to those provided in foreign navies; ...some ratings influenced by I.N.A. propaganda and sympathetic to I.N.A." (149) An officer who visited the Indian officers and ratings in Bombay and Karachi during December 1945 and February

(147) Gazette of India, n. 110, 133.
(148) Ibid.
(149) Ibid.
1946 confirmed the existing pro-I.N.A. feelings among the ratings. (150) Another report of the same period prepared by an officer on his visit to the Bombay naval establishments mentioned:

All ratings and officers sympathetic to independence movement in the country, Muslim ratings keenly interested in Pakistan; Hindu ratings pro-Congress; opinion about I.N.A. divided but majority in favour of trials being abandoned. (151)

The political features of the mutiny. The actual events of the naval mutiny repudiate the contention that it was solely for improved facilities in the service. Once the mutiny broke out, it quickly assumed a political complexion. The demands put forward by the ratings for immediate redress, included the release of the I.N.A. prisoners and the abandonment of the impending trials. (152) Moreover, the mutineers renamed the navy as the Indian National Navy, (153) contacted the leftist leader, (154) burnt the U.S. flag and flew the flag of the Congress and the Muslim League. (155)

The official Enquiry Commission holds political influence as a contributory factor. Soon after the end of the naval mutiny,

(150) Ibid.
(151) Ibid.
(152) Bombay Chronicle, 20 and 21 February 1946, 5; Times of India, 21 February 1946, 7.
(154) The ratings contacted Mrs. Aruna Asaf Ali. For the role of the left-wing elements in the mutiny see Mitra, ed., n. 101, 287; Azad, n. 34, 131 and Attlee in the House of Commons, H.o.C., n. 146, col. 1442.
A Commission was appointed by the Government of India to enquire into its causes. The Commission marshalled various causes which gave birth to discontentment among the ratings. Some of the evidence which the Commission took into account, most notably that of Rear Admiral Rattray, maintained that "the causes of the mutiny are to be found in politics and political influence." (156)

The Commission did not agree with the view. It, however, held political influence as a "contributory cause of the mutiny." (157) It summarised the factors which "contributed to the spread of subversive propaganda among the ratings and gave the mutiny a political complexion." These, according to the Commission, were:

- Majority of ratings politically conscious, the ratings' contact with I.N.A., the Azad Hind literature in Singapore, Malaya and Burma, free access to political meetings, inflammatory articles in the Press, discussion of I.N.A. trials, R.A.P. and R.I.A.F. "strikes", Commander King incident which accentuated existing racial feeling, exploitation of the existing discontent and unrest in the Service by some individuals in the Service holding anti-British views. (158)

The Press emphasises the importance of the political factor. The Press, however, was more emphatic on the role of the political influence on the mutiny. The Times of India editorially wrote:

(156) The two other witnesses, namely, Ahmed Brohi and the Naval Officer of Bombay supported Admiral Rattray's view. Gazette of India, n. 110, 133-4.

(157) Ibid., 121.

(158) Ibid., 134.
"As a result of the extravagant glorification of the I.N.A. following the trials in Delhi, there was released throughout India a flood of comment which had inevitable sequel in mutinies and alarming outbreaks of civil violence in Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and elsewhere..." (159) A similar view was expressed by the Times. It wrote: "In the case of the naval ratings, the trouble seems to be in the main political. It was scarcely to be expected that, the ratings, in such a large centre of political activities as Bombay, would not become affected to some extent, by the prevailing racial tension..." (160)

Repercussions of the naval mutiny. In the tense atmosphere existing in the country as a result of the disturbances in the first half of February (1946) the naval mutiny had quick repercussions. Between 21 and 24 February (1946) there was furious mass rioting in Bombay following the strike called in support of the revolting ratings. (161) Simultaneously, there were

(159) Times of India, 20 February 1946, 6.
(160) Times (London), 21 February 1946, 3.
(161) The strike was called by the communists and the leftist elements of the Congress party. The official Congress policy disapproved the strike. The mass demonstration in sympathy with the mutineering R.I.N. ratings soon took rioting. The communists organized six hundred thousand mill workers of the city to strike. The minimum casualty figures which was quoted by the Government were 187 killed and 1,002 wounded. The maximum figures quoted by non Governmental sources were 270 killed and 1300 injured. Times of India published from Bombay wrote that the "mass-rising" which was "in sympathy of the naval mutiny" was "unparalleled in the city's history." See Times of India, 23 February 1946, 1, 25 February 1946, 1; Kassina's Contemporary Archives, 1946-8, 4745, 8745; Mitra, ed., n. 101, 313.
disturbances in Calcutta, Madura and Madras. (162) The repercussions were felt among the armed forces too. It led to the strikes of the Indian soldiers stationed at Jabalpur on 27 February (1946) and of the R.I.A.F. at Bombay and Madras between 22 and 25 February 1946. (163)

There were some important features of these disturbances. The civil disturbances in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras and the strike in the air-force were in sympathy with the mutiny in the navy. (164) The soldiers, who struck, expressed their sympathies for the I.N.A. and the ratings. (165) Moreover, the civil disturbances in Bombay, the most furious of all such disturbances, were anti-foreign in nature. Government and European property was singled out for attack. (166) The disturbances were brought under control only by military and police forces which had to be reinforced. (167)

The revolutionary sentiment created in the country by the I.N.A. issue, as described above, had important consequences. It brought to light the cautious attitude of the Congress High Command


(165) Idid., 328.

