CHAPTER IV

Subhas Chandra Bose and His Strategies for Armed Struggle

This chapter discusses Bose’s dramatic escape from India during his house arrest by the British and his journey from Kabul to Germany. The chapter analyses his failure in getting assistance from Germany and Russia for the liberation of India which was his main aim when he had been in exile in Europe during 1930s. Realising in 1943 that he was not benefitting India by his work in Germany and totally disillusioned by Hitler's declaration of war on Russia, he decided to approach and seek assistance from Japan.

Even after the resignation of Bose from Indian National Congress Presidentship on 29th April 1939 as desired by Gandhi due to the ideological and tactical discordance with him, Gandhi was not entirely satisfied with it. Gandhi and Nehru could not stand Bose as he had been working intensively from the platform of his new-born Congress wing, the All India Forward Bloc. Gandhi felt that the Forward Bloc made Bose more popular with a bigger following than when he was the Congress President. On 19th August 1939 Gandhi passed a resolution disqualifying Bose as the President of Bengal Provincial Congress Committee for three years on the imposed ground of ‘deliberate and flagrant breach of discipline’. It made no difference to Bose as his popularity and mass following all over the country was due to his sincere and dedicated work and impressive speeches. But it created a rift between the two.¹

On 18th June 1940, at the second All India Conference of Forward Bloc, Bose proclaimed; “It is for the Indian people to make an immediate demand for the transference of power to them through a provisional National Government… When things settle down inside India and abroad, the provisional National Government will convene a Constitutional Assembly for framing a full-fledged Constitution for the Country.”²

4.1 Decision to Leave India

The British government was alarmed by the activities of Bose. Gandhi was perceived as naïve and harmless; but Bose, in contrast, was seen as dangerous and a threat to them and they were looking for any opportunity to control him and his activities. On July 2nd 1940, a day before the Siraj-ud-daulah Day was to be observed in Calcutta, he was arrested and sent to the Presidency Jail for an indefinite period of detention. In jail he planned his adventurous escape through Afghanistan. Shanker Lal, his emissary to Japan returned with encouraging information. By the end of June; but as no one was allowed to meet him in the jail Shanker Lal could not get access to meet Bose personally. So he sent the good tidings in code language through an insider secretly, which read: “All friends are well and happy and anxious and are waiting to welcome you. We see no reason for you to be where you are when there is so much to be done outside.”

Bose himself had arranged Shanker Lal’s visit to Japan. Government sources reported that Shanker Lal had met the Japanese foreign Minister and German, Italian and Russian ambassadors and that he was also channelling some Japanese money to Forward Bloc. Bose had already established contacts with the Japanese in Calcutta. In 1938, just before the annual Congress session, Japan’s Vice-Foreign Minister Ohasi visited Calcutta and met Bose secretly at a rented house of the wealthy Bengali communist politician S.K. Acharya.

The only evidence that has ever been presented about all this was the treaty between Bose and the Japanese which Shanker Lal showed K.M. Munshi in 1942, claiming that the treaty had been arranged via Shanker Lal’s good offices. But even if the treaty is fanciful (and, if there was a treaty, why did not Bose head to Japan when he escaped- as he could have done as the British thought he had done-instead of Russia?) the British government was convinced of his Japanese contacts. It tried unsuccessfully to prosecute Shanker Lal for travelling to Japan under false passport, and on 10th September 1940 Linlithgow was informed that a warrant could be issued

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based on what the government knew about Bose’s relation with Japan, if all the prosecutions launched against him failed.⁵

This message made Bose anxious to get out of the jail as soon as possible. In the face of the detention which was expected to continue till the end of the war, he wrote to the Home Minister; “There is no other alternative for me but to register a moral protest against the unjust act of this indefinite detention and as a proof of that protest, to take a voluntary fast unto death… Life under existing conditions is intolerable for me….Government is bent on holding me in jail by brute force. I say in reply: Release me or I shall refuse to live and it is for me to decide whether I choose to live or die… The individual must die so that the nation may live. Today I must die, so that India may live, may win freedom and glory.” ⁶

On 29th November, after writing this political testament, Bose went on hunger strike. He would drink only water with a little salt and would not allow himself to be force-fed. The government was in panic. The words of Bose could not be taken lightly by those who knew the strength of his determination. The government could not let him die in prison. Attempts were made to feed him forcibly but Bose resisted successfully as he said. The eloquent ‘moral protest’ achieved its desired result. On 2nd December 1940 it was decided to release Bose if his condition deteriorated. Three days later doctors reported that it had indeed done so, and argued that unless he was released he might die. On the afternoon of 5th December the decision to release Bose unconditionally was reached. The government was following a cat-and-mouse policy—the moment Bose recovered, he would be jailed.⁷

4.2 Escape from India

An unhealthy Bose was taken back to his Elgin Road house in an ambulance. But by then the plan of escape from the country was well sketched out in his mind. Staying in his father’s room, where for the next six weeks, he received relations.

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colleagues and friends and carried on an extensive correspondence. Bose started writing letters on political matters to Gandhi. He wrote about the need of a mass movement. He was in touch with Jayaprakash Narayan about secret plans to rebuild the left. On December 29th Bose wrote to Viceroy Linlithgow, whom he met some months before, about the coalition government in Bengal and growing communalism. He said that, ‘on communal question, the Muslims are given a free hand; while political issues, the will of the governor and the British mercantile community is allowed to prevail’. 8

Bose thought a small circle of political workers and family members had to be told of the plan, but he tried to keep the circle of those who knew as small as possible. Months before, there had been a rumour that he might try to leave India. From his window he could see the police watching him; he knew of the deceitful cousin and others with loose tongues around him. He had to be extremely careful.

The government files contain this report; “C.207 reports on 15th Dec. That Akbar Shah (F.B) of N.W.P is expected to come to Calcutta to see Subhas in a day or two in connection with the A.I.F.B. Conference to be held at Delhi on 22nd 23rd Dec”. 9 Akbar Shah’s visit concealed the most vital ingredient in Bose’s developing plans. The plan and the arrangements of his adventurous escape were kept strictly secret even from those who were allowed to meet him, his brother Sarat Bose and the nephew Sisir Bose were told about his programme merely two days before his exit from the house. Funds for his secret plan were collected intensively by the all India Forward Bloc from all sources and passed on to him. 10

He was also working out all the practical details of his planned escape from India with as much foresight and precision as he could. Agents of the Kirti Party were contacted and several were sent to Afghanistan and two to the Soviet Union to try to prepare the way for Bose. One of the two entering the Soviet Union died in an accident en route. Mian Akbar Shah, a member of the Forward Bloc Working

Committee, came to Calcutta and then went back to the Frontier Province, to work out the necessary contacts. Bhagat Ram Talwar, a young Indian whose family lived in the frontier area was recruited as he knew the necessary language and the frontier area well. He was considered to be the perfect companion for Bose as the Indian leader made his way across the frontier and out of British India.

