CHAPTER I
Chapter I

Indian Army at Revolt – INA & Naval Mutiny – Facts Depicted by English Newspapers

First phase of I.N.A.

The Indian National Army, popularly known as INA was formed by the Indian Army personnel posted in Malaya when the allied force were attacked by Japan in the Far East on 8th December, 1941. The Indian Army had been undermined and subjugated by the British for a considerably long period of time. Till the 1st World War which continued from 1914 – 1918, the talented and efficient Indians from respectable families also could rise to the rank of Subedars or Subedar Majors only and they always remained junior to the British soldiers. They had to salute the British soldiers who were junior to them by age.

It was only during this war that some Subedars and Subedar Majors were given the ranks of Captains and Majors. It was not till 1920 that Indians started getting Kings Commissions on regular basis.¹ Indore College Cadets were the first lot to receive these commissions followed by K.M.Cariappa who later on became the first Indian Army Chief. Compared to the British, the number of Indians who received these commissions was very small. Moreover the Indians were posted to specified units, six Infantry and two Cavalry. The British never had to serve under the Indians. Entry of the Indians into the officer grades of the technical arms, as engineers was not open to the Indians till the late twenties, again after training in England.²

At the time of the 2nd World War in 1939, the highest rank occupied by an Indian was that of a Major. Some ornamental ranks were however given to the Princes. The British did not want to increase the number of Indian officers and selected a
limited number very carefully after much consideration in order to sustain their supremacy. This was the background supporting the formation of INA in Malaya in 1942. When the first Indian troops to Malaya reached Singapore in August 1939, as a part of Force Emu, a sensation was created by their arrival with equal status to the British. Among the officers were S.M. Shrinagesh, K.S. Thimayya both of whom became Army Chiefs later on. The Indians in Malaya till then had been treated as inferior to the British in all aspects. Even a story goes that there was a notice at the entrance of the Kuala Lumpur Club — “Indians and Dogs not allowed.”

Upto 1940 the British plans in this area catered only for the defence of Singapore from sea attack. The British were forced to plan for the defence of Malayan mainland due to increase in the Japanese military activities. Indian Division under the command of Major General Mursay Lyon, arrived in Malaya in October 1940 and set up its headquarters at Kuala Lumpur. A few months later it moved forward and was replaced by 9th Indian Division commanded by Major General Barstow. The headquarters of the Indian Corps, commanded by Lt-General Riggy Heath was also at Kuala Lumpur. The overall army commander, Lt.Gen. Percival and the overall commander of all forces in Malaya, Air Chief Marshal Brooke Popham, both had their headquarters at Singapore.”

The British were trying to delay the reaching of enemy to Singapore by at least six months by which time they hoped to get sufficient reinforcements but these arrangements came too late and was inadequate. There was no proper air force. The plan of entering South Thailand to fight the Japanese was dropped at the eleventh hour. The prepared favourable position, North of Slor Star, known as the Jitra Line was given up at the last moment in the hope that the Japanese
could be delayed further North. On the very first day of the battle on 1st December 1941, the Japanese succeeded in destroying the so-called famous battleships, The ‘Prince of Wales’ and ‘The Repulse’ and gained the supremacy over the sea. The Japanese got the superiority and by February 2, 1942 with the fall of Singapore everything was over. This defeat at the hands of the Japanese was the background for the formation of the INA and the IIL. The Indians in that area, both the war prisoners and the civilians suffered heavily with defeats in the battlefields although they fought bravely for the cause of their motherland.

The British surrendered at Singapore on 15th February 1942. All Indian troops were ordered to gather at Farrer Park the next and overcoming all their difficulties like shortage of food, water, lack of sanitation, hygiene etc. they did so. Major lwachi Fujiwara and his group, the Japanese Liaison group and Mohan Singh and his colleagues were present there. Colonel Hung had come there on behalf of the British High Command to handover the Indian prisoners of war to join him in organising a National Force to help in the fight for the independence of India, adding that the Japanese had promised to help in that effort. Japanese Special Team for this purpose was present there, headed by Major Fujiwara. Captain Mohan Singh seized the opportunity without any hesitation and further planned that a number of soldiers who were cut off along with him would return to their units with Japanese help. Without any hesitation the British had agreed to the Japanese demand that Indian officers should be separated from others and handed over. A team was sent to Tokyo for consultations with the Japanese High Command and the well known revolutionaries residing there. Along with a Japanese team they flew to Tokyo in two planes, one of which crashed killing Gyani Pritam Singh, Swami Satyanand Puri, Capt. Mohd. Akram Khan and
N.K.Ayer who are not remembered now but they were the first martyrs of the INA movement in the East.

In mid April preliminary arrangements were made to get going INA and IIL and to ensure the success of the Bangkok Conference. The Bangkok Conference was held from 15th to 20th June 1942. About 150 delegates from all over the east attended representing two million members of the Indian community. The conference catered for the following:

1. That complete independence of India, free from any foreign control, domination, interference of whatsoever nature shall be the object of this movement.

2. That as the Indian National Congress is the only political organisation, which can claim to represent the real interests of India, this conference is of the opinion that the programme and plan of action of this movement be so guided, controlled and directed as to bring them into line with the aims and intentions of the Indian National Congress.

3. All prisoners of war and all members of the Indian Community, numbering nearly two millions, along with their properties will be placed under the direct control of the IIL, to safeguard their interests and security and to strengthen the moment.

4. That Subhash Chandra Bose be invited and brought over from Europe to give real strength and inspiration to the movement.

5. That while the Indians are highly grateful to the Japanese for their assistance, without which they could hardly expect to succeed, the Japanese should forthwith declare their acceptance of these resolutions so that the Indians could go ahead with confidence knowing that their
actions and motives will be appreciated and approved both in India and outside.

To carry out the objectives of the Tokyo and Bangkok Conferences, the following council of Action was formed:

President - Rash Behari Bose
Head of the INA and Incharge of Defence Affairs - Major Gen. Mohan Singh
Military Training - Lt. Col. A.Q. Gilani
Publicity & Propaganda - K.P.K. Menon
Organisation III - N. Raghavan

A portion of a letter written by Mohan Singh to Rash Behari Bose gives us information about I.N.A.:

"There were serious differences between the leaders of the Indian Independence League and the I.N.A. and the Japanese Indian prisoners of war and those volunteers who had not been absorbed in the first I.N.A. Division were ill-treated and thousands of them were worked to death in jungles.............Let me put down a few facts concerning the Indian National Army which may help to clear your mind.

a) The members of the Indian National Army are pledged to me and me alone by name and I am pledged to safeguard the honour and dignity of the I.N.A. We form one indivisible whole. It was raised and trained for an honourable cause that of securing the unfettered independence of India and not to satisfy the passing whims and fancies of any particular individual."
b) This army will only be the part of any movement if it is convinced that movement is conducted in the interests of India.