(166) Times of India, 23 February 1946, 1; Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1946-8, 8745.

(167) Times of India, 23 February 1946, 1.
towards the revolutionary situation which had been created in the country, to a great extent, due to their all-out support for the I.N.A. The purpose for which the Congress had taken up the responsibility of defending the I.N.A. officers, that is to remove the dull political atmosphere in India of the immediate post-war months, had been achieved. The Congress, therefore, did not make the full use of revolutionary sentiments among the masses and the armed forces to organize a new Quit India movement and give a call to Indians in the armed forces to join it. The Congress condemned the civilian disturbances of February (1946) and withdrew its support from the mutiny of the ratings. (168) This was mainly because the Congress High Command expected the transfer of power to be peaceful. (169) Although the possibility of a new anti-British movement was removed, the existing revolutionary sentiments in India had an important effect on the British attitude towards the question of India's independence.

(168) Sardar Patel condemned the mass demonstration in Bombay during the civil disorder as "unjustifiable". Nehru also deplored it. The Congress Working Committee, in its meeting in March 1946 stated that those events were "an obstacle in the way of Congress." See Mitra, ed., n. 101, 124, 314, 317. The President of the Congress Maulana Abul Kalam Azad communicated to the Bombay Provincial Congress as well as Sardar Patel that "the steps taken by the naval officers were wrong and they should go back to work." He gave the same instruction to Mrs. Aruna Asaf Ali who tried to secure the support of the Congress for the ratings. See Azad, n. 34, 131. On 22 February (1946) Sardar Patel strongly advised the ratings "to lay down arms and to go through the formality of surrender." Mitra, ed., n. 101, 297.

(169) Azad, n. 34, 120.
5. The impact of the I.N.A. issue on the attitude of the British Government towards the question of India's independence

British withdrawal from India to await the settlement between the Congress and the League

In August 1940, when the British Government first offered India a promise of self-government, they insisted on an agreement between the two principal communities of India as a pre-condition to the transfer of power. (170) This condition continued to be the key point of all subsequent British offers during the war. (171) When the Labour Party came in power in 1945 Indian nationalism was still divided and the British policy continued to stress the urgency of a communal agreement. (172) The settlement

(170) It was feared that if the communal settlement did not preceed the transfer of power, the future government of India might fail to command the loyalty of a powerful minority group. Coupland, Indian Politics 1936-42, n. 29, 158-9, 311.

(171) At the time of the Cripps offer of 1942, the British Government held that a settlement among the main political parties of India on the form of constitution of the free India should precede the transfer of power to India by the British "since otherwise there would be no Indian Government commanding the allegiance of India as a whole...." Coupland, Indian Politics 1936-42, n. 29, 313. At the outset of the negotiations among the principal Indian parties and the Viceroy at Simla Conference in June-July 1945, it was made clear that the Viceroy would not take any new step "without substantial agreement between Congress and League." As the Conference foundered on the communal issue, the Viceroy ceased to proceed with any further measure towards India's constitutional development. See The Spectator (London), no. 6106 (6 July 1945) 1; no. 6107 (13 July 1945) 2; no. 6108 (20 July 1945) 1.

(172) See the item 'C' of the summary of the Viceroy's broadcast on 19 September 1945 in the note 31 of this chapter.
of the Indian question depended solely on the initiative of the Congress and the League. The British policy under these circumstances aimed at a limited objective, namely, the convening of a Constituent Assembly. Having declared its decision in September (1945) to hold the general elections preparatory to convene a Constituent Assembly, (173) the British Government waited for the elections which were to take place during the winter. (174)

The revolutionary condition in India injected new initiative in the British attitude

During this interval, the revolutionary sentiment created by the I.N.A. issue swept India and it penetrated into the armed forces. To what extent the British Government were kept informed of these events is not known. The outbreak of violence in India during the last weeks of November (1945) — occurring for the first time after the war — gave a shock to the British Government and made it act speedily. (175)

(173) Ibid. Pointing out the objective which the British policy wished to achieve in 1946 the biographer of Sir Stafford Cripps wrote: "The problem...was to bring into an Indian Constitution making body all the Indian interests that should be properly represented in it." Colin Cooke, The Life of Richard Stafford Cripps (London, 1957) 342.