Bose fixed 16th January as the day of his departure. He had already announced, and evidently convinced his largely ignorant family, that he was going into seclusion to pray and meditate. Part of his large bedroom was partitioned with screens, leaving a small aperture for the cook to serve the food. Nobody was to disturb him while he was in retreat. To make the impression complete, Bose decided to have a ritualistic family dinner. On the evening of 16th January, then after the meal as his family retired, Bose disappeared behind the curtains to begin his ‘retreat’

Only four people remained—his niece Illa and his nephews Aurobindo, Dwijendranath and Sisir who arrived with the car in which he escaped. At night 1.30 a.m. of 16th / 17th January 1941, when all the members of the family including the servants went to sleep, Bose disguised as Mohammed Ziauddin, Travelling Inspector, Empire of India Life Assurance Company Limited- permanent address: Civil Lines, Jubbalpore. Sisir and Aurobindo trooped into to the car with him and Bose was driven away.11

Bose had left a number of letters bearing different dates and address to different people, to be posted gradually according to their dates, after his departure, to give an impression that he was writing letters as usual from his seclusion. He had also left a number of slips roughly scribbled in casual manner, informing his inability to meet anyone as he was observing complete silence in connection with his meditation.12

4.3 Activities in Kabul

After the midnight of 16th January 1941, Bose started the greatest adventure of his life for achieving the liberation of India with the help of an organised army and support of anti-British foreign powers. Bose reached Peshawar on 19th January as Maulvi Mohammed Ziauddin and left for Kabul after the arrangements were made, accompanied by Bhagat Ram Talwar who passed as Rahmat Khan. In Kabul, which was the hub of international intelligence during Second World War, Bose faced an agonizing wait in the pursuit of his life’s aim. Upon arrival in the Afghan capital on 31st January, Rahmat Khan and his deaf-mute relative Ziauddin had found lodging in a serai (inn) near the Lahori Gate. During the first few days in Kabul, Bhagat Ram alias Rahmat Khan made a couple of futile attempts to establish contact with the Soviet Ambassador.  

In the beginning Bose was not interested in going to either Berlin or Rome. He had a desire to go to Russia and seek Russian help as it was an anti-British power. This hope was further strengthened by the signing of the non-aggression pact between Germany and Russia in 1939, which was known as The Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, named after the Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov and the German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop. It was a pact under which the Soviet Union and Germany pledged to remain neutral in the event of either nation being attacked by a third party. In Bose’s view, Russia was the only country which could help to liberate India. So he tried his best not to go anywhere else other than Moscow.

Meanwhile, in Calcutta, on 26th January 1941, at Bose’s Elgin road home, it was discovered that Bose had disappeared. The news of Bose’s disappearance was published in two friendly newspapers, the Ananda Bazaar Patrika and the Hindusthan Standard, on the morning of January 27. It was then picked up by Reuters and transmitted to the world, leaving British Intelligence officers embarrassed and bewildered. The police arrived at the Elgin Road home and stated questioning everyone. One agent reported that Subhas Chandra Bose had left his home on 25th

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January for Pondicherry, to join his old friend Dilip Kumar Roy in religious seclusion. Sarat and Sisir made subtle efforts to propagate the renunciation theory. An anxious telegram from Gandhi elicited a three-word reply from Sarat; “Circumstances indicate renunciation.” But he would not deliberately mislead Rabindranath Tagore, who had stood by Bose during his political battles with Gandhi in 1939. “May Subhas receive your blessing wherever he may be,” was the cable Tagore received from Sarat in response to his query.15

The police could see that Prabhabati was genuinely disconsolate. Most of the police officers and intelligence agents floundered and blamed one another. J.V.B. Janvrin, the deputy commissioner of police of the Special Branch in Calcutta, believed there were “grave reasons to doubt” that sudden religious fervor was the “true explanation” for Bose’s disappearance. On 27th January Janvrin forwarded to Delhi an intercepted letter, dated 23rd January, from the amateurish Aurobindo to a colleague, saying the reason he could not accept an invitation to travel outside Bengal would become evident on 27th January. But this error brought the police no closer to fathoming what had really taken place. One report from Punjab claimed to know of a plot to fly Bose toward Russia. Another conjectured that Bose’s friend Nathalal Parikh, who had visited from Bombay in December, may have got him a false passport to travel to Japan. There was serious speculation that Bose may have left Calcutta on 17th January on a ship called the Thaisung, which had sailed for Penang, Singapore and Hong Kong.

While Governor Herbert considered Bose’s disappearance a convenience, Viceroy Linlithgow believed that Bose’s escape reflected very poorly on those who were responsible for keeping him under surveillance. Richard Tottenham, of the Home Department in Delhi, categorically stated that the government had “wanted to prevent Bose from doing harm within India or abroad,” and also that “Bose had hoodwinked the police.” “How he arranged to escape and where he now is,” he wrote on 13th February, “is still a mystery.” Tottenham told Linlithgow that Herbert “was by no means proud of the performance.” The other alternative was that Bose had gone abroad to seek foreign help for his country’s freedom. “He would never, I think,

Janvrin, the deputy commissioner of police of the Special Branch in Calcutta, concluded, “cease to strive his utmost to achieve what has been his life’s aim, the complete independence of India.”

There is evidence in the form of a British Intelligence report that Gandhi told a Congress gathering in Bombay that the Forward Bloc is a tremendous organisation in India, and that Bose has risked much for India; but if he means to set up a government in India then he will have to resisted.

In Kabul, Bose had to stay nearly two months before he could secure help from the Italian Consul. During his stay in Kabul he was immensely helped by Uttam Chand, an Indian businessman there. The delay in Kabul made Bose so desperate that he thought it is better to risk smuggling himself into the Russian border and imprisoned in Russia then rot in Kabul. It was only when the Soviet avenue closed that Bose turned to the prospect of seeking assistance from the Axis embassies in Kabul. Uttam Chand, who was eventually deported by the Afghan government and was imprisoned and put into solitary confinement by the British, later recalled that Bose did not view this idea with any confidence either. “For forty-five days Bose was with me and not once, during this period did I hear one good word for the Axis from his lips. He hated them as much as the British”

Even after the Russian Ambassador in Kabul and the Russian Government refused him all help, he was not prepared to believe that he was not wanted in Russia. While reiterating his absolute preference for Russia, he blamed the organisers of his exile who had failed to provide him a person having an earlier contact with the Soviet Embassy. He consoled himself, thinking that the Russian Legation in Berlin or Rome might be able to arrange for his going to Moscow.