About half of the Indian prisoners of war, totalling about 45,000 were already to join I.N.A. Love for the country was the common motive of all. It was expected to raise three divisions of 15,000 troops each. The brigades were named after the national leaders. Secularism was the main feature of INA.

The main aim of I.N.A. was to go to Burma in 1942 and to start military action in 1943 in order to enter India to hoist the National flag on its soil and proclaim the independence of India giving a fresh cause to the people of India and even within the Indian army ranks itself to get rid of the foreign domination. This became possible in 1943 when the British Force in East India were hardly prepared but unfortunately the Japanese refused to undertake the offensive on the Burma front.

The biggest blow to the Japanese came when on 21\textsuperscript{st} December 1942, General Mohan Singh announced the dissolution of the I.N.A. Mohan Singh himself was arrested on 29\textsuperscript{th} December 1942. The movement came to a standstill. Thus ended the first phase of the I.N.A. and IIL.

\textbf{2\textsuperscript{nd} Phase of I.N.A.}

Netaji's association with the I.N.A. was the outcome of his dream to see his motherland free from British bondage. After the Revolt of 1942 had been crushed and put down, till the end of the war on 1945 there was scarcely any political activity in the country. The eminent leaders were all in jail and there was no new leader to show the right path. The fire of revolt was burning underneath though everything seemed to be calm and quiet. National movement had halted for the time being.
Subhash Chandra Bose had left India secretly in March 1941 to go to the Soviet Union and seek their help in India’s struggle for freedom. But the Soviet Union was attacked by Germany in June 1941 and had joined the Allies. With the hope of getting the help of Germany Bose went there. With some assurances from Germany he again went to Japan to organise the liberation of India with Japanese help. Meanwhile Japan had tried to raise an Indian National Army with the help of the officers and men of the Indian Army who had been left behind after the British withdrawal from Malaya and Burma. Subhash Bose took charge of this army, which now joined the Japanese army and began its march towards India. The officers and men of the INA were inspired by a sense of patriotism and they wanted to enter India as her liberators. Subhash Bose was supposed to be head of the Provincial Government of Free India.

21st October 1943 was a poignant moment in the history of Indian National Army, because on that day Netaji proclaimed the establishment of the Azad Hind Government at Singapore. This provisional government was decided to be the permanent in India after independence. There were twenty one members with Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose as the Head of the State, the Prime Minister and also the Minister for Wars and Foreign Affairs. The Azad Hind Government issued its own newspapers and arranged for printing of currency notes and postal stamps. It also had a National Bank at Singapore. The National Flag was the tricolour with the springing tiger in the middle. Netaji made elaborate arrangements for civil administration in the liberated regions and imparted training to the Azad Hind Dal in all branches of civil administration. Later on Rangoon was made the headquarter of the Government and Singapore remained its rear headquarter. On 18th March 1944 the I.N.A. crossed the
Indo-Burma border but the real victory came on 14th April 1944 when the I.N.A. unfurled the tricolour at Moirang in Manipur on the border of Assam. I.N.A. met with its ill fate soon after its moment of glory when the supply line was cut off due to torrential Burmese rain followed by the outbreak of malaria and dysentery. Netaji’s army began to fall back making it easy for the British army to break through and march towards Rangoon. Netaji, like a true leader, in his thunderous voice recharged his army saying “India shall be free and before long.” He sent a message to Mahatma Gandhi by radio broadcast from Rangoon and sought the blessings of the Father of the Nation.10 Hardly did he know that worst disasters were lying ahead of him and his army.

On October 21, 1943, Netaji announced the formation of the Provincial Government of free India "Arzi Hakumate Azad Hind" and took the following oath: “In the name of God, I take the sacred oath that to liberate India and 38 crores of my countrymen, I, Subhash Chandra Bose, will continue the sacred war of freedom till the last breath of my life. I shall always remain servant of India and look after the welfare of 38 crores of Indian brothers and sisters. This shall be for me, my highest duty. Even after winning freedom, I will always be prepared to shed the last drop of my blood for the presentation of Indian Freedom.”

Oath was taken by each member of the cabinet –"In the name of God, I take this only oath that to liberate India and 38 crores of my countrymen, I will be absolutely faithful to our leader, Subhash Chandra Bose and shall always be prepared to sacrifice my life and all I have for the cause."

The following members were included in the Cabinet of Netaji: Capt.Laxmi Swaminathan, Lt.Col.A.C.Chatterjee, Mr.S.A.Ayer, Lt.Col.Aziz Ahmed Khan,

Under the command of Captain Laxmi Swaminathan, Rani of Jhansi Regiment started to give training to ladies to gain the support of the Indian women. The Japanese had announced that Andaman and Nicobar Islands would be handed over to the Provisional Government by Free India. These two islands were renamed Shahid and Swaraj by Netaji. He visited many countries, explained his views and plans and was able to gain the confidence of almost the entire Indian community numbering about 2 millions. Wasn’t it a threat to the ambitious political leaders?

In January 1944, the Headquarters of the Provisional Government of free India moved to Rangoon. 3000 soldiers of the Subhash Brigade under the command of Lt.Col.Shah Nawaz Khan had already arrived in Burma. The First Division of 10,000 troops under the command of Lt.Col.M.Z.Kiani was ready to move to Burma. The Second I.N.A. Division under the command of Lt.Col.N.S.Bhagat consisted of the civilians who played a magnificent role in the forward campaigns.

Although the spirit of the I.N.A. soldiers was high, they were ill-equipped. When they reached Burma they didn’t have any artillery of their own nor any mortars. The machineguns were only of medium size and spare parts were not available. The Guerilla Regiment had no wireless equipment or telephones. Transport for carrying extra arms and ammunitions was not available. As they had to travel barefoot due to shortage of boots they had to suffer. The same thing happened
in Imphal and Kohima campaigns. Shah Nawaz Khan in his book "My Memories of I.N.A. and its Netaji" wrote – "The men made fresh attacks which soon became almost a knee-deep of mud, in which many of our men got stuck and died there. At that time, there was no transport of any type with us. Almost every man was suffering from dysentery and malaria. No one had any strength left in him to help any one else. It was a question of every man for himself and devil take the hindmost. In that retreat, I saw men eating horses, which had been dead four days ago. There were hundreds of dead bodies of Japanese and Indian soldiers lying on both sides of the road. Some had committed suicide to escape capture by the British."

Most probably the Japanese had certain designs on India and they were afraid of allowing the I.N.A. to be too powerful and one day turning round and fighting the Japanese in case of their betrayal. Although the I.N.A. soldiers fought as well as they could under the highly adverse circumstances, the I.N.A. troops had to retreat along with the Japanese. The brave soldiers had to surrender although the spirit still kept going with orders to fight for every yard in Malaya. Netaji laid the foundation stone of the I.N.A. Memorial in Singapore in July. He inspected the troops and tried his best in the face of impending defeat.

