CHAPTER - VII

SUBHAS - HIS EXPLOITS ABROAD

IN QUEST OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE ROLE OF THE I. N. A.

"So far as I am concerned, after twenty years' experience of public service in India, I came to the conclusion that it was impossible to organise an armed resistance in the country without some help from outside — help from our countrymen abroad, as well as from foreign power or powers."

Subhas Chandra Bose

Subhas knew that "on the complicated chess board of Europe interminable moves were being given by adept political powers" and a shrewd player must carefully play the game to achieve his object. "We must have a correct appreciation of the world situation at every stage and know how to take advantage of it," Subhas announced at the Haripura Congress session in 1938. And confidently he reiterated: "I believe that in the years to come, international developments will favour our struggle in India." When the gathering war-clouds ultimately culminated in a war, Subhas firmly asserted: "But I was convinced of two things: Firstly, that such a golden opportunity would not come within another century — and secondly, that without action from abroad we would not be able to win freedom, merely through our own efforts of home. That is why I resolved to take the plunge."

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1 Subhas Chandra Bose, "Europe - Today and Tomorrow" in Sisir K. Bose and Sugata Bose (eds.) in Sugata Bose (eds), The Essential Writings of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 302 (Hereafter cited Essential Writings)
2 Ibid., p. 216.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., p. 303. (italics mine)
There were other reasons too why Subhas took this plunge. A detailed account of the reasons which prompted Subhas to take this momentous decision is to be found in A.C.N. Nambier's recorded interview with Sisir Kumar and Krishna Bose in Zuric, in 1971. "His (Subhas') presidency of the Congress had convinced him that the masses in India were in a mood to respond to his active call for independence. He felt and also regretted that this call might not be coming from the Congress leadership who were likely to devote their time on resolutions, petitions and hopeful thoughts of Britain being more conciliatory than she actually was at the moment. That was one of the main reasons that influenced him to come over to Europe .... Another reason and a very important reason which struck me very much was that he (Subhas) told me that his last conversation with Jinnah had convinced him that he was out for the partition of India. The only possible way of stopping it was an active movement from abroad."  

Subhas, in fact, was convinced that national movement at home must have the backing of international pressure.

It is not that Subhas took the 'plunge' (the word he himself used) at the spur of the moment without deeply considering and evaluating the overall international situation. "I spent days, weeks and months in considering the pros and cons of the situation", he said in his 'Address to Mahatma Gandhi' over the Rangoon Radio on 6 July 1944.  

The first decision he had to take was to decide whether it was right to take help from abroad. Subhas, a keen student of history and politics, had a comprehensive knowledge of the history of revolutions of various countries of the world. He was quite conversant with the methods resorted to by other nations seeking freedom. It was quite clear to his mind that foreign help in any form was essential for an enslaved nation like India to win freedom. He said: "In 1940 I read my history once again and once again, I came to the conclusion that history did not furnish a single

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6 Essential Writings, p. 303.
instance where freedom had been won without help of some sort from abroad.” He recapitulated, Cavour and Garibaldi were not averse to the idea of seeking foreign assistance for the sake of freedom of Italy. As Subhas himself observes: “Throughout my public career, I have always felt that though India is otherwise ripe for independence in every way, she lacks one thing: an Army of Liberation. George Washington of America could fight and win freedom because he had his army; Garibaldi could liberate Italy because he had his armed volunteers behind him.”

It is evident that Subhas never acted on a sudden impulse. A psycho-analytical study of Subhas indicates that he was prepared to make any sacrifice for the sake of his country. “It was the easiest thing for me to remain at home and go on working as I had worked so long,” he said. The crucial decision he had to take was whether it was right to take help from foreign nations. His keen study of history convinced him, as stated above, that “history did not furnish a single instance where freedom had been won without help of some sort from abroad.” He had also no moral scruple regarding taking help from foreign nations. “I told myself that in public as well as in private life, one can always take help as a loan and repay that loan later on.” And when the war ultimately broke out, Subhas found that it was the opportune moment to explore the possibilities of getting help from the enemies of the British Empire.

Subhas had got an opportunity of getting a first-hand knowledge of the international affairs during his enforced exile in Europe for five years during 1933-1937. He spent these years as the ‘unofficial ambassador’ of India. In

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7 Ibid., p. 302.
8 Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose, Government of India Publication, Delhi, 1962, p. 314.
9 Essential Writings, p. 304.
10 n.7
11 Ibid.
course of his address at a public reception on 6 April 1937, he frankly said: “I am very thankful to the present Government for forcibly putting me in places and in predicaments which I would have ordinarily avoided, but from which I have extracted considerable knowledge. I believe that the most valued treasure that I carry with me today is the insight I have gained into international affairs and the contacts I have made with some master-minds of Modern Europe.”

The great savant Romain Rolland was one of such master-minds. Subhas had an opportunity of personally meeting him on 3 April 1935, and had a heart to heart talk with him regarding many relevant points relating to India. In course of this conversation Subhas had commented: “Gandhiji’s method is too lofty for this materialistic world and, as a political leader, he is too straightforward in his dealings with his opponents. We find further that though the British are not wanted in India, with the help of superior physical force, they have nevertheless been able to maintain their existence in India in spite of the inconveniences and annoyance caused by the Satyagraha movement.” After saying this Subhas hurled a pointed and significant question: “If Satyagraha ultimately fails, would Mon. Rolland like to see the national endeavour continued by other methods or would he cease taking interest in the Indian movement?” The emphatic and categorical reply that Subhas got – “The struggle must go on in any case” – gave him immense pleasure. It vindicated his position.

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13 N.C.W., Vol. 8, p. 305.
14 ibid (italics mine)
15 Ibid.
But besides this, there were other reasons too, and very formidable reasons they were, which compelled Subhas to take his own decision. As Subhas clearly explains in The Indian Struggle: "It was in September 1938, that the writer for the first time realised that in the event of an international crisis Gandhi would not seize the opportunity for attacking the British Government. It was then that he (the writer) realised that Gandhi regarded a struggle with Britain in the near future as outside the domain of possibility."

"16 It is interesting to note that even the idea of starting a civil disobedience movement was repugnant to the hard-core Congressites. As Subhas says: "On 20 May 1940, Pandit Nehru made an astounding statement in which he said: 'Launching a Civil Disobedience Campaign at a time when Britain is engaged in a life and death struggle could be an act derogatory to India's honour.'"17 And Gandhiji reiterating the same point magnanimously said "We do not seek independence out of Britain's ruin."18

Subhas, finding the Congress leaders adamant in their stand, tried to explore other avenues open to him. He attempted to enlist the support of other parties. But that too bore no fruit. He approached Mr. Jinnah, the President of the Muslim League, and Mr. Savarkar, the President of the Hindu Mahasabha. But Mr. Jinnah"... was then thinking only of how to realise his plan of Pakistan (Division of India) with the help of the British ....... and Mr. Savarkar, (the President of the Hindu Mahasabha) seemed to be oblivious of the international situation and was only thinking how Hindus could secure military training by entering Britain's army in India."19 And the inevitable conclusion that Subhas could draw was that nothing could be expected from either the Muslim League or the Hindu Mahasabha. But this did not deter or demoralise Subhas. He was convinced, in his own words, that "..... India

18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
would win her independence if she played her part in the war against Britain and collaborated with those powers that were fighting against Britain." 20 The conclusion he drew for himself was that India should actively enter the field of international politics.

Subhas was well versed in international politics. He knew very well that the much-talked of League of Nations was constituted in 1919 to put an end to secret diplomacy and to the division of the world into rival power centres. The main object was to preserve the *status quo* by maintaining the 'Balance of Power'. On 21 August 1937, Subhas had published an article in *Modern Review* entitled 'Europe – Today and Tomorrow' in which he had clearly analysed the political situation in Europe through he was well aware that 'political prophecy is always a difficult job'. 21

In this article Subhas first of all explains the aims of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. According to Subhas, Italy, "since Mussolini came to power in 1922," had been "thinking aggressively of expansion." She was angry with France for taking the "Italian districts of Savoy and Nice. France was in possession of "Tunisia in North Africa with a large Italian population." The "island of Corsica" was also in her clutches. Italy was also "hostile to Imperialist Britain who was in control of Italian ‘Malta’ and had, with French acquiescence, converted the Mediterranean Sea into a British lake." 22 But after the conquest of Abyssinia Italy became a 'satisfied' power, and Mussolini declared that in a public speech. But Britain was determined to increase her influence in the Mediterranean while Italy was equally determined to increase her influence in the Mediterranean through the expansion of her Navy and Air Force. But this could be achieved only by incurring the wrath of Britain.