(174) The results of the general elections could be known only at the beginning of 1946. The British Government would have to wait about four months (from September 1945) to take the next step in the Indian question.

(175) On 26 November 1945 the London correspondent of the New York Times wrote: "Anxiety over unrest in India is becoming acute here." He quoted a spokesman of the India Office to have said that "there is a dangerous period ahead." New York Times, 27 November 1945, 30.
All party Parliamentary Delegation for India appointed. On 4 December (1945) the Lord President of the Council, Mr. Herbert Morrison, re-stated in the House of Commons the British policy towards India. The statement repudiated any intention to delay the settlement of the Indian question and stated that the British Government considered further progress in India's constitutional development "as a matter of the greatest urgency." At the same time, the Government took a significant step to get for the Parliament and the British public first-hand knowledge of the real nature of the Indian situation. It was stated that a nine-man Parliamentary delegation, consisting of six Labour M.Ps., two Conservative M.Ps. and one Liberal M.P., would visit India. (176) Unlike all other previous goodwill missions, which paid courtesy visits to the colonies, this delegation had a purely political task to perform. (177) Elaborating the object of the delegation, Mr. Morrison said: "...one of its purposes would be first of all to convey the good-will of the British

(176) UK, House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, 416 (1945-6) cols. 2102-4. Hereinafter referred to as H.o.C.

The delegation consisted of six Labour M.Ps.: Professor R. Richards, Alderman A. Bottomley, Major Woodrow Wyatt, Mrs. M.Wallhead Nichol, R. Sorensen Lord Chorley; three Conservative M.Ps.: Brigadier R. Low, G. Nicholson, Lord Munster; and one Liberal M.P.: R. Hopkin Morris.

(177) The sending of the All Party Parliamentary Delegation to India was a departure from the British Parliamentary conventions. Never before had such a delegation visited any part of the British Empire without an invitation of the Dominion. In this case, the initiative came from the British Government. This was pointed out by Sir Anthony Eden in the House of Commons. H.o.C., n. 176, col. 2106; Wyatt, n. 30, 115.
Parliament and also to assess the situation." (178)

Mr. Morrison emphasised that the extraordinary duty of the
delegation would be to convey, on its return, its assessment of
the Indian situations to the Government. The latter, on the
basis of those findings, would take the next step to solve the
Indian question. Morrison added that the delegation, on its
return, would have:

an opportunity of conferring with His Majesty's
Government in order to express its views and
impressions. At that point we could consider
what further action should be taken. In that
sense, it is rather exceptional, but we should
certainly wish to have the advantage of the
views and opinions and impressions of the delege-
tes on their return. (179)

The All-Party Parliamentary Delegation left Britain on
2 January 1946. During their short stay of five weeks in
India (180) the members of the delegation assessed the political
and economic conditions and those of the Indian armed forces and
the princely states. (181) On their return to England they
reported to the British Prime Minister, other members of the Cabi-
net and the Parliament, - individually as well as collectively.
(182) Broad conclusions of their assessment of the Indian situ-
tions can be drawn from their subsequent speeches in the Parliament


(179) Ibid.; see also H.S. Peshak, H.N. Brailsford and
added.

(180) The delegation returned to London on 12 February 1946.
(181) R.W. Sorensen, My Impression of India (London, 1946)
15-6.
(182) Ibid., 27.
and their writings.

The delegation's views on the question of Indian freedom

The representatives of the Labour and the Conservative parties reiterated in India as well as in British Parliament that India had attained her "political manhood." (183) The story of the constitutional development of India was criticised as a "poor record" for Britain. (184) The lack of understanding in a section of the British people about India's political maturity was criticised by a Conservative member of the delegation:

It is no good to anybody in this country thinking that the cry for independence is confined to a few intellectuals or to city-bred politicians. Every Indian who can read, and a good many of those who cannot, have been bitten by this cry and feel it deeply. That is the fact we have got to realise. (185)

The Conservative representatives convinced of the danger of unrest in India. Brigadier Low, a Conservative representative

(183) See the farewell talk of the leader of the All-Party Parliamentary Delegation, Mr. Richard, to press representatives in India quoted in Menon, n. 29, 223.

Mr. Godfrey Nicholson, a Conservative member of the delegation, pointed out in the House of Commons: "India today is politically adult. That is the fact we have got to realise." This was also reiterated by Roberts in the House. See H.o.C., n. 176, cols. 1427, 1441.

(184) Mr. Richards made this remark in the British Parliament after an analysis of the different steps taken by the British Government to give effect to the pledge of some liberal-minded British statesmen that the British policy in India should aim at the development of self-government. H.o.C., n. 176, cols. 1438-41.