On 2nd October 1943, Netaji in a broadcast from Bangkok addressed the nature and purpose of his mission: "I would like to remind you that when Mahatma Gandhi commenced his Non-Cooperation programme to the Indian nation at the annual session of the Congress at Nagpur in December 1920, he said, "If India had the sword today, she would have drawn the sword." And proceeding further with his argument, Mahatmaji then said that since armed revolution was out of the question, the only alternative before the country was that of non-cooperation
and Satyagraha. Since then, times have changed and it is now possible for the Indian people to draw the sword. We are happy and proud that India's Army of Liberation has already come into existence.....The final struggle for liberty will be long and hard and we must go on fighting – till the last Britisher in India is either cast in prison or thrown out of the country.”

Netaji wanted to meet the new Japanese Premier General Koiso, so he flew to Tokyo in October 1944. A Japanese ambassador Hachiya was appointed to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind who reached Rangoon in February 1945 when the Government itself was about to evacuate Rangoon. Netaji returned to Rangoon in January 1945 to face the deteriorating situation. The soldiers of I.N.A. had started surrendering as defeat of the Japanese was sure. One after another Colonel Sehgal, Shah Nawaz Khan, Col.Dhillon surrendered. Towards the end of April 1945, Netaji and his party, consisting of some Ministers, Army officers, IIL workers, Rani of Jhansi ladies had to leave Rangoon for Bangkok in a convoy leaving Major General A.D.Loganathan and Col.Arshad. With about 5000 troops, all the I.N.A. force left now, that had managed to reach Rangoon for surrender to the British.12

Netaji discussed with the colleagues and decided to go to Russia for help. Some Japanese officers were willing to help him. But something else was destined. From Bangkok Netaji and his party flew to Saigon where he was informed that a special plane was about to leave for Taipeh and then to Darien. Two seats were managed with great difficulty for Netaji and Habibur Rehman. Other members agreed that Netaji must proceed ahead of others to escape British capture. They flew to Saigon and on the next day to Taipeh. They came to know that Port Arthur had fallen to the Russians and they must reach Darien by any means
before it was also captured. The plane took off again but after a steep ascent and when it was just a hundred feet above the ground, loud explosion took place and the plane crashed headlong to the ground and caught fire on August 18, 1945. Netaji was removed to the local army hospital where he retained consciousness for quite some time.\(^\text{13}\) As said by Habibur Rehman, his copassenger who himself was injured, Netaji spoke to him a few minutes before his death and said, "Habib, I feel, I shall die very soon. I have fought for India’s freedom until the last. Tell my countrymen India will be free before long. Long Live Free India." He is also reported to have said, "I want to sleep," after which he went to his final sleep from which no one wakes up. He was cremated at Taipei.\(^\text{14}\)

Netaji’s alleged untimely death changed the course of Indian History which would have definitely been better than what had been constructed by Jawaharlal Nehru and Jinnah along with the British. What Netaji had told his comrades on August 15, 1945 when the Japanese had surrendered is worth mentioning:

"Comrades,

In our struggle for the independence of our Motherland, we have 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 this failure is of only temporary nature. No setback and no defeat can undo your positive achievements of the post. Many of you have participated in the fight along the Indo-Burma frontier and also inside India and have gone through hardships and sufferings 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."
Comrades, in this dark hour, I call upon you to conduct yourselves with the discipline, dignity and strength befitting truly Revolutionary Army. You have already given proofs of your venture and self-sacrifice on the field of battle. It is now your duty to demonstrate your undying optimism and unshakable willpower in the hour of temporary defeat. Knowing you as I do have not the slightest doubt that even in this dire adversity you would hold your heads erect and face the future with unending hope and confidence. Comrades, I feel that in this critical hour, thirty eight crores of our countrymen at home are looking at us, the members of India's Army of Liberation. Therefore remain true to India and do not for a moment waver in your faith in India's destiny. The roads to Delhi are many and Delhi still remains our goal. The sacrifice of your immortal comrades and of yourselves will certainly achieve their fulfilment. There is no power on Earth that can keep India enslaved. India shall be free and before long. Jai Hind.”

Many leaders did not like the idea of winning freedom with Japanese help and her Fascist allies. But during the closing years of the war, Subhash Bose and the INA served to hold up the drooping spirits of the nationalist Indians at home who were feeling helpless and frustrated; they set before all sections of the Indian people, including those serving in the army, an example of courage and patriotism which was both inspiring and ennobling. There was protest from all sides when the British Government decided to prosecute some of the INA officers for treason because they had broken their oath of loyalty to the British Crown. The Congress as well as other political leaders opposed to the trials and demanded that the officers should be released. The congress set up an INA Defence Committee which consisted of such eminent lawyers as Bhulabhai Desai, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Kailashnath Katju and Asaf Ali. The political
atmosphere in the country was highly charged with patriotic feelings. The exploits of the I.N.A. came to light inspite of all censorships. The trial of the I.N.A. leaders further accentuated the already emotional atmosphere.\textsuperscript{16}

In February 1946, the students all over India demanded the release of the I.N.A. prisoners and asked the British to Quit India. The A.I.C.C. also passed two other resolutions regarding the I.N.A. extending full sympathy to the I.N.A. prisoners demanding that they should be treated as war prisoners as they were fighting for the cause of India's independence and also that they should be treated on the same basis as the Burma National Army. The B.N.A. under Aung Sen was allowed to form the independent Government of Burma.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{Trial of I.N.A.}

On November 5, 1945, the trial of I.N.A. officers began in the Red Fort before a military tribunal. The trial created great excitement for the name of Subhash Chandra Bose was associated with the I.N.A.\textsuperscript{18} Another factor which gave it a national character was that the three leaders who were selected for the trial belonged to each of the three major communities: a Hindu (Sehgal), a Muslim (Shah Nawaz Khan) and a Sikh (Dhillon). There was intense anti-Government feelings among the educated mass. Even within the Government, Srivastava, a member of the Viceroy's Council, made repeated requests to the Viceroy to drop the case.