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22 *Essential Writings*, pp. 163-164.
The case of Germany, according to Subhas, was different. "The political doctrine of the Nazi Party," Subhas says, "can be summed up in one phrase – Drang Nach Osten – 'Drive to the East'. The doctrine was first propounded by Muller van den Bruck in his book, Das dritte Reich or the Third Empire" 23. His idea was taken up by Hitler and elucidated by him in his own book Mein Kampf or My Struggle. The main idea was that Germany should try to remain a continental power – her expansion should take place on the Continent – towards the East. "But," Subhas admits, "in international politics there is no finality ... One thing is certain, if war comes it will come as the result of a German challenge to the status quo in Central and Eastern Europe. ..... The answer rests primarily with Great Britain." 24 This Subhas wrote in 1937. And in his address at the Haripura Congress he reiterated the same point: "I believe in the years to come international developments will favour our struggle in India." 25

Many events happened after that which were of tremendous significance. The most important of these was the Munich Pact of September 1939. Subhas considered it to be – "an abject surrender to Nazi Germany on the part of the Western Powers – France and Great Britain." 26 The ultimate result of this was that France no longer remained a dominant power in Europe and "the hegemony passed into the hands of Germany without a shot being fired." 27 And the net result was that in Europe, as well as in Asia, British and the French imperialists got a set back in the matter of strength and prestige.

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23 Ibid., p.167.
24 Ibid., p. 173
25 Ibid., p. 216.
26 Ibid., p. 224.
27 Ibid.,
But Subhas could foresee that though the Munich Pact staved off the war for the time being yet war was unavoidable and impending. To Subhas, it was the most opportune moment to give a smashing blow to Great Britain. As the British historian Michael Edwardes remarks: "Bose himself welcomed the possibility of conflict because a blow to Britain in Europe would undoubtedly will weaken her grasp on India. Other Congress leaders had no such clear-cut vision of the future." 28 And regarding this Subhas' sarcastic remark is worth quoting: "According to the practice of having no interest in international affairs, the Congress leaders seem to be without a policy on this all important question." 29 Subhas, in fact, was far ahead of the other Indian leaders in his knowledge of current international affairs.

The time was now ripe for his historic escape – which has been called 'the Great Escape'. On the late night of 16 January and the early morning of 17 January 1941 he left his house and started on his mission in the disguise of a Muslim, Mohd. Ziauddin. And thus started the eventful journey of his chequered career. Prior to his departure Subhas had attempted to establish contacts with officials of foreign nations like Italy, Germany, Japan and also Soviet Russia. And now after a long journey beset with danger at every step eventually Subhas was able to reach Germany in his new pseudonym – Orlando Mazzotta.

But the big question that crops up is: Why Germany? How did Subhas forget the critical viewpoints about Nazi Germany which he held during his forced exile in Europe? In a speech to the Indian Students' Association of Berlin on 4 February 1936, he had clearly analysed the situation, "Since the new regime had come into power in Germany, the postion of Indians had considerably worsened. The problem were roughly four in

29 N.C.W., Vol. 8, p. 323.
number. Firstly, Indian students, including those who had graduated from the German Universities, were finding it difficult to get practical training in German factories. Secondly, anti-Indian propaganda in the press and in films had increased whereas, pro-Indian propaganda had been virtually suppressed. Thirdly, the new Race Law threatened to discriminate against all Asiatics. Fourthly, Germany was selling much more to India than she was buying from India.30 Again, in one of his letters to Ministerialrat Syckhoff on 5 April 1934, Subhas clearly pointed out what he considered to be the most serious threat to the friendly relations between Germany and India. He enclosed a copy of a memorandum on this particular issue. He wrote: “The most serious factor threatening friendly relations between Germany and India is the unfortunate effect produced by the present race propaganda in Germany. When I was walking along the streets of Munchen a week ago – I was called ‘Neger’ by German children. Indian students in Munchen told me that they have all been addressed by German children as ‘Neger’ .... It is the opinion of all India that the present race propaganda in the schools and universities of Germany is developing a feeling of hatred towards the Indian. Such an atmosphere never existed in Germany before.31

But what shocked Subhas most was the essence of the Nazi philosophy. He had referred to this in his letter to Dr. Thierfelder on 25 March 1936. He wrote: “Today I regret that I have to return to India with the conviction that the new nationalism of Germany is not only narrow and selfish but arrogant. The recent speech of Herr Hitler in Munich gives the essence of Nazi philosophy.”32 Subhas clearly enunciated the main tenets of this racial philosophy. He stated: “The new racial philosophy which has a very weak racial foundation stands for the glorification of the white race in general and the German race in particular. Herr Hitler has talked of the desirity of the

30 N.C.W., Vol. 8, pp. 342-43
31 “Germany and India,” N.C.W., Vol. 8, p. 63
32 Ibid., p. 165.
white races to rule over the rest of the world.” 33 In this connection Subhas also pointed out what he considered to be a vile attempt to appease Great Britain. He said: “Germany in her desire to curry favour with Great Britain finds it convenient to attack India and the Indian people.” 34 That this particular issue was also very much in the mind of Subhas is clearly revealed in a press statement given by him in Geneva in March 1936 when he repeats the same view: “It is quite clear that Germany today is determined to curry favour with England by insulting India.” 35

But why was Germany so keen on appeasing Britain! In an article, “Europe Today and Tomorrow” (published in Modern Review in September 1937), Subhas said: “Political prophecy is always a difficult job – but one thing is certain. Germany had not forgotten the lessons of her last defeat. Hers was not a military defeat but an economic one. And it was the British Navy which was primarily responsible for starving her to submission.” 36 So Germany, once bitten twice shy, as the saying goes, was extremely cautious in her political manoeuvring while dealing with Britain. The main interest of Subhas’ was to align with that side which had the potential to crush British supremacy. But the choice was not easy. Soviet Union, undeniably Subhas’ most preferred foreign ally, never showed much enthusiasm for him during his European exile of the thirties and certainly proved inaccessible when he, after his great escape, wanted frantically to come over to Moscow. Subhas, in fact, while on his way to the German Legation along with Bhagat Ram Talwar had come across the Soviet Ambassador whose car at that moment was stuck in deep snow. Subhas wanted to utilise this opportunity. He instructed Bhagat Ram to approach the Ambassador and the latter did so in broken Persian. The

33 Ibid.,
34 Ibid., p. 166.
36 “Europe Today and Tomorrow”, Ibid., p. 404.
Ambassador verified Subhas’ identity but no further response was available from him. So Subhas was virtually compelled to go to the German Legation. He was cordially received there. Subhas got an opportunity of meeting the German Minister Dr. Hans Pilger who promised to contact the Foreign Office in Berlin for instructions.

On the initiative of Dr. Hans Pilger there was at last a breakthrough; things started moving and preparations were afoot to felicitate Subhas’ journey to his destination. On 2 April 1941 Subhas ultimately reached Berlin and was taken in a car to Excelsior.

The long-cherished ambition of Subhas was thus ultimately fulfilled – the ambition to wage war against the British with the support of the Axis powers. “In his seeking assistance from Germany,” it has been said, “the history of the revolutionary movement of India completed a full circle. It could well be called a projection of the revolutionary style that the Indian revolutionaries had set during the first world war beginning 1914 when liaison was established with Germany, then at war with Britain. Terrorists sought armed assistance while the *Anushilan Samity* in collusion with like-minded revolutionary groups plotted an uprising of the Indian soldiers in the British army. The failure of the plot prompted its mentor Rashbehari Bose to disappear into Japan in 1915.”

And it was Rashbehari Bose, who was the chief organizer and helmsman of the movement to be carried from the foreign soil. It was he who organised the INA and made the ground ready for the subsequent takeover by Subhas.