(185) This remark was made by Mr. Godfrey Nicholson. H.o.C., n. 176, col. 1427.
to the delegation, expressed a cautious warning about the danger of 'disorder' in India. He urged that the British public had got to realise it without any delay. He told Parliament:

...I believe there is a danger that an atmosphere has been created in which one evil-minded man might set off the eruption of the volcano.... I do not believe that anybody who has not studied this matter fully appreciates the dangers that exist of real disorder. I have made these preliminary remarks in the hope that, perhaps, some hon. Members of this House and the people in this country who have not been studying this problem will appreciate the difficulties. (186)

The Labour representatives foresaw the possibility of a revolt in India. The Labour members of the delegation, like the Conservative members, were also convinced that serious consequences would follow if the Indian grievances were not immediately removed. To describe the consequences, however, they preferred the word 'revolt' to 'unrest'. According to them, the impact of the I.W.A. officers' trial and the activities of the Indian socialists and communists were the factors which were powerful enough to paralyse temporarily the influence of non-violence and cause a revolt in India. (187) They agreed that the ferment in India was partially due to the absence of communal harmony and discontent among the labour class. But the main danger to the British rule in India, it appeared to them, lay in the more powerful anti-British feelings among the Indians. A Labour member

(186) H.o.C., n. 176, col. 1461.
(187) Sorosen, n. 181, 186-8.
wrote:

India is in a state of suspended ferment.... The British, in the role of an unnatural safety valve, keep them submerged by maintaining law and order and continuing the machinery of Government. When the lid is finally taken off something is bound to happen. It may only be riots and minor disturbances, or there may be two sorts of civil war - Hindus against Muslims, and later the workers against the rest. But, if the British fail to find some way of handing over smoothly, there may first be a revolution to drive them out. (188)

The Labour representatives believed Britain could not bear the brunt of a revolt in India. Could Britain stand the strain of a revolt in India in 1946? Some of the Labour representatives gave their serious consideration to this question. It appeared to be an extremely difficult task to maintain order in a vast country like India with an army about whose absolute loyalty there was some doubt (189) and a civil service which was about to break down. (190) Moreover, in case of a revolt against the British,


(189) One member of the delegation, Mr. R.W. Sorensen wrote: "To maintain law and order in a land of 420000000, with large numbers everywhere engaged in systematic violence, and with uncertainty respecting the Indian army itself, would have evoked a crisis of the highest magnitude. Even aircraft and aerial bombardment, against which revolutionaries have no effective defence, would not have sufficed. Every bomb dropped would have intensified the depths of bitter resistance until India was consumed by hatred and soaked in blood." Sorensen, n. 181, 169.

(190) The 'steel frame' civil administration of India which was responsible for smooth running of the Government in India was tottering at the end of the war. Although the large majority of administrators were Indians the key-men at the top were Europeans. Many of the European Civil servants were to retire during the war but they could not be allowed to do so due to exigencies of the war. All of them were overworked. At the end of the war they

(Contd. on next page)
it was quite possible that large number of trained Indian men and
officers of the armed forces who were facing demobilization would
go over to the nationalists. (191) One very important factor in
the argument of these delegates was that, in the immediate post-
war period, Britain was struggling hard to tide over a serious
economic and political crisis at home and abroad. (192) Under
these circumstances a revolt in India would "involve Britain in
military operations and repression that would have strained most
seriously her military and economic resources." The revolt would
prove fatal for the British domination over

were anxious to return home. The Conservative representative to
the delegation, Mr. Godfrey Nicholson, who brought the danger to
the notice of the Parliament, concluded by adding: "...it is my
conviction that the Administration is very near to breaking point.
An administrative breakdown is not only a possibility, but almost,
one might say, a probability. H.C.C., n. 176, cols. 1429-30.
See also Francis Williams, A Prime Minister Remembers (London,

(191) Sorensen, n. 181, 169. About 2250000 men and officers
of the Indian army were facing demobilization in 1946.

(192) Ibid.

It may be pointed out here that at the end of the war, the
British Government were faced with serious problems at home aris-
ing out of the war-devastations, acute shortage of food which was
described by Attlee as "the worst food crisis in modern history," the
necessity of re-establishing the war-economy of Britain on a
peace-time footing and the urgent need to build-up Britain's
export trade. The position became far more difficult on account of
British economic and political commitments in Europe. The war
had left such devastation and disorganization in Europe that there
was "the gravest danger of wide-spread famine and break-down of
ordered government" in many countries as a result of the activities
of the internal communist elements and the help of the U.S.S.R.
Britain had to extend her economic and political assistance to
those countries. For detailed discussions of these problems see
Francis Williams, n. 190, 135-48. Some of the speeches of Attlee
in the House of Commons gave clear idea about Britain's economic
problems. See Roy Jenkins, ed., Purpose And Policy: Selected
India. One member of the delegation wrote:

Circumstances this time have been far less favourable to Britain than in 1857. Then there were no nation-wide, disciplined, powerful political organizations effectively canalising social discontent and nationalist fervour. This alone would make all the difference. But there is also the other fact, that in the middle of the last century Britain had not suffered the terrific strain of a devastating world war, and was not urgently intent on economic and social reconstruction. In short, we were able to bear the strain in those days, but we could not do so today without the possibility of cracking under it. (193)

Another point, on which all the members of the delegation agreed, was that the situation in India needed urgent attention of the British Government. (194)

The Viceroy urged the Secretary of State for India for hurried action

The Viceroy, in the meanwhile, was reported to have informed the Secretary of State in Britain about "the changed situation in India and the growing unpopularity of the Government among all sections" of the people. He had also stated that after the elections "Congress was sure to present its demand even in more extreme form if some action to solve the deadlock was not taken in the meantime, and it would be difficult to resist it then."

The Viceroy was reported to have gone to the extent of saying that the Congress might "resort to direct action to enforce its demand." He had also warned the British Government that in case of such an

(193) Sorensen, n. 181, 169-70.
(194) Ibid., 27.
event the Government would find itself without any supporter - not even the Princes." (195) So far as the loyalty of the Indian police, civilian officers and army was concerned, the Viceroy was said to have reported that there was not much reason of immediate worry. But he warned at the same time that "it would be unwise to try the Indian Army too highly in the suppression of their own people, and as time went on the loyalty of even the Indian officials, the Indian Army and the Police might become problematical." (196)

The appointment of the Cabinet Mission to India

The observations of the Parliamentary delegates and those of the Viceroy underlined the possibility of a great upheaval in India. The civil disturbances in India during the mid-February corroborated them. The Labour Government acted quickly. On 19 February 1946 Lord Pethick Lawrence, the Secretary of State for India, announced the decision of the British Cabinet to send to India a Cabinet Mission consisting of the Secretary of State for India, the President of the Board of Trade Sir Stafford Cripps, and the First Lord of the Admiralty Mr. A.V. Alexander to discuss with the representatives of India the positive steps to be taken for giving effect to the programme envisaged in the speech of the Viceroy on 19 September 1945. (197)

(195) Pyaralal, n. 34, 169.
(196) Menon, n. 29, 232.
(197) Times, 20 February 1946, 4.
The impact of the R.I.N. mutiny and civil disturbances on the British authorities. The mutiny of the naval ratings at Bombay and Karachi with its repercussion over the whole R.I.N. and the following civil disorders created utmost concern in Whitehall and in New Delhi. The correspondent of the Times reported from New Delhi on 20 February (1946), a day after the outbreak of the naval mutiny: "A serious view is taken here of the trouble with the Royal Indian Navy at Bombay." (198) As the mutiny spread in other ports with its violent repercussion in the civil disturbances the same paper wrote on 26 February: "...The naval mutiny and the civil riots which followed it in Bombay have been a shock to everyone, including the political leaders. They are symptoms of mounting unrest and impatience." (199) The New York Times pointed out the graver consequences of the mutiny. Its correspondent reported from Delhi on 21 February: "The British, not unnaturally, are concerned over the effects of these mutinies on the morale of the Indian Armed forces and on the Government's authority, which must be based, to some extent, on the existence

(198) Ibid., 21 February 1946, 3.

(199) Ibid., 26 February 1946, 4. About the British concern created by the civil disorders after the outbreak of the naval mutiny the correspondent of the New York Times reported from London: "Reports from Bombay...to the effect that police officials on the spot termed the civilian riots "open rebellion" have aroused more concern here than the naval mutiny itself. For sometime there has been a growing feeling in well-informed British quarters that tension in India has reached a point where it might snap dangerously at any time." New York Times, 26 February 1946, 2.
of military force." The correspondent also added that although the Indian army was still loyal to British the "most disturbing factor is that the personnel of the armed forces are now being subjected to all political stresses and strains that affect the civil population." (200)

The new anti-British sentiment in India. To many observers it appeared that there was a real danger in those disturbances. The disturbances in November (1945) and February (1946), which the I.N.A. officers' trial brought in its train, had revealed one important fact. Over the I.N.A. issue the anti-British feeling in India was transcending the communal divisions. On 18 February 1946, Anne O'Hare McCormick in a special article in the New York Times first referred to the rift between the two principal Indian communities and then added:

The ancient cleavage is so far unbridgable except when the two elements are fused in an anti-foreign campaign. Lately there have appeared the first serious evidences in India of the anti-white feeling that crops up in other parts of Asia.

The new feeling, according to the same writer, was "stimulated by the propaganda of Chandra Bose, the pro-Japanese leader who had won followers among Moslems and Hindus alike...." (201)
The appointment of the Cabinet Mission indicated a shift in British attitude towards the Indian question.