On 21\textsuperscript{st} November, 1945 a large number of students in Calcutta started on a big procession towards Esplanade and then to Dalhousie Square. The procession was stopped on Dharmatola Street not allowing it to proceed to Dalhousie Square. The students insisted on marching forward and police opened fire, killing two students and injuring sixty-one including some girl students. The
angry students were determined to avenge the death of their leader Rameswar Banerjee and police firing could not stop them from protesting against the I.N.A. trial. The clash between students and police occurred on the next day resulting into the death and injury of many students. On 23rd Calcutta's civic life came to a halt as the workers of tramways and waterworks went on strike. Leaders like Sarat Bose and Shyamaprasad Mukherjee appealed to the students to withdraw the demonstration. In big cities students organised demonstrations to protest against the police violence on the students and also against the I.N.A. trial. The then Governor of Bengal Casey told the Viceroy on December 25, 1945 regarding his assessment of the Calcutta riots of November that so much shootings which resulted in 30 deaths and so much injuries was unnecessary. He also told Wavell on November 27, 1945 "Police staff work was thoroughly bad; a good deal of firing was unnecessary; most of Bengal officials useless." When another trial started in February 1946, more shooting occurred again. The first trial started on 5th November 1945 against the three accused, Captains S.Gurubaksh Singh, Dhillon, Shah Nawaz Khan and P.K. Sehgal before a court martial composed of three British and one Indian Army officers. The three captains were charged with murdering or torturing their erstwhile comrades of the Indian Army for their refusal to join the I.N.A. and waging war against the King Emperor. The prosecution was conducted by Lt.Col. Walsh. Along with the best judicial talents of India Nehru also put on the lawyer's gown after 22 years. The Court martial had 22 sittings ending on 31st December, sentencing the accused to transportation for life, subject to confirmation by the C-in-C. On January 3, 1946, the Commander-in-Chief announced the remission of the sentence. The three I.N.A. officers received a hero's ovation all over India.
The I.N.A. trial was able to create anti-government feeling all over India and the government thought the venue was wrongly chosen. Even after the remission of sentence on the three I.N.A. officers the Government refused to learn and sentenced Captain Abdul Rashid of the I.N.A. to seven years R.I. Due to this disturbances broke out in Calcutta and continued for six days. Muslims also joined and shouted the slogan of “Jai Hind” with which slogan Capt. Rashid went to jail. Military vehicles, cars, tram depots, military jeeps, post offices etc. were set on fire. The government had to take military help to bring the situation under control. The city was declared out of bounds for the Americans. There had been adverse comments in the U.S.A. Press about the British policy in India.

The Muslims also declared Hartal and the Anglo Indians became victims of the grudge. Even a church was set ablaze. In the first two days of demonstration 17 persons were killed and 200 injured. The disturbance continued for six days. The Associated Press of America published that up to then 38 persons had been killed and 509 persons including 82 policemen had been injured. Although the communists were against the I.N.A. they also took part in the demonstration against their trial.

Although the situation was the worst in Calcutta, the other cities like Delhi, Bombay and Madras were not out of its influence. Calcutta turned out to be the most rebellious for about six days. At Kankinara – an industrial suburb of Calcutta – the workers went on strike and started creating troubles on the 13th. Police opened fire and four workers were killed and several injured. Questions were asked in the House of Commons and London papers of all parties published news of Calcutta disturbances with banner headlines. “The Daily Herald” had on its front page a full length headline “Martial Law in Bengal.”
Lord Casey took the permission from the Secretary of State for India to call in Military. It was done secretly by the Government but was leaked out by the newspapers. The representatives of the United Press of America asked an India office representative at London if the military had been called at Calcutta with the consent of the Secretary of State. The official said – "The Governor being the man on the spot, is responsible for any action." The American and British Press were giving detailed and prompt news of the incidents although the Government was reluctant to give necessary information.

In the regular Indian Army substantial funds were collected for I.N.A. defendants. In Delhi and Patna the police went on strike. Even Gorkha soldiers from Nepal demonstrated in the cantonment of Delhi zone against British officers. The Congress leaders stumped the country with fiery speeches applauding Bose’s army and its valorous deeds and denouncing the British not only for their continuous oppression in India, but also for rivetting the yoke of France and Holland over the south-eastern lands of Asia.

The Muslim League also didn’t want to miss the opportunity to arouse Muslim public emotion in its favour. Reports trickled out that some of the INA officers and soldiers had been executed and others were being subjected to inhuman treatment in unidentified prisons and forts and most of the captives were being held under the shadow of death. In February 1946, the students all over India demanded the release of the I.N.A. prisoners and asked the British to quit India. In the period that followed the students of India emerged as a positive force to reckon within the affairs of the country.

Born at the time of the Second World War, the I.N.A. was no doubt a revolutionary army, organised on a foreign soil far away from the motherland.
The patriotic zeal of the Indians scattered all over East Asia from Burma to Japan kept alive the spirit of I.N.A. They raised men, money, clothing, food and other civilian supplies. "Delhi Chalo" and "Jai Hind" had become the war cry of the soldiers waging India's last war of Independence. It was Netaji's desire to unfurl the national tricolour on the Red Fort in Delhi amidst the cheers of "Jai Hind." Nehru paid a compliment to Netaji by fulfilling 'Netaji's unfinished task on 15 August 1947. Unfortunately tricolour was unfurled in divided India which could have been avoided had Netaji got the support in his life time which I.N.A. got after his death.

The I.N.A. had electrifying effects on the Indians in the British Navy that revolted in February 1946 with the Congress, Muslim League and the Communist flags fluttering together. Indian Defence Force and Indian Navy mutinied and refused to take orders from the British officers. The situation went out of control with strike, burning of government properties, killing, firing etc. The British said that since Indian army, navy and airforce could not be replaced by men of British origin, it was no longer in their power to rule over India permanently. Thus credit goes to the INA for compelling the British to wind up their empire in India. General Mohan Singh, Raja Mahendra Pratap, Rash Behari Bose, K.P.K. Menon, Bhai Budh Sing etc. became famous in the pages of history along with Netaji. The group of leading soldiers – Nawaz Khan, Prem Sehgal, Gurbux Dhillon, Colonel Bishen Singh, I.S. Mura, Thakur Singh, Ram Singh, Padam Singh, Colonel Gurmit Singh, Tehl Singh, Captain Hardial Singh Bhullar, Roshan Lal Seth, Fanja Singh, Gurdial Singh, Sohan Singh Bhullar, Joginder Singh, Hira Singh, Harnam Singh, Gurbachan Singh, Mehnga Singh, Gurmukh Singh of German INA and many many others became immortal in the History of India.
One thing had become clear that neither Germany nor Italy nor Japan were directly interested in India's interests except to the extent that suited their plans. The destiny of any Nation is built up by the people of that Nation not by any outsider. The Japanese never wanted a large formation of INA and tried to break their spirit and health by putting obstacles on their ways. The crucial question is why the Indian National Congress failed to safeguard the interests of the INA personnel? Although the people of India and Indian National Congress opposed the trial of INA soldiers after independence, the Indian Government failed to come to their rescue and majority of them had to live from hand to mouth in free India. "INA personnel, who belonged to the Indian Army and they were the majority in the INA, should simply have been taken 'back' in this Army in their original ranks and places.......It is a lame excuse that because they broke their oath to a foreign power, British, they may again break their oath to free India, their motherland, for whom they all suffered, many many perishing."28