The German leaders in the meantime were bent upon making the full use of the charisma of Subhas to serve their own purpose. The subcontinent,

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they knew, could have an important role in their war strategy. It is not that Subhas was not aware of this. As a veteran Subhas was quite conscious of his own plus points. His physical presence in Germany, he knew, would give a fillip to the patriotic ardour of the people and rouse them to action. It would be an arduous task for the British forces to quell them and consequently it would be difficult to deploy forces against the Germans. Moreover, by befriending Subhas, Germany wanted to hold the image of Great Britain as an imperialist power and a big impediment to the human progress as a whole.

And then Subhas started playing his cards. Though he was in a foreign country he was never like a humble refugee with a beggar's bowl in his hand. He was bold: he was of a dignified stature and he was adamant. He had a clear idea of what he wanted. He had three demands from the German government. His first concern was to secure a declaration from the German government setting up a Free-India-Government-in-exile in Berlin. He demanded also that a public declaration would have to be made recognising the independence of this Government. His other demands were that Germany would have to render all military help in India's struggle and all facilities of forceful propaganda against the British should be made available to him.

But when the negotiations began, Subhas found to his dismay that these were contrary to his expectations. His meeting with Dr. Woermann, Head of the Political Section, yielded no concrete result acceptable to him. Subhas subsequently got an opportunity of meeting with the Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop. Subhas, who was above all duplicity, clearly expressed his views about Nazi racism. But Ribbentrop had also his doubts about the contention of Subhas that the Indians were on the verge of revolting because of their inherent hatred of the British. Subhas' frank answers were not palatable to Ribbentrop who naturally wanted to have a clear idea of the feelings of the Indian people towards Germany. Subhas frankly told him about
the strong anti-Fascist feelings of the Indians. He also did not hide the fact that the Soviet Union was in the good books of the Indians because of the latter's anti-imperialist stand. Ribbentrop gave only evasive reply to the question raised by Subhas regarding India's independence and concluded the discussion promising to meet again. Subhas, in spite of his best attempts, did not get an opportunity of having a face to face discussion with Hitler. And the declaration of Free India by Germany seemed far off.

But Subhas was a person who was determined to achieve his objective by exploring all the avenues. He thought of a plan to get assistance from Mussolini and get the declaration of Free India. So he made a trip to Rome accompanied by Emile Schenkl in May 1941. In Italy he met with the Italian Foreign Minister Ciano who agreed to cooperate in all Indian matters. But it did not take long for Ciano to note the dissatisfaction of Subhas because of the delay in the promulgation the declaration that the latter was so keen to have from Mussolini. Ciano wrote in his diary regarding Subhas that he would like the Axis countries to promulgate the declaration on Indian Independence, but in Berlin his proposal was received with great restraint. As a result, though Subhas stayed in Rome for more than one and a half month no decision was taken by Mussolini. And a frustrated and dejected Subhas returned to Germany. But Subhas never gave up hope whatever the circumstances might be. This psychological trait in his character always helped him to surmount many a tight corner.

But another shock was awaiting Subhas. While in Rome a new development took place to the chagrin of Subhas which was detrimental not only for India but for the entire world. Germany attacked the Soviet Union on 22 June. Subhas instantly realised that this event would have tremendous impact on the Indian population. This would undoubtedly intensify anti-Fascist and anti-Nazi feeling among all sections of the Indian population.
Subhas knew that the sympathies of the Indian people in the German-Russian war would be positively with the Russians. Moreover, the German attack on the Soviet Union had worsened India's situation because now the overland route to India became inaccessible.

Subhas, in spite of this set back did not become demoralised. With a firm determination he stuck to his point – a declaration by the Fascist Powers affirming India's independence. Persistently he raised the question before the Ministry. Desperately he also wrote a strong letter to Ribbentrop, frankly expressing his views. He wrote that the waging of war against Soviet Russia was nothing but an act of aggression. The Soviet - British propaganda was making full use of it by propagating that Germany was bent upon securing world supremacy. He also emphasised the urgent need of the declaration regarding India. But this time also he was told that Hitler had taken the decision 'not to hurry' in promulgating the declaration on India. However, Subhas was given certain concession within a limited framework. As A.V. Raikov puts it: "Bose was allowed to unite groups of Indians staying in Germany on various reasons and to form the so-called Centre of Free India consisting of roughly 35 people .... The Centre had the status of a diplomatic mission and was quite generously provided with means. The members of the Centre took an oath of allegiance to Bose and pledged themselves to work under his guidance for achieving independence of the motherland. From this time Bose was 'Netaji' and he started wearing semi - military uniform of a special style". Subhas wanted to make the best use of the meagre opportunities available to him. He started to coordinate the activities of all Indians in Germany, France and Italy under the banner of the Free India Centre.

The Free India Centre was formally baptised on 2 November 1941 with its headquarters in Lichtensteinallee. Adequate arrangements were made to prepare radio scripts in a number of different Indian languages and broadcasting these by German transmitters. Subhas who had considerable experience in editing journals, took the initiative for the publication of the newspaper *Azad Hind*. The basic policy was to expose and to point out the atrocities committed by the British rulers on the people of India and also to exhort the Indians not to support the war efforts of England. At the same time there used to be appeals to the Indian soldiers not to fight in the interest of the foreign rulers who were sucking their life blood. The Germans condescended to grant this meagre concession to Subhas because they had their own axe to grind. By supporting Subhas the German Empire could present itself as a friend of the exploited people and at the same time could expose Great Britain as an imperialist power. Moreover, the political disturbances in India would keep the British so much engaged in that front that they would not be able to focus their attention to the on-going struggle against the Germans. Subhas was quite aware of the facts and like a shrewd diplomat he wanted to make full use of it. As Jan Kuhlmann puts it: "Thus Bose did not act like a humble refugee toward the German potentates, but appeared with boldness and courage, which dazzled the German officials. Although he was alone in a foreign country and - could not count on the support of the popular masses, he insisted relentlessly on his basic demands. "39 And Subhas' basic demand all the time was that the German Empire would make a public declaration recognising India's exile government.

At this time Subhas got or rather created an opportunity to give shape to his dream of building up a military wing – the Indian Legion. As he himself says: "Throughout my life it was my ambition to equip an army that will

capture freedom from the enemy." 40 The Germans initially had doubts and were not sure how such a legion could be used effectively to serve their purpose. However, after discussions it was agreed upon that the Germans would be entrusted with the entire training programme of the recruits. Second, "the legionnaires would be basically trained to operate as standard infantry. Third, the legions would not be mixed up with German army units. Fourth, the legionnaires would be sent back to India on the completion of their training and wouldn't be used in any other front. And fifth, they would enjoy the same perquisites as the German soldiers during their stay in Germany. The legion had a separate uniform and its emblem was Netaji's springing tiger." 41 It was not that everything was smooth sailing. Subhas had to encounter quite a few unsavoury problems in organising his army but he knew how to deal with the matter. His leadership qualities were in full play. He was of firm belief that caste, creed or religious bias shouldn't have any place whatsoever in his army. As Captain Walter Harbich, who was one of the trainers, writes in his "Report on Training and Organisation of the Free Indian Army in Europe", "In the beginning, Indian volunteers were divided in platoons according to their religion.... Bose wanted a division into section so that every platoon had a Hindu, a Sikh and a Muslim section. After a brief acclimatization to this arrangement, His Excellency Bose desired a complete dissolution of the units based on religion so that the ideal which he had in mind was realised and the Indian were united in the smallest tactical unit, regardless of their religious profession. Contrary to the original doubts the result was surprisingly good. 42 Subhas started the recruiting process in full swing though the number of recruits was not to his full satisfaction. An Indian legionnaire, while taking an oath during induction at Annaberg Camp in Germany in 1941, had to owe allegiance to Adolf Hitler, Commander of the Germany Armed Forces,

40 See n.8, p. 146.
and also acknowledging Subhas Chandra Bose as their leader: "I swear by Almighty God and by this holy oath that I will obey the leader of the German State and Commander of the Germany Armed Forces, Adolf Hitler, in the fight for India's freedom in which the leader is Subhas Chandra Bose and that as a brave soldier I am willing to lay down my life for this."  