The decision to send three members of the British Cabinet marked a change in the British attitude towards the Indian question. The British Government were no longer to await a communal settlement between the Congress and the League as a preparatory step to transfer power to India. The British policy was now directed to bring about a communal settlement before transferring power to India. The New York Times observed that the decision to send a Cabinet Mission to India "represents an even more drastic step than appears from the official announcement."

About the impact of the mutinies and civil disorders in India the correspondent of the same paper reported from London on 23 February (1946):

Underlying this surprise move is the fact that the British no longer bases its policy so strictly on the former stand that "It is up to the Indians themselves to arrive first before any big step towards independence can be taken." Instead the Labour

"Greater East Asia Coprosperity Sphere" may not have pleased the Indian people, but "Asia for the Asians" has a ring that appeals to many of them. New York Times, 23 February 1946, 12. See also New Statesman and Nation (London) 795 (20 October 1945) 255-6.

(202) The London correspondent of the paper also pointed out: "In quarters in close touch with the Indian situation here it was stated today that the latest developments in Bombay had reinforced the feeling in London that, once order has been fully restored, the time has come for a radical approach to the problem." New York Times, 23 February 1946, 2. One day earlier, on 22 February, the same paper had editorially written that "The revolt of Indian Seamen in Bombay...underlines the urgency of the mission of three Cabinet Ministers which the British Government is sending to India." New York Times, 22 February 1946, 24.
Cabinet is now determined to draw up, after the fullest consultations with Indian leaders of all parties, its own proposals for a Constitution, including, it is understood, a definite date for the achievement of self-rule. (203)

The Cabinet Mission was to help the Viceroy to bring into existence a constituent assembly and an interim government, as promised in the Viceroy's declaration of 19 September 1945. The Mission was not to take part in framing the constitution of India, which was to be entirely the responsibility of the Indians. The Mission was not carrying to India any definite proposal on which it might seek an agreement of the Indian leaders. Its main purpose of the Mission was to help the Indian leaders to reach an agreement. The Secretary of State, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, stated in London a few days after the appointment of the Cabinet Mission:

We go ready to translate British promises and pledges into action, and we shall not seek in our negotiations to provide for anything incompatible with the freedom of India to control her own affairs.... It is for India's representatives to choose the structure of her constitution under which she will enjoy freedom,.... We are determined to do everything in our power to bring about agreement and enable India to frame a new constitution. (204)

The British Prime Minister explains the need for early settlement of the Indian question

On 15 March 1946, four days before the Cabinet Mission was

(204) Daily Telegraph (London) 26 February 1946, quoted in Puri, n. 23, 131. The biographer of Sir Stafford mentioned that the 'solution' of the Indian question, which the Cabinet Mission attempted to bring about, was "to find out a basis of agreement between the Indian leaders which would allow an Indian interim Government to take office forthwith while a Constitution was drafted and brought into being." Cooke, n. 173, 342. Emphasis added.
to leave for India, an important debate on India was initiated
in the British Parliament. The debate disclosed the factor
which had influenced the Labour Government in sending the Cabinet
Mission to India. Prime Minister Attlee pointed out:

I find from our friends in the House who had been
out to India and returned, from letters received
from Indians and from Englishmen in India of all
points of view, complete agreement on the fact
that India is in a state of great tension and this
is indeed a critical moment. At the present
moment the idea of nationalism is running very
fast in India...and today I think that the national
idea has spread right through not the least perhaps
among some of those soldiers who had rendered such
wonderful service in the war.

I would like today, therefore, not to stress
so much the differences between the Indians, but
let us all realise that whatever the difficulties
and divisions may be there is this underlying
demand among all the Indian people. (205)

Mr. Attlee emphasised that the object of the British policy
towards India was to grant her the right of self-determination.

(206) His Government were aware of the difficulties in solving
the Indian problem arising out of the conflicting demands of the
Congress (for Independence and unity of India) and the League
(for division and freedom of India). The mission was "to get

(206) UK, House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, 420

(206) Mr. Attlee said: "India herself must choose what
will be her future constitution; what will be her position in
the world. I hope that the Indian peoples may elect to remain
within the British Commonwealth.... But if she does so elect,
it must be her own free will.... If, on the other hand she
elects for independence, in our view she has a right to do so."
Ibid., cols. 1420-2.
the machinery of decision established." (207) This was, in fact
the total acceptance of what had been the aspirations, if not of
the Indian Nationalism as a whole, at least that of the predomi-
nant section of the national movement - the Congress. The latter
had struggled for complete independence, for a constitution-
making Assembly, for the responsibility to solve the problem of
minorities without the dictation of any third party. Here was
the promise to fulfil all these aspirations. What was more
remarkable was that all shades of opinion in the Parliament
agreed on this policy. The Liberals supported the bold step taken
by the British Cabinet to break the Indian deadlock. (208) The
Conservatives not only hailed the decision to send the high