Role of Subhash Chandra Bose in INA

Although the presence of Bose in Germany and his meeting with Hitler were made public, Bose had reached the end of his hopes in Europe. He wrote a strong message to the Bangkok Conference, where his name was on all lips.29 Subhash Bose had said "It is now time to link up Indian nationalists all over the world in one all embracing organisation." Bose always claimed to know more about events in India than its Government had made public and would include in his broadcasts coded instructions, as if to a wide network of agents there.30 He inspired the peasants of India and warned the Indian police and soldiers that unless they participate in the independence movement one day they will be
answerable to the Government of free India. He opened two new radio stations—“Congress Radio’ and ‘Azad Muslim Radio’ in August 1942. His repeated claim was “My whole life is one long, persistent, uncompromising struggle against British Imperialism and is the best guarantee of my bonafides.” He was eloquent in saying—“The English are like the dead snake which people are afraid of even after its death. There is no doubt that the British have lost this battle. The problem is how to take charge of our country. When the Englishmen are about to leave there is no point in begging independence or getting it as a present from other nations because such an independence cannot last long......We are young and we have a sense of self-respect. We shall take freedom by the strength of our arms. Freedom is never given. It is taken. Thank God, the nations fighting Britain are ready to help us. They know that Free India will contribute to the prosperity of the world. Consequently they are ready to help us sincerely. Now it rests with you to shoulder this noble task and to bring it to perfection or spend your life in imprisonment.”

He could capture the attention of a large number of audience who came under his spell and were instilled with the spirit to do something for the motherland. Payment for his soldiers of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd battalion originally came from Bose’s monthly Foreign Office grant, which was insufficient later on and Bose had to agree to their direct payment by the Germans to an oath of loyalty to Hitler. He reminded the soldiers that freedom is not given, it is taken, freedom never could be a gift because every gift carries its obligations, its ties.

The personal enthusiasm of Subhash Bose, his vitality, authority and world view won him the real allegiance of Indians in East Asia. His words brought magic effect on the fighters for freedom, inside India and outside. "We have a grim fight
ahead of us-for the enemy is powerful, unscrupulous and ruthless. In this final march to freedom you will have to face hunger, thirst, privation, forced marches and death. Only when you pass this test will freedom be yours.\textsuperscript{32} He talked about the national honour of India, insisted that Indians must make the maximum contribution of blood and sacrifice themselves and urged that the I.N.A. should be the spearhead of any offensive instead of Indian liberation secured through Japanese sacrifices. He was a powerful focus of loyalty and fighting spirit for the I.N.A. as well as the whole of India. He was very particular about training, uniform, discipline of the regiments. The training structures were supported by officers and N.C.O.s Training schools and the Boy’s organisation – the Balak Sena. Women played their part as nurses and soldiers in the Rani of Jhansi Regiment founded in Singapore. On 21\textsuperscript{st} October 1943 Subhash Bose took the oath “In the name of God, I take this sacred oath that to liberate India and the thirty – eight crores of my countrymen, I, Subhash Chandra Bose, will continue the sacred war of freedom till the last breath of my life. I shall remain always a servant of India and to look after the welfare of thirty-eight crores of Indian brothers and sisters shall be for me my highest duty.

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

The members of the Cabinet took a similar pledge, standing before him each in turn. Bose made the claim for the Provisional 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.” In another occasion he said – “Blood is calling to blood. Arise! We have no time to lose. Take up your arms. There in front of you is the road our
pioneers have built. We shall march along that road. We shall carve our way through the enemy’s ranks, or if God wills, we shall die a martyr’s death. And in our last sleep we shall kiss the road which will bring our Army to Delhi. The road to Delhi is the road to Freedom. On to Delhi!"

On 1st January, 1945, the special order of the day by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was:

"Comrades of the Azad Hind Fauj!

On this auspicious New Year’s Day, I want you first of all, to look back on your achievement and on your progress since the formation of the Azad Hind Fauj. There can be no doubt whatsoever that inspite of many difficulties and drawbacks, your achievements and progress have been truly remarkable. This has been possible because of the passionate desire for freedom which inspires the Indian people today, the many-sided assistance rendered by our countrymen in East Asia, the valuable aid offered by our Allies and above all – the hard work and sacrifice that you yourselves have put in.

Before the end of 1943, units of the Azad Hind Fauj began moving in the direction of the Indo-Burma Frontier. On the 4th February, 1944, India’s War of Independence was launched in the Arakan region of Burma.

On the 21st March, 1947 the whole world was proclaimed that the Azad Hind Fauj had crossed the eastern frontier of India and was fighting on the sacred soil of India. Since then, the fight has been going on and in the course of that campaign, many of our comrades, while fighting heroically, have laid down their lives on the field of battle.

The heroism and self-sacrifice of the officers and men of the Azad Hind Fauj in India’s War of Independence have already become a priceless heritage for the
India of tomorrow– while for the Azad Hind Fauj itself, they have become a glorious and undying tradition which will serve as an inspiration for all time.

Comrades! On this auspicious day, I want you all to pay a silent homage to our immortal heroes and to renew your solemn pledge to continue the fight until complete victory is achieved. India is calling you. The souls of your comrades are urging you on to still braver deeds. Therefore, gird up your loins for the hard battle that lies ahead. There can be no rest and pause for us, until our tricolour national flag is hoisted over India’s metropolis.

Comrades! Our immortal heroes have paid for India’s liberty with their own blood. We are proud of them. But we too must be ready for that supreme sacrifice. The Azad Hind Fauj can justify its name and fulfil its task – only if it is ready to fight and die to the last man. We have to give our blood and to take the blood of our enemies. Therefore let your slogan – your battle cry – for the year 1945 be – “Blood, blood and blood.”

On 15th August 1945 he said – “Never falter in your faith in India’s destiny. There is no power on Earth that can keep India enslaved. India shall be free and before long.”

Bose had laid the foundation stone of the I.N.A. War Memorial in Singapore. Less than two months later, the Memorial completed, a service was held for Bose himself. On 18th August at about 2.30 p.m. the plane carrying Netaji took off from Formosa, caught fire, dived steeply and crashed. Bose’s clothes were on fire and his companions beat out the flames. But Netaji had head injuries in addition to terrible burns on his face and body and even before he was taken to hospital he seems to have realised that he would not recover.33 He breathed his last in the hospital with the last words “India will be free before long. Long live Free
India." His funeral rites were observed at the Reokoju Temple on 14th September.

On 21st August the facts of the plane accident and the death of Netaji were broadcast from Delhi and then the whole world came to know about it. It was an unbelievable incident to the Indians not only at that time but also 60 years after independence, still time to time rumours spread about Netaji being alive. But it is an established fact by his close associate Habibur Rehman that he died on August 18th 1945 in the Nammon Ward of the Japanese Military Hospital at Taihoku and with his alleged death there came a turning point in the history of India, giving ample opportunities to the power hungry leaders to secure their position cutting India into two halves.