The headquarters of the Indian Legion was formally established at Frankenberg on 25 December 1941. But at times there was what may be called teething trouble. The change of environment, stringent discipline, a depressing psychological feeling that they were aliens, started creating discontentment among the legionnaires. Subhas took upon himself the task of meeting the situation. He was quite adept in this. By his sympathetic approach and convincing arguments he was able to solve the problems. Since it was not possible to transport the legion across to the India-Burma frontier because of various constraints, it was deployed against the Allies in Western Europe though this was in violation of the agreement between 'Wehrmacht' and Netaji. Ultimately this Indian Legion showed their mettle when they were deployed in the defence of Berlin. The very creation of this Indian Legion indicates the organising ability of Subhas. But, it is interesting to note that Hitler had a rather contemptuous attitude towards the Indian Legion. In the one recorded reference to it Hitler said: "The Indian Legion is a joke. These Indians who cannot kill a louse, they won't kill an Englishman either. I consider it nonsense to put them opposite the English... One just wonders how any person with an iota of self-respect could have any dealings of any kind with anybody harbouring such humiliating impressions. But Subhas, it seems, had become desperate with no feasible alternative open at the moment. The Indian Legion, in reality, was yet another failure of Subhas in Germany as it ultimately became evident from actual facts that it was utilised by the Germany

43 J.K. Dutt, n.41
Commanding Officers for serving the interest of Germany instead of fighting for freedom of India as was intended by Subhas.

Subhas, at long last, on 29 May 1942, could meet Adolf Hitler. He found him to be a hard nut to crack. But Subhas was undaunted; he practically challenged Hitler to explain why he had made some unsavoury statements about India. The reply he got was evasive. And also he found to his dismay that the much-awaited declaration on India's independence was not there in the agenda of Hitler. In fact, India's freedom was not the war-aim of Germany. The meeting as a whole was a great disappointment to Subhas and hence Hitler's gift to him - a golden cigarette case - did not mollify him. After the meeting Hitler told Subhas that he would provide him with all facilities for his trip to East Asia. And that was the end of the meeting. The meeting meant complete ruin of Bose's hopes and of his prolonged struggle for obtaining guarantee from the 'Axis' powers of India's independence. The inanity of his stay in Germany became evident to him. But the whole episode does not reflect the diplomatic sagacity of Subhas. Subhas, in fact, had formulated his plans very diplomatically and with an eye to the future though adverse circumstances stood in his way. His plan evidently was to form, if possible, 'The Government of Free India in Berlin.' "The Axis countries were to conclude a treaty with this government, which would envisage a concession of freedom of India after their victory. Immediately the embassies of this government were to be set up in all the friendly countries of Europe, i.e. in the countries of the Fascist bloc.... The above stated steps would convince the Indian people that in the event of the victory of the Axis countries, the freedom (of India) would be guaranteed by these nations and that the fact of India's independence itself was already recognised." 45 But though Subhas failed to achieve his object, the whole episode indicates his firm determination. As Hirendranath Mukherjee comments: "Netaji showed his mettle as he met the

45 A. V. Raikov, n.38, p. 248.
Fascist leader Hitler and Co., still so steeped in ‘western’ arrogance as not to countenance India’s freedom which was Subhas’ absorption by day and dream by night.\textsuperscript{46}

But Subhas was determined to give shape to his dream at any cost. All the time he had a feeling that a field of activities of great importance was awaiting him in South - east Asia. He now felt that the crucial moment had arrived and it was his bounden duty to stay close to his motherland. Moreover, he was aware that South-east Asia was eagerly awaiting his arrival. Subhas kept himself busy with preparations of his departure in the second half of 1942. And then on 3 February 1943 he embarked on another perilous voyage whose destination was Japan. He had only one companion. Abid Hasan. In the early hours of 8 February 1943\textsubscript{46} they got into a German submarine U - 180 from Kiel. It was a long journey beset with every conceivable kind of peril. During these two and a half months that he had to spend there, Subhas was busy finalising his plans for his new venture in South-east Asia. On 24 April, he boarded the Japanese submarine I - 29 in the Indian Ocean east of Madagascar. And, after an equally perilous journey, Subhas ultimately reached, on 6 May 1943, Saban Island naval base and was met by Col. Yamamoto who was formerly the Military Attache to the Japenese Embassy in Berlin. From Saban he flew to Tokyo.

And thereafter started another chapter of his multi-faceted chequered career. Subhas was not a man to cool his heels. His activities there started immediately after his arrival. In Tokyo, he first of all met quite a number of topmost Japanese Generals and also the Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu. Prime Minister Tojo, may be, had no intention of meeting Subhas so soon after his arrival in Japan, but ultimately he changed his mind. They met and

Prime Minister Tojo was deeply impressed. Fruitful meetings were held between the two on 10 and 14 January. Subhas had the honour of being invited by Prime Minister Tojo to attend the 82nd Extraordinary Session of the National Diet on 16 June. He was given assurance of Tojo's support for the Indian freedom movement. On 19 June Subhas addressed his first Press Conference in Tokyo. This was attended by representatives of sixty newspapers and diplomatic missions. And there he made his momentous declaration - the freedom movement against the British rule in India under the banner of the Indian National Army (INA) would develop into a full-fledged armed struggle. Subhas, it is interesting to note, made a very favourable impression on Prime Minister Tojo. As captain Dasan comments: "The Japanese Prime Minister Tojo was so enamoured by his enagaging personality that he granted all his requests including the formation of the Provisional Government of Free India and handing over the Andaman and Nicobar islands to this Government." 47 Dr. Radhabinode Pal, the eminent jurist, who became a member of the War Crimes Tribunal, according to Surya Kumar Bose (grand nephew of Subhas), called on Mrs. Tojo before returning to India. Mrs. Tojo related the following to Dr. Pal, who in turn repeated that to his father. She said, "when Subhas Bose came to Tokyo for the first time, my husband (Prime Minister Tojo) said that Bose appears to be a difficult customer, so let him cool his heals. After meeting Subhas Bose however he told me that he had found his leader:. 48 This anecdote indicated how Subhas could influence people with his magnetic personality.

On 2 July 1943 Subhas came to Singapore which was going to be the main arena of his subsequent activities. He was accompanied by Rashbehari Bose, Abid Hassan and Kazunori Kunizuka, the Japanese interpreter. He got a tumultuous welcome. Next day Subhas met the leaders of the Indian

48 Surya Kumar Bose "Netaji and his Role for Indian Freedom Struggle from Germany." Ibid, pp. 220-221.
Independence League and the officers of the Indian National Army. Subhas' long cherished ambition of having an Indian National Army was fulfilled. "Fortunately for Subhas such a force in embryo had already started maturing under the initiative of Rashbehari Bose in the Far East. He did not have to raise there the legions from the scratch as in Berlin or Annaburg... yet he alone could provide them the much-needed sense of direction."49

4 July 1943, was an important day in the annals of the I N A when delegates from different East Asian countries met at a convention at the General Assembly of the Indian Independence League in Singapore. And there, on that memorable occasion, the veteran revolutionary Rashbehari Bose resigned from the Presidentship of the League and formally welcomed Subhas as the new president. Rashbehari Bose, while presenting Subhas, eloquently addressed the cheering gathering: "Friends and Comrades at Arms ... I have brought you this present, Subhas Chandara Bose ... symbolizes all that is best, noblest, the most daring and the most dynamic in the youth of India .... In your presence today, I resign my office as President of the Indian Independence League in East Asia. From now on, Subhas Chandra Bose is your President, your leader in the fight for India's independence and I am confident that .... you will march on to battle and victory."50 Subhas, as the new President, exhorted in his address the people assembled there to rise to the occasion, face hunger, thirst and privation in the final march to freedom.

On the next day, 5 July 1943, a rally was organised in a large park in front of the municipal building of Singapore. And here Subhas delivered one of his memorable speeches. He had an innate power of wielding the masses which was at full play here on that day: "Throughout my public career, I have always felt that though India is otherwise ripe for independence in every

49 Radharaman Chakrabarti, "Subhas Chandra's Understanding of the International Power Politics," in Radharaman Chakrabarti, n.46,p.92
50 M. Sivaram: The Road to Delhi, Charles Turtle, pp 122-23.
way, she has lacked on thing, namely, an army of liberation .... It is your privilege and honour to be the first to come forward and organise India's National Army. By doing so you have removed the last obstacle in our path to freedom. ....... Today is the proudest day of my life. For an enslaved people there can be no higher honour than to be the first soldiers in the army of liberation .... I assure you that I shall be with you in darkness and in sunshine, in sorrow and in joy, in suffering and in victory... It does not matter who among us will live to see India free."