(207) Ibid. During its stay in India, the Cabinet Mission,
having consulted the main political parties, formulated its pro-
posal which indicated the maximum area of agreement between the
two sets of conflicting demands forward by the Congress and the
League. The proposal of the mission envisaged: (a) an Indian
Union of States and Provinces, having exclusive jurisdiction over
foreign affairs, defence and communications; (b) residuary powers
to be vested in units of the Union; (c) a constituent assembly to
be elected by an electoral college composed of members of Provin-
cial legislatures and by a negotiating committee of Princely
States, by proportional representation; (d) an advisory committee
to make recommendations to the constituent assembly regarding
fundamental rights, protection of minorities and administration
of tribal and excluded areas; (e) the Viceroy to request the
Provincial legislatures to proceed with the election of their
representatives and the States to constitute a negotiation com-
mittee; power to be transferred to India through a treaty between
the constituent assembly and Britain and finally (g) an interim
government having the support of the major political parties.
UK, House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, 422 (1946-6) cols.
2109-20; Menon, n. 29, 233-7.

(208) Mr. Hopkin Morris, A Liberal M.P., expressed his
wish "to welcome the Government - a bold and important decision -
to send out a Mission of three Ministers" to India. H.o.C.,
n. 175, col. 1433.
powered mission to India and wished success but regretted that they could not have any role to play in the function of the mission. (209)

6. The interim government of India and the demands of the I.N.A. personnel

The opposition from the important political parties and the Indian officers in the armed forces against the government policy, which came as an aftermath of the Red Fort trial, brought about a further change in the C-in-C's attitude towards the I.N.A. (210) The Commander-in-Chief decided at the end of April 1946 to call off all the trials which had already started or which were to take place in near future. (211) About 15 I.N.A. prisoners, who had been already convicted by May 1946 on the specific charges of atrocities, however, were not covered by the official pronouncements and they, therefore, were not released. (212) The question of the release of these few I.N.A. prisoners and two other questions, namely, those of the payment of the arrear pay and allowances

(209) See the speeches by the Conservative M.Ps. Nicholson and Brigadier Law. Ibid., cols. 1420, 1421 and 1460.

(210) The first change in the army authorities' policy towards the I.N.A., brought about by the protests against it in India and Britain, has been discussed above.

(211) See Connell, n. 8, 317; for the text of the communique which contained the decision, see Keesing's Contemporary Archives, n. 15, 8745.

(212) See Connell, n. 8, 855. On 31 May 1946, the Government of India made a further announcement that all I.N.A. prisoners except those earlier sentenced had been released. See Keesing's Contemporary Archives, n. 15, 8745.
of all I.N.A. prisoners and their reinstatement in the Indian army, were the important features of the I.N.A. problem. The first two questions were taken up by the Indian interim government and these became fresh points at issue between them (the interim government) and the army authorities. The third question was neither pressed by the interim government nor favoured by the C-in-C of the Indian army.

The attitude of the Interim Government

The interim government were under pressure by the released I.N.A. men, supported by the sections of the nationalist opinion. (213) The initial demand for release of the remaining I.N.A. prisoners was soon reinforced by the demand for arrear pay and allowances of the I.N.A. prisoners. (214) The Defence member of the interim government, Sardar Baldev Singh, suggested to the C-in-C to consider these demands. (215) No suggestion for the reinstatement of the I.N.A. prisoners in the Indian army, however, was made by him. (216)

(213) From Jawaharlal Nehru to Sardar Baldev Singh, 25 December 1946 and Sardar Baldev Singh to Field-Marshal Auchinleck, 30 December 1946, see Connell, n. 8, 855-7.

(214) Connell, n. 8, 859.

(215) Sardar Baldev Singh to Field-Marshal Auchinleck, 30 December 1946, Connell, n. 8, 856-7.

(216) Ibid. In a speech on 9 January 1946 Nehru dealt with the question of the 'future of the I.N.A.' He suggested that they would be absorbed in the public works, such as industrial cooperatives and village works. He wanted them to be kept out of politics and made no hint of any possibility of their being reinstated in the Indian army before or after the transfer of power. Bright, n. 39, 263.
The attitude of the Viceroy and the C-in-C

The C-in-C and the Viceroy were firm on the question of the release of the remaining I.N.A. prisoners. Such a move, according to them, would be a betrayal of the good faith of the senior British officers in the Indian army and it would endanger the discipline in the armed forces. (217) Realising that the interim government would have to face the renewed demands in the Central Assembly, (218) the defence member requested the interim cabinet to make recommendations to the C-in-C on the two questions. (219)