The I.N.A. trials had proved conclusively that the Nation was no longer willing to compromise with repression or be satisfied with hollow promises. The fighting spirit of India had been aroused and if the nationalist demands were not adequately met, the situation would become explosive. There was ample evidence for reaching this conclusion.34

The Indian Naval strike in Bombay in February 1946, the strikes by Indian Air Force, strike by the Indian Signal Corps in Jabalpur and even the inclination of police and bureaucracy towards nationalism prove the success of I.N.A. in creating a deep impact all over the country.

**Trial of I.N.A. and Facts Depicted by English Newspapers**

The Court-Martial proceedings of I.N.A. Officers lasted from 5th November 1945 – 31st December, 1945 and the three accused were found guilty of waging war against the King. All political parties in India supported their cause and pleaded for their freedom. Public opinion was whole heartedly in favour of the I.N.A.
According to Pyarelal, a long-time private Secretary of Gandhiji and Editor of the Harijan Weeklies, "The undertrial members of the I.N.A. who had fought the British in Burma for India’s independence were lionised by the public."\(^{35}\)

Gandhiji wrote to Lord Wavell and saw General Auchinleck, the Commander-in-Chief and made them aware of the support of whole India for I.N.A. soldiers. He met the I.N.A. prisoners and spoke to them which further dramatised the situation. The Indian National Congress at its session on 23\(^{rd}\) September 1945 at Bombay adopted a Resolution on the I.N.A. which was covered by all leading newspapers stating that it would be a tragedy if these officers, men and women were punished for the offence of having laboured, however mistakenly, for the freedom of India. The whole of the Indian Press rose in sympathy with the war prisoners and the three accused and through articles by eminent jurists like Dr.Katju etc. in the newspapers the I.N.A.was idolised. Reporters and writers continuously wrote out interviews regarding the Indian National Congress’ support to the I.N.A.defence, inspite of the fact that the I.N.A. attempt was at variance with the Congress creed of non-violence. When Pandit Nehru was requested to comment on this he said that the Congress attitude towards the I.N.A. was the “outcome of the whole Congress outlook in regard to Indian freedom.”\(^{36}\)

The story of the I.N.A. started spreading to the remotest villages as the issue got a coverage everyday in the daily local and National newspapers.

While the Tokyo Radio announced on 23\(^{rd}\) August, 1945 “Mr.Subhas Chandra Bose died in a Japanese hospital from injuries in an air crash," R.F.Mudie, the then Home Member, Home Department, Government of India on that very date was writing to Sir.E.Jenkins, Private Secretary to the Viceroy about Bose’s case
which His Excellency was expected to discuss in London. On 25th October 1945, the British Cabinet discussed the note and laid down principles which were to govern the trial and punishment of Indian Civilian offenders, including Subhash Chandra Bose. Even Wavell recorded in his diary on August 23rd “I wonder if the Japanese announcement that Subhas Chandra Bose’s death in an air crash is true. I suspect it very much. It is just what would be given out if he wanted to go underground.” The Hindustan Times continuously published the reactions of Indian political leaders to Bose’s death which was regarded as unbelievable. K.Santharam wrote an article on the I.N.A.issue. This was followed by the publication of an interview with an Indian student who was in Japan when war broke out regarding – Is Subhash Chandra Bose still alive?

Arthur Moore in his article in Unrest in Asia rebutted the charge that Bose was a Quisling and admitted that “His allegiance was to his own country.” He wrote, “History will regard him as a patriotic man who over-estimated those of others, misread the tendencies of his own time and consequently failed.” Bose was really wrong in understanding the power of those who, due to sheer self interest and greed allowed the division of the country into two halves. Had he been alive, he would have never allowed such a brutal thing. His death no doubt is mysterious and suspicion even falls on the British as well as some Indian leaders belonging to both Hindu and Muslim communities.

Mahatma Gandhi, who was an admirer of Bose expressed his views in the Hindustan Times – “I believe Subhash Bose is still alive and is biding his time somewhere.” He also added “I admire his courage and patriotism but I have no belief in the method he adopted. The people of India cannot attain freedom by sword.”
The Hindustan Times reports in February — Congress and I.N.A. Objectives Identical — the objectives of the Congress and the Azad Hind Fauj was the same. While the Congress adopted the Quit India resolutions and launched a non-violent movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the Azad Hind Fauj under Subhash Chandra Bose had "Delhi Chalo" for the battle cry. Netaji became the most live issue to be discussed by the Press not only in India but also outside India. The Statesman, reproduced a report from London about a Soviet writer denying Newspaper Report about his being in Soviet Russia and characterizing it as "A stupid fairy tale." Another view which appeared in the Magazine — New Times was reproduced by the National Herald that use of Indian troops against the national movement in Indonesia and Indo-China had evoked deep indignation among Indian public.

Protest against I.N.A. trial continued like a boiling cauldron the reflection of which we get from the English newspapers. National Herald reports: Over 1,000 killed: 2,000 injured — Calcutta situation deteriorates. The Bombay Sentinel reported — Historic Trial starts in Red Fort — INA officers face charge of waging war against King. Shah Nawaz’s Diary discloses Army was disgusted with Jap Tactics. Hindustan Times also voiced Maulana Azad”s warning to Britain — "Use of Indian Troops in Far East Must Stop." The I.N.A. trials had proved conclusively that the Nation was no longer in a mood to put up with repression or be satisfied with vague promises. The fighting spirit of India had been aroused and if the nationalist demands were not adequately met the situation would become explosive. There was ample evidence for reaching this conclusion. In the middle of November 1945 Bombay longshoremen refused to load war materials on a ship leaving for Java on the
invitation of the Indonesian National Government. The article noted that Indian people’s demand for release of the I.N.A. personnel was to lead to serious consequences. The decision to send Common Wealth Forces to take part in the occupation of Japan was followed in October 1945. This move was openly criticised in the Press. ‘Tej’ carried a news item entitled “No injury should befall the Azad Hind Army.” It was stated there that if one soldier of the Azad Hind Army was injured, several imperialists would have to wash their hands of their lives in exchange. Another paper ‘Aj’ carried a headline “Terrorism begins in Delhi as well-Threat to kill White Dogs.” The Chief Commissioner, Delhi was informed confidentially that as identical items had appeared in English papers, it would be desirable to have the same policy for papers published in any language.