After that Subhas started his campaign for total mobilisation of all his resources for a total war against the British colonial rule in India. And for this he visited various places like Thailand, Indo-China, Burma and all parts of Malaya. His main object was to establish new branches of the Indian Independence League, open recruitment centres for the Indian National Army, start new training centres for the newly recruited men and women and collect funds. Subhas' charismatic personality was at full play and he was going ahead with firm determination to achieve his goal. The independence of Burma on 1 August 1943 gave an impetus to his dream. Ba Maw, a fervent Burmese nationalist who became the head of the new government, was greatly impressed by Subhas and gave his own impression of Subhas: "We next met in Rangoon when Burma declared her independence. I saw the dream again in his eyes which I had seen before, but it was now a little sad and wistful, and so was his smile .... Seeing Burma as the first colony to win her independence out of the war, he must have been thinking of the long, bloody journey still ahead of him and his forces before India too would be free." Subhas, in fact, was so inspired that he broadcast a congratulatory message to India's neighbour: "The independence of Burma in this momentous crisis in world

51 Cited in Atis Dasgupta, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, through the Eyes of a Japanese Interpreter, in Radharaman Chakrabarti, n.46, p.123.
history has a two-fold significance for us. It shows what a nation can achieve if it knows how to seize an opportunity which history has offered. Secondly, just as the conquest of India supplied the British with a jumping-off ground for their attack on Burma in the nineteenth century, similarly the emancipation of Burma has supplied the Indian independence movement in East Asia with a springboard for its attack on Britain's army of occupation in India during the twentieth century.\(^{53}\)

And on 21 October 1943, Subhas formed the Provisional Government of Free India. Subhas, in course of his Proclamation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, emphatically said: "Now that the dawn of freedom is at hand, it is the duty of the Indian people to set up a Provisional Government of their own and launch the last struggle under the banner of that Government ... The Provisional Government is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Indian. It guarantees religious liberty, as well as equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens. It declares its firm resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally and transcending all differences cunningly fostered by an alien government in the past ........\(^{54}\) This Declaration was signed on behalf of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind by Subhas Chandra Bose, Head of the State, Prime Minister and Minister of War and Foreign Affairs, Captain Mrs. Lakshmi Sahgal, Women's Organisation, S A Ayer, Publicity and Propaganda, Lt. Col A.C. Chatterjee,

\(^{54}\) "Proclamation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind" in *The Essential Writings*, p. 298.
Finance, Lt. Col. Shah Nawaz, Representative of the Armed Forces, Rashbehari Bose, Supreme Commander and others and was dated Syonan, 21 October 1943.

A tricolour flag with a leaping tiger across it became the flag of the Free Indian Army and the INA. It is interesting to note that Tipu Sultan was holding a flag with the emblem of a leaping tiger when he was killed fighting the British forces in Secundrabad.). According to File No. 422 / INA of the National Archives of India, the epaulettes, collar insignia and badges worn by Indian National Army personnel were planned with meticulous care and precision. The epaulettes were made of khadi cloth with the letters 'Indian National Army' in bronze. The cap badge was made of thin tin sheets and was painted in bronze colour. It is significant that the motto on the emblem of the cap badge read: "Ittefaq, Etmad, Qurbani" which means - Unity, Confidence and Sacrifice". The Provisional Government received political recognition, from nine countries including Germany, Croatia, China (Nanking), Philippines, Burma, Italy, Japan and Siam and also received warm felicitations from de Valera, President of the Irish Free State. This Provisional Government had not only a national flag and the national anthem, it had also a national bank and a separate currency. Subhas started the National Bank of Azad Hind on 5 April 1944, to finance the war efforts. Further, to carry on administration in parts of India to be gradually liberated by the INA, he created the Azad Hind Dal for training of a cadre of administrative personnel. Lt. Col. A C Chatterjee was appointed the Chief Administrator of Liberated Territories.

The formation of this Provisional Government with all its ramifications clearly brings out the foresight, administrative ability and the thoroughness with which Subhas dealt with a complex problem like forming a government. In fact, all along Subhas had in his mind an idea, a plan - how to rebuild an independent India. And when he got a chance to give a concrete
shape to his ideas he spared no pains to accomplish it. Another of his innovative ideas was to give proper status and responsibility to women in the on-going struggle for independence. And, now to achieve this aim, he wanted to build up a women's regiment as part of the Indian National Army. As a result of this, evolved the Rani of Jhansi Regiment named after the Rani of Jhansi - a heroine of the 1857 Movement. The Rani of Jhansi Training camp was inaugurated in Singapore on 23 October 1943. The training imparted was comprehensive. This included physical training, army drill and handling of arms such as rifles, pistols, bayonets etc. Of course there was opposition from the Japanese who did not want to 'waste' precious war materials on what they considered to be an exercise in futility. But Subhas' wholehearted support was there and there was no dearth of women recruits in the Rani of Jhansi Regiment and the Chand Bibi Nursing Corps. Lt. Col. Lakshmi Sahgal (nee Swaminathan), Head of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment and Minister-in-charge of Women's Affairs of the Azad Hind Government who came to know Subhas from very close quarters vividly narrates her impression about Subhas: “For me this was the most meaningful and fulfilling period of my life - to have the opportunity to work very closely under Netaji and to be actively involved in the freedom struggle. To me Netaji was everything a leader should be. He had a clear vision of what our present strategy should be and what should be done in the future after we had attained freedom. He firmly believed that all the religious, language, caste and ethnic differences could be overcome. To keep the country united was to divorce religion from politics and the States. Each person would be given complete religious freedom and equal opportunity in all fields. No one religion, even if practised by a very large majority, should be allowed to dominate. Women and weaker sections, he felt, must be liberated from the bonds of social injustice. All these principles were clearly brought out in the I N A and Rani of Jhansi Regiment.”\(^{55}\) Another officer of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, Second-in-Command Janki Davar, who is a recipient of the

\(^{55}\) Lakshmi Sahgal, "I N A and the Role of Subhas Chandra Bose", in n.38, p.4.
Padma Shree award in the year 2000 commented while speaking about Subhas: "Here was a leader who ate what they ate and wore the clothes they wore. And he could not be persuaded to go by car to safety but chose to be with his troops."\(^{56}\)

Subhas, in his broadcast message to Gandhiji on 6 July 1944 – "Netaji's Message to Mahatma Gandhi" clearly elucidated the objective of the Azad Hind Government: "Mahatmaji, I should now like to say something about the Provisional Government that we have set up here. The Provisional Government of Azad Hind (or Free India) has been recognized by Japan, Germany and seven other friendly powers and this has given India a new status and a new prestige in the eyes of the whole world. The Provisional Government has, as its one objective, the liberation of India from the British yoke, through an armed struggle. Once our enemies are expelled from India and peace and order is established, the mission of the Provisional Government will be over. It will then be for the Indian people themselves to determine the form of government that they choose and also to decide as to who should take charge of that government".\(^{57}\) In this message to Mahatma Gandhi Subhas spares no pains to reassure Gandhiji about the sincerity of General Tojo and Japan: "Mahatmaji .... I would be the last man to be influenced by Japan if her declarations of policy had been mere promises. But I have seen with my own eyes how, in the midst of a world war, Japan has put through revolutionary changes in countries like the Philippines, Burma and National China. … Coming to India, I must say that Japan has proved her sincerity by her deeds. There was a time when people used to say that Japan had selfish interests regarding India. If she had then why should she recognize the Provisional Government of Free India? Why would she decide to hand over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the Provisional government of Free India?

\(^{56}\) "Ananda Bazar Patrika", 23 April 2000.