Bose then decided to take matters into his own hands; the only alternative left for him was an approach to the Germans. Germany had been engaged in a life and death struggle, since September 1939. But by the end of 1940, Germany had a control

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16 Ibid., pp. 194-195.
19 Uttam Chand, When Bose was Ziauddin, New Delhi: Rajkamal Publishers, 1946, p. 76.
over the situation and consolidated her position. The entry of Italy into the war on the side of Germany was not received with enthusiasm as the performance of Italian army was very poor and it was considered more as liability than as asset. Germany’s war front had considerably expanded and with the entry of Italy in the war, there had to be a further extension of the warfront, as she was required to send some of her best troops to the North Africa and the Balkan countries. It was Germany and not the Soviet Union that was at war with Britain, and there were Indian prisoners-of-war in German and Italian custody. And the Soviet Union was having a non-aggression pact with Germany. The German minister in Kabul, Hans Pilger, cabled the German foreign minister in Berlin on 5th February: “Advised Bose urgently about the local Afghan security system after he had visited me rashly at the embassy, asked him to keep himself hidden amongst Indian friends in the bazaar and contacted the Russian Ambassador on his behalf.” The Russian envoy had expressed a rather bizarre suspicion that there might be a British plot behind Bose’s wish to travel through Russia-a plan to engender conflict between Russia and Afghanistan. Hans Pilger, German Minister in Afghanistan, therefore thought it was “indispensable to take up the matter with Moscow as a follow-up for making the journey possible.” He added that the Italian ambassador in Kabul had already informed Rome. On 8th February the Italian charge’d affaires in Berlin spoke to Ernst Woermann of the German Foreign Ministry offering Italy’s good offices in Moscow to facilitate Bose’s journey to Germany via Russia. If the German foreign minister permitted that step, Woermann wrote that the Italian ambassador “should get in touch with Count Schulenburg”, the German ambassador in Moscow.

Until clearance was obtained from the highest levels in Berlin and Moscow, Bose was to stay in touch with the Germans in Kabul through Herr Thomas of the Siemens Company. Life in the serai was becoming increasingly hazardous for Ziauddin and Rahmat Khan. A suspicious Afghan policeman had been frequenting the inn and had to be bribed first with money and then reluctantly with Bose’s gold

21 Ibid., p. 230.
wristwatch, a present from his father. The delay in getting a clear signal from Germany led Bhagat Ram in desperation to consider sending Bose across to the Soviet Union, with the aid of an absconder from Peshawar who lived near the Afghan-Soviet border.25

At this juncture, a message was received from Herr Thomas of Siemens that Bose should meet the Italian ambassador, Pictro Quaroni, if he wished to take his plans forward. Bose arrived at the Italian legation on the evening of 22nd February 1941, and held discussions with Quaroni. Quaroni was deeply impressed by Bose and his plan and he spoke very highly of Bose in his letter to his Government and suggested that all help should be given to him. Reporting about Bose, the Italian Minister said; “intelligent, able, full of passion and without doubt the most realistic, may be the only realist among the Indian nationalist leaders.”26 They considered alternative ways of getting out of Afghanistan. Quaroni was expecting a couple of Italian diplomatic couriers; one of them could give Bose his passport to use if the Russians agreed to provide a transit visa, or Bose might have to travel to Europe through Iran and Iraq.

On 27th February 1941, the British intercepted and decoded an Italian telegram dated 23rd February that suggested their elusive enemy might be in Kabul. On 7th March, Britain’s Special Operations Executive (hereafter ‘SOE’) informed its representatives in Istanbul and Cairo that Bose “was understood to be traveling from Afghanistan with vital information to Germany via Iran, Iraq and Turkey” and asked them “to wire what arrangements they could make for his assassination.”27 But Bose did not take the Middle Eastern route. On 3rd March, Count Schulenburg, the German ambassador, cabled Berlin from Moscow: “The Commissariat for External Affairs informs that the Soviet government is ready to give Subhas Bose the visa for journey from Afghanistan to Germany through Russia. The Commissariat has been requested to instruct the Soviet Embassy in Kabul accordingly.”28

Bose was at this time keeping himself busy writing a lengthy political tract justifying his political choices. Drawing on Hegelian dialectics, he argued that in each phase of history, there was a need for a leftist antithesis to a rightist thesis, and that the melding of the two would result in a higher synthesis. Interestingly, he suggested that Gandhi in his “Young India” phase (1920-1922) represented the leftist antithesis to the rightist thesis embodied in moderate constitutionalism. He reiterated his two criteria for “genuine leftism” in Indian politics: uncompromising anti-imperialism in the current phase, and socialist reconstruction once political independence had been won. Having abandoned his fledgling pressure group within the Congress-the Forward Bloc-to raise an army of liberation abroad, he expressed a pious hope that “history will separate the chaff from the grain—the pseudo-Leftists from the genuine Leftists.” He claimed that his Forward Bloc had “saved the Congress from stagnation and death” helped “bring the Congress back to the path of struggle, however inadequately” and “stimulated the intellectual and ideological progress of the Congress.” He asserted that, “in fullness of time,” it would succeed in “establishing Leftist ascendancy in the Congress so that the future progress of the latter (the Congress) may continue unhampered.” The “pseudo-Leftists,” he charged, “conveniently forget the imperialist character of Britain’s war and also the fact that the greatest revolutionary force in the world, the Soviet Union, has entered into a solemn pact with the Nazi Government.”

The Germans, Russians, and Italians had come together to clear Bose’s path out of Afghanistan, enabling him to avoid the ambush being plotted by British assassins. Around 10th March 1941, Mrs. Quarone, the aristocratic Russian wife of the Italian ambassador, came to Uttam Chand’s shop with a message for Bose. He had to be photographed and needed a new set of clothes. His photograph would be pasted onto the passport of Orlando Mazzotta, an Italian diplomatic courier, and Ziauddin would soon have a new identity. On the night of 17th March, Bose was shifted to the home of Signor Crescini, one of the Italian diplomats. He handed over his political thesis, postdated 22nd March; a message to his countrymen from “somewhere in Europe”; and a personal letter in Bengali, to be delivered by Bhagat Ram to his brother Sarat or his nephew Sisir in Calcutta. Having acquired the passport No.