(217) The C-in-C wrote to the Defence member of the interim Cabinet that as a result of the release of the convicted I.N.A. men "not only the men of the Army who may be affected, but also those of the Royal Indian Navy and the Royal Indian Air Force...." Such an act would make his task in "maintaining the discipline and reliability of the armed forces extremely difficult...." He also pointed out if those men were released, the senior British officers in the Indian army, "on whom, to a very large extent, the continuance of the present excellent demeanour of the Army depends, would, I feel, regard this action as a betrayal of the principles to which they have throughout their service been taught to adhere and would, in consequence, be likely to lose faith in me as Commander-in-Chief." These views were supported by the Viceroy. Field-Marshal Auchinleck to Sardar Baldev Singh, 6 January 1947 and Viceroy to Field-Marshal Auchinleck, 9 January 1947, see Connell, n. 8, 257-60.


(219) The Defence Member wrote to the members of the interim cabinet: "I feel that the time has definitely come for the Government of India to decide in favour of the release of I.N.A. prisoners and the payment of the forfeited balance of pay to the I.N.A. personnel. If the cabinet agrees to this course a recommendation to this effect might be sent to the Commander-in-Chief." Baldev Singh's memorandum to the members of the Interim Government, quoted in Connell, n. 8, 859.
A crisis was reached when the Viceroy sought (220) and secured (121) the British Government's support to veto the interim cabinet from taking up the matters and the C-in-C threatened to resign if the remaining I.N.A. prisoners were set free. (222)

In taking up a firm attitude both the Viceroy and the C-in-C were sure of bringing round the interim cabinet to their views. (223) The crisis, however, was avoided by the new Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, who persuaded the C-in-C and the Indian leaders

(220) See Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, 21 January 1947, Connell, n. 8, 860.

(221) Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, 22 January 1947, in Connell, n. 8, 860-1.


(223) The Viceroy suggested to the C-in-C that the latter should not concede to the demand of the defence member of the Cabinet regarding the release of the fifteen I.N.A. prisoners and the payment of the outstanding dues of the I.N.A. personnel. He wrote to the C-in-C: "I am sure, however, that if we stand firm on this, we shall gain our point. I trust, therefore, that you intend to maintain absolutely that you cannot consent in any circumstances to any further concessions of any kind to the I.N.A. I am sure that all the senior officers of the Army will support you on this matter, and I shall of course do so." The Viceroy could also assure the Secretary of State for India that if he would veto the interim cabinet from taking up the I.N.A. question, he was sure, the Cabinet would not resign on that score. Viceroy to Field-Marshall Auchinleck, 9 January 1947, and Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, 21 January 1947, in Connell, n. 8, 859-60. It can be assumed that the C-in-C could be sure that the Indian nationalist leaders, without any knowledge in the affairs of the military as they were, could not afford to do away with his service at initial time when the armed forces were facing a period of transition. This was evident later. The C-in-C's offer of resignation was viewed by the leaders of the Congress and the League with "genuine dismay". Nehru, who himself had asked Baldev Singh to take up the I.N.A. question to the C-in-C, was then unwilling to press the matters. In the debate over the I.N.A. question in the Central Assembly (2 April 1947) he "backed Auchinleck to the hilt, as he promised he would." Campbell-Johnson, n. 222, 53.
to submit the question to the Federal Court for its advice. (224)

The Government of India's policy towards I.N.A. demands

After the transfer of power, the Government of India decided to pay the pension for the I.N.A. personnel. The recommendation for the payment of salaries and allowances, however, was not given effect to. The Congress leaders never thought in terms of the reinstatement of the I.N.A. in the Indian army. Moreover, the opposition of the Indian officers to the reinstatement of the I.N.A. personnel in the army (225) ruled out any such possibility. The attitude of the Indian Government towards the demands of the I.N.A. personnel was expressed in a statement by Nehru in the Indian Parliament on 29 March 1948. (226) The I.N.A. personnel would, he said, "receive pensions wherever due." (227) But the Government would not accept the claim of...

(224) Campbell-Johnson, n. 222, 53.


There was an important reason for the Indian officers to fear the reinstatement of the I.N.A. personnel in the Indian army. The senior most Indian officer in the Indian army at the end of war was a brigadier, while quite a few officers of the I.N.A., who at the beginning of the Pacific War were in lower ranks, had been promoted to the ranks of General or Major-General.

(226) For the relevant part of the text of the statement see Keesing's Contemporary Archives, n. 15, 9232.

(227) A sum of Rs. 3000000 was set aside for the distribution of the widows of the ex-I.N.A. members and disabled persons. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, ibid.
the I.N.A. personnel regarding their reinstatement in the Indian army. "They would not be...reinstated in the Army since there had been a long break in their service and since, moreover, it would psychologically affect the present Army at a time when the latter had been exposed to considerable strain", thus concluded the statement.