\(^{57}\) Subhas Chandra Bose, Blood Bath, Jayasree Prakashan, Calcutta, 1996, p. 34.
Why should there now be an Indian Chief Commissioner of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands stationed at Port Blair.?58

In this connection it may be mentioned that a Conference of Representatives of the Free Nations of Greater Asia—the Great Asian Conference—was held in Tokyo on 5 and 6 November 1943. The Provisional Government was also invited to participate in this Conference. In this Conference Prime Minister Tojo made a momentous declaration to the effect that his Government had decided to hand over the Andaman and Nicobar islands to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. In accordance with this decision Col. A.D. Longanadan, a minister of the Provisional Government was appointed the first Chief Commissioner of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands with effect from 21 February 1944. These islands were renamed "Saheed and Swaraj" islands after they came under the control of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. Subhas could win all these for his motherland because of his magnetic personality which enabled him to be respected by everybody. Captain D. Dasan, who was an eminent member of the Indian National Army, points out the particular trait in the character of Subhas which endeared him to his compatriots: "He certainly had an extraordinary aura that was difficult to ignore. He touched the lives of thousands of Indians in the manner in which he lived. To me, Netaji has been a source of great inspiration, a way to live sans fear. He personified the courage never to yield. He had the mettle to swim against the tide. He won people's hearts by the sheer force of his personality and he commanded energies beyond the average. I have never known anybody with his strength of will. He was formidable in so many ways: as a reformer, a revolutionary leader, an administrator, a statesman, an ambassador, a planner ....." 59

58 Ibid p. 34.
59 D. Dasan, n.47.
A psycho-analytical study of Subhas indicates that in spite of his multifarious pre-occupations his mind was deeply engrossed with the fundamental problems of India and the best means of solving them. In an address to the faculty and students of Tokyo University, in November 1944, while discussing various problems besetting his motherland, he categorically asserted, "In the Indian Independence Movement in East Asia and in the Indian National Army there is no question of religion or caste or class. It is just in India where the British have influence or control that you will find those differences." In another broadcast on 9 July 1944, while discussing the 'Situation in East Asia', he reiterates "... three millions of Indians have now been organised politically and militarily - and they have a Government of their own, which is formally recognised by nine friendly powers of the world. Indians in East Asia are united to a man. Religious and other differences which the British have always tried to engineer in India do not exist among them. They are pledged to fulfil the programme of Total Mobilisation - Total Mobilisation of men, money and materials - for effectively conducting the armed struggle for the liberation of India. They have a modern army of their own which, since March last, has been fighting on the soil of India."

The broad and liberal attitude of Subhas, no doubt, greatly helped him in revamping the I N A. He now wanted his forces to play a major role in any offensive towards the Indian frontier. But it is not that there was no dissension anywhere. Subhas' cordial relationship with Prime Minister Tojo was not looked upon favourably by an influential section of the Japanese military officers headed by Field Marshal Count Terauchi. They did not relish the idea of dissipating Japanese resources to accommodate Subhas in his enterprises. But this opposition could not stand before the convincing arguments given by

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60 The Essential Writings n.1, p. 321.
61 Subhas Chandra Bose, n. 57, p.54.
Subhas and also his magnetic personality. Subhas went ahead with his plans and soon established the I N A on an independent footing.

According to Subhas, "...on the 4th February [1944] our War of Independence was launched in the Arakan region of Burma. The fight in the Arakan region was for the Azad Hind Fauj its 'baptism of fire'. Out of this test, our troops came out will flying colours. No longer could anyone doubt that the members of the Azad Hind Fauj would fight bravely under conditions of extreme difficulty and hardship. On behalf of the Provisional Government, I had the honour of conferring a number of Decorations on some of the officers and men who distinguished themselves in the Arakan fight." In the meantime Subhas had moved his headquarters to Rangoon (Burma) from Syonan. Under Subhas' charismatic leadership the I N A grew from strength to strength and came out with flying colours in the Arakan Campaign. Even Field Marshal W. J. Slim, who was prone to underrating the exploits of the I N A, commented in his *Defeat unto Victory* that the I N A was steadfastly closing in with "an intention to penetrate into India where the renegades would be used in the attempt to rouse rebellion". Here, he referred to heroic move of Major Laksman Sarup Mishra. "The fact was that an I N A Bahadur Group of two hundred men attached to the Japanese 55th Division commanded by Major Laksman Sarup Mishra stole the show there and helped the Japanese trap the 7th Division of the enemy at Buthidang on the eastern side of the Mayo Range on 12 February 1944. This group also won to the Indian side a sizeable number of men from a British-Indian outpost including a Gwalior Regiment which came over to the I N A on 12 February 1944."
Majoor Lakshman Sarup Mishra was later awarded the Sardar-e-Jang title by Netaji. \(^6^5\) I N A got another laurel when, under the command of Major P S Rathore, it inflicted a crushing defeat on a particular section of the West African Division of the British army. It was a glorious day for India when the British army was defeated by the I N A in the battles of Paletwa and Dalatmi and penetrated well within India and captured Mowdak. The Indian tricolour was unfurled on the soil of Mowdak which from then became a part of the liberated Indian territory. General A C Chatterjee was appointed Chief Administrator of the Liberated Territories to follow, the I N A ready to take over the administration of liberated territories.

Subhas, all the time, was feeling the need of good intelligence network. With the help of the local tribals and inhabitants he could build such a network in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. The British named the operatives of this intelligence network - "Jiffs". These operatives were given training in the Kanbe Institute in Rangoon and the Indian Swaraj Institute in Penang. The British, naturally, were really perturbed over their activities and as a consequence had to remain constantly on a high alert. In addition to this there were the I N A paratroopers whom the British called "BATS" (possibly meaning Burma area trained spies.) "These men had hideouts in far-flung places including the Kali temple in Calcutta and had nexus with a section of Congressmen and revolutionaries. The intelligence alerts and the look-out notice contained details about the routes used by them. One such look-out notice contained twenty-one important activists which included the name of

\(^6^5\) It may be mentioned in this connection that "the highest award for gallantry and devotion to duty - Shaheed-e-Bhart- was awarded to those who laid their lives fighting for the liberation of their motherland. Shere-e-Hind was the highest award for conspicuous gallantry. Sardar-e-Jung was for individual bravery and devotion to duty and outstanding leadership. Vir-e-Hind was a Senior Award for individual bravery and devotion to duty. Tamgha-e-shatru Nashu was awarded for killing a British Officer/soldier and Sand-e-Bahadur for rendering meritorious and commendable service. "Vide File No. 866 / INA., National Archives of India, Janpath, New Delhi."
Major (Dr) K. Narasimha Rao, son-in-law of Sir S. Radhakrishnan the then Vice-Chancellor of B H U.\textsuperscript{66}

Subhas, like a veteran Commander-in-Chief, with a keen eye on every aspects of the war including espionage, now turned to another sector of the Indo-Burma frontier - the Tiddim Sector on 8 March 1944. A general offensive began in full earnest in the direction of Manipur and Assam and, very soon, the Indian frontier was crossed at a number of points. There, in Kaladan Haka and Tiddim sectors, the valiant soldiers of the I N A showed their mettle. And it was a glorious occasion for India when, in the middle of March 1944, the I N A fought side by side with the units of the Imperial Nipponese Army and crossed the frontier overcoming stiff resistance. It was the fulfilment of a long cherished dream.

At last in January 1944, the Japanese Premier Tojo acceded to the request of Subhas to launch an offensive in the Kohima - Imphal sector. This came to be known as "Operation U". Subhas had to make full use of his forceful personality and charismatic leadership to win over Premier Tojo to his side and convince the military bureaucrats of the exigencies of the situation to start the offensive. He made them aware of the fact that this offensive on the Kohima - Imphal front would weaken Britain's grip over her colonies in South-east Asia and also would foster Japan's economic prospects in the region. Undoubtedly, this offensive was an exceedingly crucial and heroic episode in the annals of the I N A. Subhas had all along insisted upon having a sector exclusively manned by the I N A where he would lead his men personally in the battlefield. Subhas' attention was focused on the Arakan region. He wanted to move with his army into south-eastern Bengal where he expected to get the support of the local young men who, he hoped, would demolish railway bridges and air-fields. He expected that this would make the

\textsuperscript{66} Cited in n. 64.
British play a defensive role and naturally will relax their hold on Imphal. The strategy was befitting a veteran statesman in the role of a Commander.

But unfortunately for Subhas, the Japanese war strategists like Field Marshal Count Terauchi, the Supreme Commander of the Southern Forces. Lieutenant-General Masakazu Kawabe who was the Chief of the Burma Area Army and directly responsible for "Operation U" and Lieutanant - General Renya Mutaguchi, Chief of the 15th Army that undertook the campaign raised objections to the plans formulated by Subhas. Subhas, in spite of his best efforts and the magic of his magnetic personality failed to convince Field-Marshall Count Terauchi to agree to his view points. In fact, "Terauchi was one person on whom Bose's magic did not work." 67 The next plan of Subhas to infiltrate into the Assam plains and to move the war-front to Dimapur beyond which, he knew, had a reliable network of INA activities did not find favour with Trauchi, Kawabe and Mutaguchi. They just wanted that the Japanese troops concentrate their attention on Kohima and Imphal. They ignored the suggestion of Subhas that Dimapur was the focal point of the British war supplies to the Far and Near East. Moreover it would be easier to capture Dimapur.