647932 dated 10th March 1941 of Orlando Mazzotta, he set off from Kabul by car before dawn, accompanied by a German engineer named Wenger and two others. He crossed the mountain passes of the Hindu Kush range and crossed the Afghan frontier at the River Oxus, before driving on to the city of Samarkand. From there, Bose and his companions travelled by train to Moscow. “Bose possessing an Italian passport under the name of Orlando Mazzotta dropped in at the embassy today:” Count Schulenburg cabled from Moscow on 31st March 1941, adding that Bose intended “to call immediately at the Foreign Office”30 on his arrival in Berlin.

4.4 Bose in Germany

Bose had flown into the German capital Berlin via Moscow on 2nd April 1941. About his secret journey from Kabul there was an understanding, through their legations in Kabul, between German and Italian Governments and also the Soviet Government. A very small official circle was informed about the identity of Bose. The German foreign Office with the Information Section, added to it during the war, was assigned the task of looking after him, on his arrival in Germany. That office was directed by Dr. Adam-von-Trott assisted by Dr. Alexander Werth. Fortunately, both of those two authorities possessed certain amount of knowledge about the developments in India and also the problems of the Indian National Congress at that time and they were not Nazis.31 They took pains to acquire for him a rank and position befitting his personality and prestige and they tried best to guard him against unpleasant contacts with the Nazis. They temporarily established his headquarters at the Hotel Excelsior where he was lodged in the beginning. The friendly group of the officials in the German Foreign Office were aware of the fact that Hitler himself did not have any knowledge about India or the Indian people and their problems and that he looked at India through English eyes. Moreover, race and colour bias was there to make Hitler prone to the British white people as compared to the coloured race of the Indians, in spite of being at war against Britain. Dr. Adam von Trott and his colleagues who had taken charge of Bose from the beginning shouldered their responsibility which consisted of creating a field of action for him, keeping in mind

that he did not lose his friendly attitude towards Germans. For that reason they tried to
guard against his being looked after by the highest officials of the German
Government as they were Nazis. The German friends of Bose in the Foreign Office
succeeded in their efforts to make Bose feel that the work planned by him will be
supported by the German Government after consideration and tried their best to help
him in all respects.  

It was ironic to find Bose, the man who had espoused left-wing socialist
views as president of the Indian National Congress in 1938 and 1939, in wartime
Berlin. But the reason lay in the prisoners-of-war camps of Germany and Italy. For
two long decades, he had seen how the soldiers in Britain’s Indian Army had
remained untouched by anti-colonial mass movements. They gladly did the bidding of
their colonial masters, working to extinguish the fires of anti-colonial revolts across
the globe. The British Empire could count on Indian soldiers’ loyalty to the king-
emperor. Yet Bose wondered whether a larger cause -that of Indian independence-
could be introduced to them as an alternative to the oath they had taken to buttress the
Empire. The question had occurred to anti-colonial revolutionaries, but attempts to
wean soldiers away from imperial service had achieved limited success during the
First World War The crisis of an even bigger international war provided another
opportunity to do so. Once Indian soldiers began to fall into the hands of Britain’s
enemies, it was possible to imagine a concerted effort to turn them against their rulers.
An army of liberation raised outside India could potentially serve as a catalyst for
another mass movement within the country. Bose was convinced that an armed
struggle in aid of the non-violent agitation at home was imperative to bring the British
Raj to its knees. By stepping in Berlin Bose seemed to have slapped on the Face of
British.

The day Bose arrived in Berlin; Quaroni sent a favorable report to Rome on
Bose’s proposals about India. As a “first step,” Bose wanted “to constitute in Europe a
‘Government of Free India’, something on the lines of the various free governments
that have been constituted in London.” Quaroni had asked Bose about “the

32 Lt. Manwati Arya, Patriot The Unique Indian Leader Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, New Delhi:
33 Sugata Bose, His Majesty’s Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India’s struggle against empire,
possibilities in the field of terrorism.” According to Quaroni’s report, Bose had replied that “the terroristic organization of Bengal and other similar ones in different parts of India still exist,” and that he was “not much convinced of the usefulness of terrorism.” He was, however, prepared to consider sending instructions about “large-scale sabotage” to impede Britain’s war effort. The encounter with Bose had convinced Quaroni about the value of using the “revolution weapon” with regard to India, “the corner-stone of the British Empire.”

Just a week later, on 9th April, Bose submitted a detailed memorandum with an explanatory note to the German government, setting out the work to be done in Europe, Afghanistan, the Tribal Territory and India. He pointed out that the “overthrow of British power in India can, in its last stages, be materially assisted by Japanese policy in the Far East.” He wrote with prescience: “A defeat of the British Navy in the Far East including the smashing up of the Singapore base will automatically weaken British military strength and prestige in India.” Yet he felt that a prior agreement between the Soviet Union and Japan would both pave the way for a settlement with China and free up Japan to move confidently against the British in Southeast Asia.

At a meeting with the German foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, at the Imperial Hotel in Vienna on 29th April 1941, Bose was disappointed to hear that the German government felt it would be premature to accept his plan. He suggested that significant numbers of Indian prisoners-of-war captured in North Africa could be organized into an effective fighting force against the British. Ribbentrop responded that the time for such action had not yet come and he refused to make a public statement in support of Indian independence. When Bose probed further, saying the Indians were concerned that Britain might accept defeat in Europe but hold on to its empire in India, the German foreign minister expressed the opinion that the British, having refused Hitler’s olive branch, had doomed their empire. Asked about the Indian attitude toward Germany, Bose “wanted to admit in all frankness that feeling against National Socialists and the fascists had been rather strong in India,” because

they were seen as “striving to dominate the other races.” The Foreign Minister “interjected at this point that National Socialism merely advocated racial purity, but not its rule over other races.” Bose’s first encounter with a senior German minister was not a happy one.

Immediately after his meeting with Ribbentrop, Bose realised that he had not sufficiently emphasised the importance of a declaration on India. He was convinced that such a declaration was indispensable in the absence of a government. Not only would it help legitimise his presence in Berlin and reassure Indian public opinion, but it would also deflect potential Congress criticism. On 3rd May Bose submitted a supplementary memorandum in which he asked the Axis powers to make a clear declaration of policy regarding the freedom of India and the Arab countries. The British Empire constitutes the greatest obstacle not only in the path of India’s Freedom but also in the path of human progress. Since the attitude of the Indian people is intensely hostile to the British in the present war, it is possible for them to materially assist in bringing about the overthrow of Great Britain. India’s cooperation could be secured by the Axis Powers if the Indian people are assured that an Axis victory will mean for them a free India. The anti-British revolt in Iraq had just occurred and he urged the Germans to support the Iraqi government. “For the success of the task of exterminating British power and influence from the countries of the Near and the Middle East,” he wrote, “it is desirable that the status quo between Germany and the Soviet Union should be maintained.”