The publishing of the day to day proceedings of the first I.N.A. trial created the greatest sensation and alarm. National Herald announced that an independent vote of army went eight percent in favour of their release. The writings in the National Press amply demonstrated that all political leaders had come to believe that the British could no longer depend on the Indian Army to put down disorders which could arise in the country. The outspoken editor of the National Herald even told Auchinleck at the Editor’s Standing Committee’s party to the Cabinet Mission that the trials would serve no purpose as the Congress on assumption of power, would release the convicted persons. The Hindustan Times published the news C.I.N.C. Remits I.N.A. Officers Sentenced – Transportation for Life Verdict Set Aside. Shah Nawaz, Dhillon and Sehgal cashiered from Army. It also voiced their words – “Our release a victory for country”- “I.N.A. officers to work under Congress” – “We took pledge in the presence of our Netaji to fight for our
country's freedom and to dedicate our lives for that noble cause. That pledge still
stands. Our lives belong to Mother India and we shall carry on our struggle for
independence under the leadership of the Congress," they added.49
In the same issue again - "History of India would have been written differently -
Failure of Government to recognise people's longing for freedom." The
newspapers seemed to be reverberating with the peoples' protest and their
longings for freedom. The same paper in its January issue says - I.N.A. Men to
continue for Freedom - Delhi Honours Released Officers."50
Jan 9 issue reported - "I.N.A.Journalists in Delhi: New Delhi, Two Indian
journalists who took part in the Azad Hind movements in South East Asia are
back in India after a 1000 mile walk from Bangkok to Imphal. They were
accompanied by Mr.Ramaswamy Mudaliar." 51 "India Desires a Just Peace
Without Idea of Revenge"-Sir Ramaswamy Mudaliar on tasks before U.N.O. -
"The influence of India will be thrown on the side of making a fair and just peace
without any idea of revenge but with the determination to avoid future wars and
her delegates to the United Nations Assembly will do everything in their power to
translate into practice the high and altruistic attitude apparent at San Francisco"
said Sir Ramaswamy Mudaliar, member of the Viceroy's Executive Council and
leader of the Indian delegation to the Assembly of the United Nations, in an
interview.52
January 10 issue of the same paper published the report "I.N.A. cadets attended
Netaji's Funeral in Tokyo. The exact picture of day to day events and
happenings were brought to the general mass by the newspapers without which
people of India would not have been motivated to take active part in the freedom
movement against their 200 years established rulers cum exploiters.
On February 18, 1946 the boys of the Signal School in Royal Indian Navy in Bombay went on hunger strike in protest against racial discrimination and poor quality of food. The cadets were inspired by the speeches of the Socialist Party workers in Bombay but they were also moved by the glorious exaltation and defence of the Indian National Army. Some of the cadets were also in contact with I.N.A. men and had started correspondence while on a visit to South-East Asian parts. The offensive remarks about the Indians by the Flag Officer and his Commanding of the Royal Indian Navy which was broadcast indiscreetly ignited the spark. The Free Press Journal of Bombay were the first to come to the rescue of the cadets and it was from their office that the whole incident assumed a national complexion. The Press came out with a demand for the Admiral's instant removal and gave the fullest publicity to the "manifestation" and acts of the strikes.\textsuperscript{53} The naval mutiny was followed by four days of civil riot and disorder in Bombay. The freedom struggle got a sudden, unexpected and sensational boost forward in the naval mutiny of February 1946.

On February 19, about 3000 of the Ratings mutinied and came out in the streets. Seizing the naval lorries they began to roam in the city with Congress and Muslim League flags on display. When an attempt was made to confine them to their barracks, they started fighting. Throughout February 22, the Ratings being in charge of a majority of ships in the harbours, maintained their defiance. The Vice-admiral threatened use of the vast forces at Governments disposal, even the destruction of the Navy. The situation was deplored by the Congress Party leaders, specially Sardar Patel who advised restraint and promised to do everything to help the naval ratings out of their difficulties. The Congress accused the Communists and the Congress Socialists with their leftist Press for
instigating the mutineers. The Central Legislative Assembly was also agitated and there was an atmosphere of revolt everywhere.

The Indian Press carried out details of the naval mutiny. National Herald reported "Mutiny Spirit in the whole of Bombay – Widespread Rioting in City – British Troops and Police Open Fire over 24 times."\textsuperscript{54} It also reported – "R.I.N. Mutiny Leaders to be Tried."\textsuperscript{55}

The Pioneer, Lucknow Edition reported about "Naval mutiny in Bombay and Karachi – Rebels in possession of 20 ships and armoury. Pitched battle between ratings and military – Heavy casualties – Truce declared after seven hours of gun duel in castle barracks Area. H.H.Nawab of Bhopal, Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes appealed to Indians to make united effort for the achievement of India's national freedom based on compromise and mutual sacrifice.\textsuperscript{56} Through the same paper Gandhiji became eloquent –"The Hypnotism of the I.N.A. has cast its spell upon us. Netaji’s patriotism is second to none! His bravery shines through all his actions. He aimed high but failed. Who has not failed? My praise and admiration can go no further. Lessons learnt is self sacrifice, unity irrespective of class and community and discipline.\textsuperscript{57} Shah Nawaz of I.N.A. remarked "Islam in danger is a false cry."\textsuperscript{58}

Sardar Patel, Nehru and even Jinnah tried to suppress the disturbances. The Times(London) published a report from Bombay dated 22\textsuperscript{nd} in its issue of 23\textsuperscript{rd} February that men were prepared to resume duty on Sardar Patel's advice. The paper also drew attention to the seriousness of the disturbances, which went far beyond "the spontaneous demonstration of sympathy with the R.I.N.meeting which they were alleged to be........"
The Viceroy’s Journal recorded on Feb 21 highlighting the causes of the R.I.N. mutiny and the role of Press as: “A hunger strike by some ratings of the signal School in Bombay on grounds of inadequate pay and racial discrimination touched off a mutiny by other ratings who took possession of their ships and threatened to open fire on the military guards........"

On 26th February, when the Editor of the Amrit Bazar Patrika came to see Wavell, he took him to task for the unbridled intemperance of the Press in the last six months, which had naturally resulted in out-breaks such as at Bombay......”

The mistakes at the time of I.N.A. trial cautioned Wavell in the matter of the proposed R.I.N. Court martials. It has been ascribed to the political tension prevailing in the country from the end of 1945. The New York Times carried alarming reports about the mutiny of the ratings as well as the civilian riots that followed. As per its report the civilian riots were more dangerous than the naval mutiny. The British were concerned over the effects of the mutinies on the morale of the Indian Armed Forces and on the Government’s authority which was solely based on such a force.

The New York Times in its editorial commented: “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. The real cause of the riots was the people’s eagerness to courage and join in any attempt to strike at British rule in India.”

The Rear Admiral of the Royal Indian Navy brought to the notice of the Flag Officer Commanding on 20th January 1947 that the letter published in the Blitz, was a direct incitement to mutiny and was certain to have an adverse effect on
many serving ratings. The letter was published in the Blitz on 18th January 1947. Reference was made to the similar effects of subversive articles on the February 1946 mutiny of the R.I.N. ratings in Bombay. The Editor was accused of subverting and undermining discipline and morale of India’s Armed Forces.