This decision of the Japanese war strategists Terauchi and others against the wishes of Subhas seems to be a Himalyan blunder. Even Lieutenant General W J Slim, Commander of the Fourteenth Army defending the Imphal - Kohima sector, was surprised by this naïve Japanese decision. General Slim, however, did not fail to take the full advantage of the situation so generously created by the Japanese and got a full division airlifted to Imphal. After a lot of squibbling it was ultimately decided that the INA regiments would be kept intact under their own commanders but within the

overall Japanese command and three divisions of I N A consisting of 8800 soliders would be engaged in fighting in the Kohima, Imphal and Myintha sectors.

Is spite of a number of difficulties of grave implications created by the Japanese, I N A's Kohima offensive was unique in many respects. It brought out the intrinsic worth of the Indian soldiers who ungrudgingly marched nearly a thousand kilometres in a hostile, hilly terrain braving all oppositions. It bespeaks highly of the training imparted to them by Subhas. Armed with the information provided by the "Jiffs" and "BATS" the I N A and the Japanese advanced towards Kohima and on 31 March the Dimpaur - Imphal Road was fully captured. The British forces were caught unprepared and utter confusion prevailed. Meanwhile, three battalions of the Subhas Brigade of the I N A under Shah Nawaz Khan - 3200 handpicked soliders - determined to fight to the last for the independence of their country - were marching alongside the Japanese army from victory to victory in the Imphal - Kohima sector. Another division of 2800 I N A troops of the Gandhi Brigade under I J Kiani was fighting valiantly in the Imphal sector while the Azad Brigade consisting of 2800 I N A troops was put into action in the Myintha sector.

The predicament of the British forces and the actual situation is clear from the graphic account given by Charles R. Pawsey, the then Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hill District: "This siege of Kohima will go down in history as the siege that failed but only just. The Japanese boasted on April 9th that they had captured Kohima - a boast that was absolutely justified in view of the fact that by that time they held Kohima Bazar, Kohima Town, Kohima villages and every building of importance including the Deputy Commissioner's bungalow. Only the hill above the D.C's bungalow was then held, and the Japanese had completely surrounded and cut off the small garrison that was left to defend it. If the garrison had fallen the Japanese
would have very likely over-run Dimapur, where there was no force strong enough to oppose them, nor natural features strong enough to defend. Even experts at fighting in the jungle, the Japanese, would have found it easy to penetrate to the railway, and advance along the line until eventually all Assam would have been in their hands..." The Japanese continued their main assault on Kohima and Imphal but could not dislodge the defenders who held to their positions. In the meantime the Britishers gained control of the air and with this they could replenish their resources, both men and material and strafe the Japanese and the INA vigorously. And then the monsoon came and blasted the hope that still remained. And that was the beginning of the end. The Japanese were forced to give up the sieges at Kohima and Imphal. Subhas who had all along been trying to boost up the morale of his men spurned the idea of retreating. Shah Nawaz clearly reveals the attitude of Subhas: "Netaji was supremely confident of our victory. He said, 'Even if the Axis powers lay down their arms, we must continue our struggle. There is no end to our struggle until the last British quits the shore of our country.' He was of the opinion that the British should not be allowed to advance or break through our front, even if all the INA soldiers were killed. What he wanted most was that the INA 's 'shaheeds' should leave behind such a legend and tradition of heroism that future generations of Indians would be proud of them." And at last, when Subhas condescended to retreat he instructed his men to continue fighting while retreating.

68 Note of C.R. Pawsey on the war account dated 22 March 1946. Cited in Tapan Chattopadhyay, n.64, p.458.
But even retreating was not easy. S A Ayer, who was the Director of Publicity and Propaganda in the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, gives a graphic account of the prevailing situation. "The torrential rains and the slush and quagmires, the disrupted supply lines and lack of food and medicines played havoc with the I N A men retreating from the front. Cholera, dysentry and malaria took a heavy toll of the men's lives, but the survivors staggered back to the base hospitals, impatient to get well and pick up their rifles again and go back to the fighting front and lay down their lives there." And this was not the end to the nightmare. The enemy now took the upper hand. The British forces with their planes, tanks, and artillery launched a vigorous counter-offensive. And the unvanquished Subhas in a Special Order of the day on 15 August 1945, addressing the brave officers and men of the Azad Hind Fauj, said: "Comrades, in our struggle for the independence of our Motherland, we have now been overwhelmed by an undreamt of crisis. You may perhaps feel that you have failed in your mission to liberate India. But let me tell you that .... no setback and no defeat can undo your positive achievements of the past. Many of you have participated in the fight along the Indo-Burma frontier and also inside India and have gone through hardship and suffering of every sort. Many of your comrades have laid down their lives on the battlefield and have become the immortal heroes of Azad Hind. This glorious sacrifice can never go in vain. The roads to Delhi are many and Delhi still remains our goal ... There is no power on earth that can keep India enslaved. India shall be free and before long. Jail Hind."

The reasons for the debacle of the I N A may be analysed from different angles. According to Subhas himself, who spoke on the lessons he learnt from it: "We started the operations too late. ... The monsoon was disadvantageous to us ... in the Kaladan Sector, we routed the enemy and

71 Sisir K. Bose and Sugata Bose n.1, p. 326.
advanced, in Palel and Kohima also we advanced ... And all this in spite of the numerical superiority that the enemy had, plus equipment and rations... We have received our baptism of fire ... Our troops have gained much confidence ... We have also learnt our defects. Transport and supply were defective ... We had no Front Line Propaganda.  

But it is interesting to note that a Japanese document entitled "Subhas Chandra Bose and Japan", translated and printed in Sisir K. Bose ed. *Netaji and India's Freedom*, makes surprising remarks about Subhas' lack of military knowledge and his stubbornness: "It was unreasonable for Bose to have given his judgement on strategy and military affairs and operations of the war since he had no knowledge of such things. The fact that he behaved in a conceited way in matters he knew nothing about may be because of his own self-confidence. Especially since he was the political and military head of the Government ... since there were no outstanding personality around him... this tendency might have gone too far ..."  

Regarding Subhas it is further stated in the document: "In his demands regarding the relations of the two armies there were a number of points which were unreasonable and especially under the circumstances they could never be accepted completely."

K. K. Ghosh mentions that he has been told by General Kawabe who commanded the Japanese army in the Burma Front that after the end of the war he personally prepared the documents for the Government of Japan and he incorporated the testimony of many of the personnel directly involved. On the contrary a close study may also reveal that the results of the war in the Kohima Front might have been the reverse if the Japanese generals had followed and acted according to the war strategy drawn up by Subhas. According to Tapan...

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72 *Selected speeches*, n.8, pp. 219-20.
74 *Ibid.*, 401
Chattopadhyay, "One major reason for the failure of the offensive was the rigidity of the Japanese commanders in not making suitable changes in their strategy. Instead of taking Dimapur hands down, the Japanese army hopelessly got delayed in trying to capture Kohima as planned. Moreover, it was a blunder on the part of Field Marshal Terauchi and his commanders not to have accepted Bose's plan to take the battle to the Assam plains. Had they agreed to allow Bose to have his way and give military support to him to lead his 30,000 men to fight on Indian soil, the result of the offensive might have been different. In that case, in spite of Japan's eventual defeat in the war, the British in India would have been on the run. The Japanese generals understandably chose their own interests over Bose's. The implication of the statement is obvious. In reality, Dimapur was practically the Achille's heel - a defenceless region comparatively easy to be vanquished. But the strategy of Subhas was not put to use with devastating consequences.

Another reason for the success of the British forces was the support they got from the Nagas living in Phek, Kohima, Wokhs, and Mokokchung. They were very close to the civil and army officers. They were greatly influenced by the British propaganda tactics against the I N A and the Japanese. As a result they helped the British in all possible ways. They provided the British army officers with information about the location and movement of the I N A and Japanese forces. Sometimes they worked as scouts and porters of the British. The Naga Labour Corps was of immense help to the British during the offensive. And equally of great help was the Naga Service Station in Kohima under Kevizelie Angami.