Then delineating his plans to be executed with the co-operation and help of the German Government, he states, “It will entail work in Europe, in Afghanistan, in the Independent Tribal Territory lying between Afghanistan and Indian and last but not least, in India.” He also discussed four possible routes for opening up a channel of communication between Germany and India; of those four, he favored the one going through Russia and Afghanistan. An invasion spearheaded by an Indian legion from the traditional northwesterly direction, he believed, would greatly help India’s unarmed freedom fighters at home.

36 Ibid., p. 204.
37 Ibid., pp. 204-205.
The works proposed to be done in Europe, under his own control were:

2. A treaty to be signed between the Axis Powers and the Free India Government providing for India’s independence in the event of an Axis victory and special facilities for the Axis Powers in India, when an independent government is set up there.
3. Legations of the Free India Government to be established in friendly countries, with the intention of convincing the Indian people that their independence has been granted by the Axis Powers and that the status of independence is being already recognized.
4. A Free India Radio Station to be set up in Germany for propaganda and for guiding the people in India to rise in revolt against the British Raj.
5. Arrangements for sending necessary requirements to India through Afghanistan to help the revolution in India.”

The Congress was not interested in this program as it would undermine the political program of the INC.

The help required by India were mentioned as follows: Work in Afghanistan (Kabul): A centre in Kabul to maintain communications between Europe on one side and India on the other to be set up and also to equip that centre with means of transport and communication including special messengers. Work in the Tribal Territory: Indian revolutionary agents already working in the independent Tribal Territory between Afghanistan and India to be coordinated to plan an attack on British military centres on a large scale, to help the insurgent work led by the tribal leader, Fakir of Ipi, active in the North West Frontier Province area to instigate the revolt of the people in India and to send some military advisor from Europe to the Tribal Territory. Strong propaganda work, relevant printing centre and radio transmitting station with necessary equipment was to be installed in the Tribal Territory and also

agents from Tribal Territory were to be appointed for procuring military intelligence from the Frontier Province of India adjoining the Tribal Territory.40

The work planned in the memoranda to be done in India was: Broadcasting on a large scale from stations in Europe and later from the Tribal Territory as well as in India secretly. The printing centre in the Tribal Territory was to be in charge of propaganda in India also. The members of his party Forward Bloc in India were to be instructed from the European and Tribal Territory bases to see that the Indian people refrain from giving any men, money or material to the British Government, and to instigate the Indian people to defy the civil authorities by refusing to pay taxes and also to refuse obeying orders and laws of the British Government. They were also to do secret work to induce Indian Section of the British Army to rise in revolt, organize strikes in factories producing war materials for the war efforts of Britain, carry out sabotage of strategic bridges, factories etc., to prepare for a general mass revolution by organizing revolts by civil population in different places.41

The necessary finance for all the work mentioned above was to be provided by the Axis Powers in the form of loan to the Free India government in Europe with clear understanding that it would be repaid in full when an independent Government is set up in India. Informing about the British Military strength in India, he wrote that a force of 50,000 with full modern equipment provided by the Axis Powers to fight in collaboration with the revolting Indian troops could surely vanquish the 70,000 strong British troops present in India.

He further detailed explanatory notes on the following points:

2. Future of the British Empire as considered by the Indians.
3. The importance of India in the British Empire.
4. Some aspects of British Diplomacy in the present war.
5. The attitude of the Indian people in the present war as compared with their attitude in the World War 1914-18.

40 Ibid., p. 135.
41 Ibid., p. 135.
6. The Military Position in India today.

7. The importance, for India, of Japanese foreign policy in the Far East.”

Before implementing any of his plans, Bose demanded that the tripartite powers make an unambiguous and unequivocal declaration recognizing Indian independence. In the latter half of May, he wrote up a draft of such a declaration and tried his best to get the German and Italian governments to issue it publicly. The Germans and Italians gave various excuses for delaying it. One reason for this prevarication was that the tripartite powers had tacitly agreed that India was within the Russian sphere of influence, and they could not at this stage publicly repudiate that position.

Hitler approved Bose’s request for declarations on India and Arab nations, realising that they would politically reinforce his directive by furthering anti-British sentiment and mobilising public opinion alongside Germany; but postponed any concrete decision in favour of it. Though the well thought-out and informative memoranda of Bose produced a far-reaching effect on the higher echelons of the German Government, it took a long time to be considered and put into action. Hitler was still debating whether to set up an Indian government but in the end instructed the Foreign Office to shelve it indefinitely and the most the Foreign Office came up with as a substitute was a ‘Free India Centre’ or an Indian Independence Committee. Bose, being a seriously devoted activist eager to get things done as early as possible, repeated his request to start putting his plans into action. As a result, the “Working Group, India” of the Information Department in the German Foreign Office, with the full support of the Political Department, started looking for Indian co-workers in Germany and in the neighbouring countries as well as in the Indian Prisoners of War Camps all over Europe. They also felt the necessity of recruiting German specialists on India to help the work. They could do so only if the Army Headquarters could permit and free the capable men from their military duties. Eventually, the ‘Working Group, India’ managed to lay the foundation of the ‘Special Department, India which

42 Ibid., p. 136.
43 Sugata Bose, His Majesty’s Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India’s struggle against empire, New Delhi: Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd, 2011, pp. 204 -205.
ultimately took up the entire responsibility of helping Bose in realizing his objectives.\footnote{45}{Lt. Manwati Arya, \textit{Patriot The Unique Indian Leader Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose}, New Delhi: Lotus Press, 2007, pp. 132-133.}

In April 1941, Bose asked Emilie Schenkl to come and join him in Berlin. “Please write at once to Orlando Mazzotta, Hotel Nurnberger Hof, near Anhalter Bahnhof, Berlin,” he urged. “Please give my best regards to your mother and greetings to your sister.” In a short while Emilie joined him in Berlin.\footnote{46}{Sugata Bose, \textit{His Majesty’s Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India’s struggle against empire}, New Delhi: Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd, 2011, p. 199.} Bose made no public announcement of his marriage to his Austrian Secretary, Emilie. Neither did he discuss or mention his wife to any of his Indian co-revolutionaries, either in Berlin or south-east Asia. None of them could acknowledge Bose’s marriage. It must have been because Bose accurately gauged the probable negative impact of the news of his marriage to a foreign national on his Indian followers that he kept the whole thing secret.\footnote{47}{Joyce Chapman Lebra, \textit{The Indian National Army and Japan}, Singapore: ISEAS, 2008, p. 113.} Even though Bose desired to see Emilie, the personal was always subordinate to the political for him. For Indian anti-colonial activists, Berlin was not just the capital of Germany, but a strategic diasporic space they had inhabited since the Swadeshi era at the beginning of the twentieth century, in their efforts to undermine the British Raj. Bose would not hesitate to leave Berlin, however, if he could not extract the right terms for India’s independence or if circumstances changed.\footnote{48}{Sugata Bose, \textit{His Majesty’s Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India’s struggle against empire}, New Delhi: Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd, 2011, pp. 199-200.}