The unexpected and unfortunate turn of events during the Second World War posed a barrier to the fulfilment of Netaji’s dream of his victorious march to Delhi as the head of his Indian National Army. In the absence of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and his I.N.A., in the post war India, the then politicians under the leadership of Nehru and Jinnah amidst the helplessness of Mahatma Gandhi did exactly that which Netaji would have hated and prevented with his last drop of blood. Nehru and Jinnah negotiated and compromised with the shrewd British on the issue of freedom and in their haste to get into power agreed to the proposal of partitioning India. The transfer of power was preponed and followed by two more developments that were alien to Netaji’s philosophy and his blueprint for a free India, i.e., introduction of a parliamentary democratic system by Nehru and his decision to keep India in the British Commonwealth of Nations. The sacrifice of lives by millions of patriots and their torchbearer Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose could not prevent the division of India into two halves as Nehru and Jinnah could not resist the temptation of satisfying their power hunger with a truncated freedom, achieved over the bloodbath of millions of civilians belonging to both the religious communities. Perhaps, Gandhiji had to pay the penance for their sin by sacrificing his life within five months of the newly achieved independence of India. Jinnah too died within a short time leaving the erstwhile India to emerge on the world map as the two nations of India and Pakistan.
The British gave a last bite to India by dividing the country before their final quit when they began to feel the foundations of loyalty being shaken among the British Indian soldiers – the mainstay of the colonial power as a result of the INA exploits that became known to the world after the cessation of hostilities.61

**Indian Women in INA – Strength Added to Netaji’s Dream Project**

Women had played a significant role in INA and ever since the formation of the Indian Independence League, the Indian women in East Asia helped to further its cause. Indian women assisted in the preparation and collection of bandages, first aid dressings, collection of funds and articles required by the troops and inspiring young men and women to do their duty in the critical hour.

The women’s section of the Indian Independence League was inaugurated in March 1943. Mrs.M.K.Chidambaram was elected Chairman and Miss Saraswati as Secretary of the Women’s Section, Indian Independence League, Singapore. Dr.Lakshmi Swaminathan was appointed Secretary at the Headquarters. They toured various parts of Malaya, Thailand and Burma to open branches of the Indian Independence League and started women’s section. The work of the women for the major part was of collecting funds and providing amenities to the soldiers. But with the arrival of Subhash Chandra Bose there came a revolutionary spirit in the organisation.62

On July 9, 1943 Subhash Chandra Bose addressed a meeting and asked for men and women volunteers. He felt that women must be ready to share the burden of freedom’s battle. “This caught the imagination of the Indian Womenfolk” and a beginning to start a Women’s Regiment was made, which later popularly came to be known as the “Ranee Jhansi Regiment.”63 Women’s camps were established in Singapore, Malaya, Burma etc. and they were given
training in nursing, social service and general welfare work. The military part of the training consisted of (1) drill, (2) weapon training (3) tactics (4) map reading and (5) general subjects. They were trained to use rifles, bayonets, sub-machine guns, machine guns, revolvers, grenades, swords and daggers.\textsuperscript{64}

The women of Ranee Jhansi Regiment were eager to go on active participation. They sent a representation to Subhash Chandra Bose which was signed with blood by all signatories. The first batch was sent to Maymo (Burma) in the beginning of 1945. Lakshmi Swaminathan who later married Captain Prem Sehgal was an important member of the Indian National Army. She was the Commander of Ranee Jhansi Regiment and also the Minister of Social Welfare and Medicine in the Azad Hind Cabinet. She was jailed several times but defying the order of the British Government she organised protest meetings and delivered public speeches to provoke people against the British. The contribution of women in the freedom fighting of India will always be remembered with reverence.

**Did Netaji Really Die in Plane Crash?**

The death of Netaji in Plane Crash is still a mystery even after so many years of independence. The reports of the Shah Nawaz Committee, Khosla Commission and interviews of the so called eye witnesses failed to prove that Netaji died in the alleged air crash at Taihoku in Formosa on August 18, 1945. The startling disclosure made in the publication of 'Top Secret' documents by the British Government has justified that the report of Netaji’s death in the air crash was nothing but fiction. Even Gandhiji had said, "If someone shows me the ashes, even then I will not believe that Subhash is not alive."\textsuperscript{65} If this is true then where did he vanish? Netaji definitely is not such a person to hide himself from the
world out of fear; particularly when India became free there was no reason to keep himself hidden. It was widely believed by the Indian people that Netaji escaped out of the approaching dragnet of the Anglo-American army which was cast to ‘catch’ him alive. Jawaharlal Nehru also had admitted in 1962 that “There was no precise and direct proof of death of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.”66 Regrettably, however, the Government of India made no effort, whatsoever, till eleven years after the report of alleged death of Netaji to find out the truth as to what actually happened to him. Under persistent pressure from the public, the Government of India insisted two enquiries, one in 1956 with Mr. Shah Nawaz Khan as the head of an Inquiry Committee and another after 27 years with Mr. G.D. Khosla as the Chairman of a one-man Commission but the findings of both these investigating bodies appeared to the Indian people as nothing but some kind of a make-believe or command performance reports.67

The London publication of the ‘Top Secret’ documents of the British Government has made startling revelation that the British Government did not believe in the report of Netaji’s death in the alleged air crash. It also indicates that they suspected Netaji’s escape to Russia which was factually corroborated later by a report of the British intelligence that was submitted to the Wavell Government in 1946. In the later forties and early fifties, Pandit Nehru brusquely turned down all public demands for a proper enquiry into the mystery behind the disappearance of Netaji, but when a non-official committee was proposed to be formed under the chairmanship of Dr. Radha Binod Pal, the eminent Indian jurist of the Tokyo War Crimes Trial, Pandit Nehru suddenly constituted a committee to ‘inquire into the circumstances leading to the alleged death of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.’68 Nehru in a shrewd manner prejudiced the minds of the members of the
Enquiry Committee by making a statement in Parliament that “the question of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose’s death was a settled fact beyond doubt.” This comment was made when the investigation was going on due to which the committee and then Shah Nawaz Khan Committee did not dare to contradict Pandit Nehru. Innumerable instances of contradictions and discrepancies were observed in the report of Shah Nawaz Khan Committee. The report of the Khosla Commission was worse than that of the Shah Nawaz Khan Committee.

The ‘Top Secret’ documents comprising confidential letters reveal the fact that the British Government did not accept Japanese report about Netaji’s death as true. According to the Japanese report Netaji died on 18th August 1945 but the first letter written by the Home Member dated 23rd August deal with the botheration of the British regarding the most suitable alternative of the various suggestions made for punishing Netaji as a war criminal. The British Government also assessed all probable repercussions if he was to be tried and hanged either in India or in any country under British control in South East Asia or in some insular British possession. Many other evidences are there to support the view that Netaji didn’t die in plane accident on 18th August 1945 which will be discussed in a later chapter.

The Indian independence owes its debt to a large extent to Netaji and his INA. The Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, the people of all communities from all corners of India developed a revolutionary amity, unitedly fighting for the freedom of India under inspiration of the legendary leader Subhash Chandra Bose and his INA.

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