Another plausible reason for the failure of the I N A might be that the Imphal Campaign was ill-timed. By 1944 the general war position had undergone considerable changes and had turned against the Axis Powers.

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76 Tapan Chattopadhyay, n.64, p. 460.
Germany was faced with a war position beyond her control; Italy had capitulated on 3 September 1943, and Japan was hard pressed in the Pacific. In reality, no one factor can be held responsible for the debacle the I N A and the Japanese had to face. It was the cumulative effect of these factors which was responsible for the failure of the mission of Subhas.

But did Subhas fail in his mission? Strictly from the military point of view, the I N A failed in its mission. But the tremendous impact of the I N A was of great significance on the political scenario of India which helped to a great extent the independence of India. The ball started rolling in late 1945 when Court Martial proceedings were initiated against (as described by the court by their original ranks in the British army) Captain Shah Nawaz, Captain Sehgal and Lieutenant Dhillon. The trial began on 5 November 1945, presided over by Major General Blaxland at the historic Red Fort. Sir N. P. Engineer, Advocate General of India, was counsel for the prosecution, assisted by Lt. Col. P. Walsh, Military Prosecutor. For the defence there was a full set of luminaries from the legal profession comprising Sir T.B. Sapru, Bhulabhai Desai, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Asaf Ali, Rai Bahadur Badri Das and others.

While the legal course proceeded inside of the second floor of the dormitory inside the Red Fort, a psychological upheaval was shaking the very foundation of the British Raj. Bhulabhai Desai was given the responsibility of conducting the defence because of Sir Tej Bahadur's indifferent health. S.A. Ayer, who was the Minister of Publicity and Propaganda of the Provisional Government of the Azad Hind, gives a vivid description of Bhulabhai Desai assiduously going through the masses of documents while preparing the case for the Defence: "...Bhulabhai waded through masses of documents relating to the origin, organisation, disbandment, rebirth and valiant achievements of the INA, the formation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, its recognition by world powers and its leadership of the I N A according to international law which ensured for I N A the status of prisoners - of war when
the British captured the liberation army. As he gathered more and more documentary evidence of the whole set-up of the Provisional Government and the I N A, Bhulabhai Desai was amazed at the far-sightendness of Netaji and his marvellous organising capacity. The thoroughness with which Netaji had attended to every detail in the midst of waging a revolutionary war left Bhulabhai Desai sometimes speechless.\textsuperscript{77}

In course of the trial, as the saga of the heroic sacrifice of the men and women constituting the I N A was gradually being unfolded, the whole nation became agog with excitement and a wave of national pride swept through the nation. Michael Edwardes depicts the still existing magnetic personality of Subhas with a literary flavour: "The ghost of Subhas Bose, like Hamlet's father, walked the battlefields of the Red Fort, and his suddenly amplified figure overawed the conferences that were to lead to independence."\textsuperscript{78} The main charge against the three accused was that they were guilty of waging war against the king. This charge sheet was read out in the court: "The accused No. IC 58 Capt. Shah Nawaz Khan, 1/14\textsuperscript{th} Punjab Regiment, NO.IC 22 Capt. P.K.Sehgal, 2/10\textsuperscript{th} Baluch Regiment, and NO. IC 336 Lieut. G. S. Dhillon, 1/14\textsuperscript{th} Punjab Regiment, all attached C.S.D.I.C. (i) Delhi Commissioned Officers, are accused of committing a civil offence, that is to say, waging war against the King, contrary to Section 121, Indian Penal Code, in that they together at Singapore, in Malaya, at Rangoon, in the vicinity of Popa, in the vicinity of Kyaukpadaung, and elsewhere in Burma, between the months of September 1942 and the 26\textsuperscript{th} Day of April 1945, did wage war against His Majesty, the King Emperor of India."\textsuperscript{79} The three accused were also charged with some other crimes which were punishable under the Indian Army Act. They were also called upon to make statements in their defence.

\textsuperscript{77} S. A. Ayer, n.70, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{78} Michael Edwardes, The Last Years of British India, Cassell, London, 1963, p. 108.
\textsuperscript{79} Pabitra Kumar Gupta, "Lalkillay Azadi Sainiker Bichar" (The Trial of the Azad officers at Red Fort), Azad Hind Golden Jubilee Number, October 1993, Jayasree Prakashan, Calcutta, pp. 31-32.
And these statements surcharged with their love and admiration for Subhas and devotion to their country stirred the soul of the whole nation. Shah Nawaz in his statement candidly expressed his feelings: "Born in the traditions of loyalty to the British Crown, I had known India only through the eyes of young British officers. When I met Netaji and heard his speeches for the first time in my life, I saw India through the eyes of an Indian ... In Netaji I found a leader and decided to follow him ... The question before me was - the king or the country. I decided to be loyal to my country and gave my word of honour to Netaji that I would sacrifice myself for her sake." 80 Sehgal quite frankly stated: "We felt that the British government had on its own cut off all the bonds that bound us to the British Crown and relieved us of all obligations to it ... 81 And Colonel Dhillon recalled the words engraved in the Chetwode Hall of the Military Academy at Dehra Dun: *The honour, safety and welfare of your country comes first* .... I felt that if a strong and willing national army could be raised at this juncture, it would not only liberate India from foreign rule, but could also resist the Japanese in case they should try go back upon their word and instead of helping us to win our freedom should seek to exploit our country for their own purpose." 82

Bhulabhai Desai's masterly exposition of complicated facets of international law with his persuasive eloquence gave a splendid opportunity to the whole nation to get an idea of practically every aspect of the heroic exploits of Subhas and his brave and dedicated army which swelled the hearts of everybody with pride. Bhulabhai forcefully maintained quite logically, keeping the tenets of the international law, "... Any war that was made for the purpose of liberating oneself from foreign yoke is completely justifiable by

80 S.A. Ayer, n.70, p. 87.
81 Ibid
82 Ibid.
modern international law and it will be travesty of justice if we are told ... that Indians may go as soldiers and fight for the freedom of England against Germany, against Italy, against Japan, and yet a stage may not arise when a free Indian State may not wish to free itself from any country including England hereself. Therefore it is that we maintain that this particular war requires no justification. "  

As the trial proceeded Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who had donned the lawyer's mantle, spoke about the mass upheaval caused by the I N A trial: "The I.N.A. trial has created a mass upheaval. Wherever I went, even in the remotest villages, there have been anxious enquiries about the I.N.A. men. There are profuse sympathies for these brave men and all, irrespective of caste, colour and creed, have liberally contributed to their defence ... The trial has taken us many steps forward on our path to freedom. Never before in Indian history had such unified sentiments manifested by various divergent sections of the population."  

In spite of all these forceful arguments the prosecution counsel, Sir Naushirwan Engineer held to his view that the three defendants were subject to Indian Army and British Indian domestic law and not international law. And then the verdict came. On 3 January 1946 the court found all the three accused officers guilty of waging war against the King - Emperor and sentenced them to transportation for life, cashiering and forfeiture of arrear of pay and allowances. This verdict of the Court was published in the Gazette of India Extraordinary on 3 June 1946. And then, keeping in view the exigencies of the situation, the Commander-in-Chief remitted the sentence of transportation of life against all the three accused but confirmed the sentence of cashiering and forfeiture of arrears of pay and allowances. On the same day the three officers were released and the curtain was rung down on the Red Fort.

83 S.A. Ayer, n.70, pp. 89-90.
drama. The enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds. The released officers got a royal ovation.

This trial and ultimate release of the I N A officers had tremendous political repercussions and the legal significance was also immense. In fact, it was a ".. monumental vindication of all that Netaji and the I N A had stood for in their armed fight for India's liberation." 85 And this had terrific repercussion on the Indian personnel of the armed forces of the country. The Royal Indian Air Force openly revolted against the treatment of the I N A soldiers captured by the British. And the Royal Indian Navy was also not lagging behind. The R.I.N. Mutiny was actually an eye-opener for the ruling British power, who realised that the Indian Army and Navy, the backbone of the British power, could no longer be relied upon. Hugh Toye, in The Springing Tiger, succinctly sums up the situation: "The Indian National Army not in its unhappy career on the battlefield, but in its thunderous disintegration hastened the end of British rule in India." 86

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85 S.A. Ayer, n.70, p. 90.