The exigencies of the Second World War gave rise to strange alliances, none stranger than the ones that led the arch-imperialist Winston Churchill to make common cause with Josef Stalin, and the uncompromising anti-imperialist Bose to shake hands with Adolf Hitler. When Bose escaped from India, Germany and the Soviet Union still had a nonaggression pact. The internal politics of European states had little to do with international alliances. Britain and France, the countries that held sway over the two largest colonial empires, had entered the war in September 1939 in defense of Poland that had a dictatorial regime at that time. Their slogans of freedom and democracy sounded hollow to their colonial subjects. By June 1940, the German \textit{Blitzkrieg} had overrun France. Paris had fallen to Hitler’s army, and the German
Luftwaffe was conducting relentless bombing raids on London, the first city of the British Empire.

“When the Nazi hordes crossed the German frontier into Holland and Belgium only the other day with the cry of ‘nach Paris’ on their lips,” Bose wrote on 15th June 1940, “who could have dreamt that they would reach their objective so soon?” He went on to “make a guess” about the terms of agreement that the Soviet Union might arrange with Germany and Italy: Germany would be given a free hand on the Continent, minus the Balkans; Italy would have been preeminence in the Mediterranean region; and the Russian sphere of influence would include the Balkans and the Middle East. Though this was an accurate assessment of what the Russians and even the German military brass might find acceptable, Bose miscalculated on the predilections of the German Fuhrer. Hitler was not prepared to cede the Balkans to the Russian sphere of influence.

During the first six months of 1940 the chief of the German High Command, General Alfred Jodi, had drawn up plans for coordinated German and Soviet action in Afghanistan and India. The Germans were already funding the Faqir of Ipi and inciting his tribal followers on India’s northwest frontier to harass the British in Waziristan. When Germany, Japan and Italy signed a tripartite pact on 27th September 1940, India was deemed to be within the Russian zone of influence. The Soviet Union, however, was less interested in India and more concerned about retaining its traditional upper hand in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Molotov may have signed the German-Soviet pact with Ribbentrop in 1939, but on a November 1940 visit to Berlin the Soviet foreign minister refused to yield on Europe. Faced with Molotov’s determined effort to undermine his designs, Hitler made up his mind to invade the Soviet Union. By contrast, Japan’s relations with Russia improved as the “strike north” group in Japanese strategic thinking lost out to the advocates of striking south against Britain in Southeast Asia and the United States in the Pacific.

By the time Bose escaped from India, in January 1941, the German war machine might have seemed unstoppable in Western Europe, but he did not know that the German-Soviet pact was nearing an end. In addition to wanting to get first-hand information on the course of the war and mobilizing Indian soldiers and civilians
abroad for a final assault on the British Raj, Bose gave another reason to his followers for coming to Germany: in the event Germany signed a separate peace with a battered but undefeated Britain, he wanted a strong Indian voice to defend India’s interests at the negotiating table. Otherwise, he feared that India would become a mere pawn in the struggle between the new imperial powers and the old. “In the early part of his stay in Europe” his deputy A. C. N. Nambiar has written, “he had more fears of German victory than doubts regarding it.”

Hitler’s admiration for Britain was undiminished and he greatly preferred forging solidarity among the “Nordic races” to aligning with those he had derided as “Asiatic jugglers.” Bose’s single-minded absorption in the cause of India’s independence led him to ignore the ghastly brutalities perpetrated by the forces of Nazism and Fascism in Europe. By going to Germany, because it happened to be at war with Britain, he ensured that his reputation would long be tarred by the blame that was due the Nazis. A pact with the devil: such was the terrible price of freedom.

As the work planned by Bose proceeded very slowly, he became impatient and rather agitated over the indifference, as he thought, shown by the German Government towards his memoranda and the appeal therein. So in the last week of May 1941, he decided to visit Rome to gauge the attitude of the Italian Government regarding the Indian problems, in view of his three better and more cordial meetings with Benito Mussolini during his visits in the 1930’s. His plan of this journey was to spend the month of June in meeting influential people of the Italian Government in order to see if they could help in expediting the execution of his plans with German help and then spend some time at Badgastein and Vienna in Austria to mark time till something was done by his German friends in the Foreign Office at Berlin. He was accompanied by his wife Emilie Schenkl in his capacity as the personal assistant.

On 28th May 1941, Bose and Emilie Schenkl left for a visit to Rome via France. There he met some French leaders sympathetic to the Indian national cause and contacted A.C.N. Nambiar, his journalist friend who had taken refuge in the

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university town of Montpellier in France, after the occupation of Paris by the German Forces. Nambiar was an Indian patriot who had worked, since the First World War, with the Indian Committee with which the Indian militant nationalist exiles such as Raja Mahendra Pratap, M.N. Roy, Maulana Barkatullah, Virendra Nath Chattropadhyay and many others were associated. Bose was keen on securing the cooperation of Nambiar in his work at Berlin. He reached Rome on 14th June and received a grand reception befitting the Head of a State. Mussolini received him personally on the following day. Dr. Ernst von Woermann, the Director of the Political Department and like many others in the German Foreign Office repugnant to Nazism, had instructed the German Embassy in Rome to provide Bose with funds as much as he would need.52

The Italian Foreign Minister Count Galeazzo Ciano, the son-in-law of Mussolini, did not like Bose’s preference to be closer to the Germans; though Bose had only wanted to avail for his Indian Legion the benefit of superior German training, weaponry and military expertise. However, Mussolini, having met him thrice during the period of his exile in Europe in 1933-36 and being aware of his revolutionary ideas, was very warm-hearted towards him. He, being free from the sense of racial superiority that the Nazis had, admired Bose for his intelligence, wide knowledge and his magnetic personality so much as to establish a rapport with him. In contrast to him, Hitler did not receive Bose till then, precisely to avoid any definite commitment.53

Bose’s overall plan nevertheless suffered from lack of realism as it expected too much of the Germans. He simply assumed that they shared his preoccupation with destroying the British Empire. What he failed to realise was that they were engaged in preparing an entirely different operation in East, Code-named Barbarossa, intended in Hitler’s words to ‘crush Soviet Russia in a rapid campaign’. India and the British Empire were, and would remain, peripheral to strategy. Not aware of German planning, Bose naively assumed that the war would remain an Anglo-German one.54 This was consistent with the flawed manner in which he essentially perceived things

52 Ibid., p. 137.
54 Romain Hayes, Bose in Nazi Germany, U.P. India: Random House Publisher India Pvt. Ltd, 2011, pp. 33-34.
from a purely Indian Nationalism perspective, little troubled by German interests. His theoretical formula ‘the enemy of my enemy is my friend’ was not so simple, however, when applied practically. On the positive side, the audacity of Bose’s plan ensured that it at least received attention and that something of substance might well emerge from it. It certainly forced bureaucrats at the Foreign Office to do what they had failed to do so far—namely develop a comprehensive policy on India.55

In June 1941, long after Bose had safely reached Europe, the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in Istanbul sought confirmation of the continuing validity of the March order from London to assassinate him. In late May, Delhi had informed London that they had thought Bose “would be used for Radio Propaganda from Russia, Italy or Germany, but nothing of the sort has eventuated.” They believed, therefore, that Bose might still be in Afghanistan, and wondered “whether demand should be presented to Afghan Government to deal with him under rules of practice.”56 It was on 13th June that SOE in Istanbul inquired whether the assassination order was still in effect. Sir Frank Nelson, the chief of SOE, was reported to be “in a minority of one at that morning’s meeting in insisting that it should be referred to the Foreign Office. He said he was sure the Secretary of State for India [L. S. Amery], who was also interested in this question, would not take kindly to Sir Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen [the British ambassador to Turkey] objecting to Bose being liquidated on Turkish territory.” Reconfirmation of the assassination decision having been obtained, London cabled SOE in Istanbul telling their operative Gardyne de Chastelain that “the Foreign Office agreed to the liquidation of Bose being carried out on Turkish territory,” but that Gardyne de Chastelain should tell no one about this. By now, Bose was well beyond the reach of his potential assassins. Following his return from Rome and Vienna in July 1941, Bose lived with Emilie in a mansion at Sophienstrasse 7 in the Charlottenburg neighborhood of Berlin. The house had been previously occupied by the American military attaché. However, there is no reliable documentary evidence relating to this German plot.

During 1941, Bose used two channels of communication to stay in touch with family and friends in India: one went via Kabul, the other through Tokyo.

55 Ibid., p. 34.
31, Sisir, sitting at Woodburn Park in Calcutta, had received a visitor’s slip saying, “Bhagat Ram-I come from frontier.” Bhagat Ram handed over letters and documents from Bose to Sarat and Sisir, and arrangements were made to send a Bengali revolutionary, Santimoy Ganguli, to Peshawar and Kabul. The Kabul conduit, however, became compromised once Bhagat Ram revealed his German and Italian contacts to the Russians in September 1941 and began to play the role of a consummate multiple agent. The German invasion of the Soviet Union transformed the war, in the eyes of many communists and their fellow travellers, from an imperialist war to a people’s war. Bhagat Ram shed his old Forward Bloc connections to join a local organization known as the Kirti Kisan party and thus moved close to the communist line on the war. Much later, in November 1942, he would be arrested and immediately released by the British, on condition that he supply intelligence about Bose’s movements.\(^{57}\)

Bose was also able to send wireless messages from Berlin to Tokyo that were delivered to his brother Sarat by diplomats of the Japanese consulate in Calcutta. Sisir would drive the Japanese consul-general, Katsuo Okazaki, to his father’s garden house in Rishra. After Okazaki’s departure, another officer named Ota, along with his wife, wearing an Indian sari, would come to Rishra for ostensibly social visits. While the British police in Calcutta were aware that these meetings were taking place, they could do no more than speculate on the content of the conversations. The vulnerability of the Japanese telegraphic code at the highest governmental level eventually undermined the security of the messages the Bose brothers exchanged via Tokyo. A telegram from the Japanese foreign minister in Tokyo to his ambassador in Berlin—a message containing one of Sarat’s communications with Subhas, dated September 1, 1941—landed on Winston Churchill’s desk on September 5. The prime minister was assured that “the Government of India were awaiting an opportunity to arrest Sarat and the prominent members of his group.” \(^{58}\)

Toward the end of the year, Sarat Chandra Bose was able to bring about a major change in the provincial politics of Bengal. The coalition of the Krishak Praja

\(^{58}\) Ibid., p. 212.
party and the Muslim League was replaced by a new formation headed by the Krishak Praja leader, Fazlul Huq, in alliance with Sarat’s followers in the Bengal legislature. Sarat himself was slated to become the home minister, the in charge of police and law and order in Bengal. On December 11, 1941, as the new ministry of the Progressive Coalition party took office, J. V. B. Janvrin arrived at Wood-burn Park to arrest Sarat. The detainee was to be held as a prisoner in distant south India for the duration of the war. His Japanese contacts were seen to present “a very real and definite danger” to security, and Richard Tottenharn of the Home Department in Delhi was clear “that it would be impossible to contemplate having Sarat Chandra Bose as a Minister.” On December 10 a telegram had arrived from L. S. Amery, secretary of state for India, addressed to Viceroy Linlithgow and calling for the arrest of Sarat Bose “without delay.”

On the wider front of his work and achievements in Germany, Bose could still get little joy and he had begun to be worried about the attention he was receiving in the British press. On 10th November 1941, Eric Conran Smith, secretary of the Home Department of the government of India had told the Indian Council of State, one of the many bodies for Indian collaborationists of the Raj, that Bose had ‘gone over to the enemy’ and signed a pact with the Axis designed to lead to the invasion of India. This was the start of a tremendous propaganda offensive against Bose. The British press, which had so far been speculating in which ashram he was and how he had escaped, now latched on to the notion of Bose ‘the Quisling’ - a theme song that the more propagandist and imperialist papers like the Daily Express and Evening News maintained till well into the 1960s.

The Daily Mail, with a photograph of Bose under the caption ‘Indian turns traitor’, announced. ‘Indian Quisling No 1 flees to Hitler’. The Daily Express carried a photograph of Bose in a long overcoat and Gandhi cap talking to a German guard at a Berlin zoo in 1934, and the heading: ‘Indian leader plans invasion 5th Column’; while for the Empire News it was ‘Chandra Bose Haw-Haw’. ‘Suhhas Chandra Bose, India’s Quisling No. 1, is to become the Indian ‘Lord Haw-Haw’ broadcasting from

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59 Ibid., p. 212.
Berlin.\textsuperscript{60} Its amazingly ignorant correspondent informed readers that Bose had been deposed as Congress president in 1940 because Gandhi had discovered he was a German agent, been kept under house arrest, escaped (by dressing in women’s clothes; with the help of Axis agent) and finally arrived in Berlin via Afghanistan, Syria and Rome. For Bose this was a cruel moment. He could do nothing about these lies, for he was still incognito.

In the meantime, the German invasion on Soviet Russia made Bose much agitated and disappointed with Germany; and he did not join any Nazi condemnation of the Soviet Union which was ever more popular and a source of inspiration among the Indian intelligentsia. So, on his return to Berlin from Rome on 14\textsuperscript{th} July, he held discussions with Dr. Ernst Woermann, the Secretary of State in the German Foreign Office, and frankly told him about the adverse Indian reaction to the German invasion of the Soviet Union. He suggested that a declaration supporting the cause of India’s independence be made urgently to offset that adverse reaction. At first even Mussolini, as one of the members of the Axis Powers, did not support Bose’s demand in the matter; but he changed his stance after Bose’s visit in June 1941. Convinced by the arguments and persuasions made by Bose, he later telegraphed the German Government that “they proceed at once with the declaration”.\textsuperscript{61}

Though he sought help and cooperation of foreign powers for ousting the British Imperialists from India, he never bowed down before them but held his head high as equals. Bose had made it very clear that Germany would have to provide him the necessary finances in the form of loan to the Free India Provisional Government established in Germany, to be paid off in full when India would be free and set up its Independent Government in India. Being conscientiously scrupulous in money matters, Bose fell ill at ease because the financing of his work was done not by Indians. This feeling of uneasiness always gnawed him. Later in 1944, as the Head of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind in Burma, Bose remitted 5 million yen (equivalent to 200,000 Reich Marks) through the German Ambassador in Tokyo, with the full knowledge of the Japanese Government, as the first of four instalments.

\textsuperscript{60} Mihir Bose, \textit{The Lost Hero a Biography of Subhas Bose}, London: Quartet Books Limited, 1982, p. 188.
towards the repayment of the loan from the German Government to the Free India Centre in Germany.\textsuperscript{62} He impressed the Axis Powers and convinced them that it was in their interest to support the Indian cause.

On the demand of Bose for setting up an Indian Government in Exile, as Poles and others had done in London, Dr. Woermann, the Secretary of State in the German Foreign Office, remained non-committal as it required decision and provision by the Axis Powers of Germany and Italy. When he returned after his visit to Rome on 14\textsuperscript{th} July 1941, he found good progress in the work towards the fulfilment of his programmes in Berlin. A properly organized office was already set up for him by his German friends in the Foreign Office.

On 16\textsuperscript{th} October von Ribbentrop himself revived the idea of using Indian POWs for ‘broadcasting purposes in case of a possible advance into the Caucasus, into Iran, etc.’ He wanted everything to be ‘fully ready for action in about two months’. And money was no problem. As the Foreign Office note concluded, ‘In so far as funds were needed for this he was willing to make them available’. Von Ribbentrop’s views were meant for Hitler, who ‘unambiguously’ recommended the setting-up of an Indian Legion. But again the Italians intervened. A summit conference between the Free India Centre and the Italian Ufficio India in Berlin in December 1941 had agreed that work on the formation of the Indian Legion should start immediately; an infantry battalion was to be raised and all training was to take place under German command. But the Italians were tardy in releasing the Indian POWs to the Germans and despite Hitler, the German high command, continued to treat the whole exercise as an experiment.\textsuperscript{63}

Besides, the Germans had a lot to learn about Indian soldiers and the conditioning they had received under centuries of British rule. In Annaburg there were complaints about food and the disregard of caste habits. Later, German investigators researching the attitudes of Indian POWs in north Africa discovered that the British policy of isolating them from politics had worked wonderfully well; the soldiers were

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., p. 139.
indeed, as their British masters wanted, completely non-political: more interested in the Vedas than political literature. Asked why they were fighting Germany, they replied it was because ‘the present lord of India’ wished it; they had joined the army to avoid hunger. It was only the swastika on the investigator’s uniform that brought any response: it was, after all, a famous and ancient Hindu religious symbol. Worse, though the Germans had separated the Indians from their British officers they had not segregated the men from the NCOs (non-commissioned officers), who had a long history of active collaboration with the British.

So when Bose visited the Annaburg camp in December 1941, he was met with hostility and anger. Carefully coached by the collaborationist NCOs, the men refused to listen to him. But Bose was persistent and the next day, in personal interviews, some of the anger melted. The men were curious about ranks, pay, loss of British benefits, new laurels from the Germans etc. To all this, Bose’s reply was the same; that this is for India, this is not a mercenary army like the British Army and that they are fighting for a cause. But, as ever, he was a good listener, and many went away convinced of his sincerity and his cause. On his return to Berlin Bose decided to separate the NCOs from the men and sent two of his trusted workers, N.G. Swami and Abid Hasan, to the camps. The process began slowly, in December 1941 and January 1942, with the NCOs among the prisoners doing their best to prevent the ordinary soldiers from enlisting in the legion. The call of patriotic duty met with obstacles: the soldiers had taken an earlier oath to serve their British masters and they were concerned about the well-being of their families in India. It required all of Bose’s powers of persuasion to create the nucleus of India’s army of liberation.64 The fact that the Indian civilian population in Europe was quite small also made it difficult to bridge the gap between anti-colonial politics and the military mentality. For recruitment various methods were used. It was found that the most effective were the traditional ones: more money, more food, Red Cross parcels and access to women. In the end only 4,000 of the 15,000 POWs joined the Legion, only a handful of whom were officers.65

### 4.5 The Free India Centre in Germany

Soon he met with Wilhelm Kepler, the secretary of State in the Foreign Office. Kepler had been able to get due sanction of finances needed for organizing and maintaining the Free Indian Centre as desired by Bose since a long time. On 30th October 1941, the Free India Centre -Zentralstelle Freie Indien -was opened at 10 Lichtensteinallce in the Tiergarten district of central Berlin, and three days later Bose formally opened it with a short but characteristic speech. The first meeting of the Free India Centre held on 2nd November 1941, officially delineated the objectives and functional framework of the Centre, which was virtually the Free India Government in Exile in the process of developing in due course of time. The work of Bose started in full force as all the necessary requirements were met by the German Government through the Foreign Office and the friendly officials who were entrusted with the responsibilities of helping in Indian cause. Bose had other motives too for establishing an Indian government in Berlin. Where Bose was deficient was in his failure to reveal with whom he intended to constitute such a government. The few available Indians – mostly stranded journalists and university students in German-occupied Europe lacked the necessary political legitimacy with which to establish a credible government. Apart from making Indian independence a reality in the sphere of international politics, it would be one significant step on the road to independence without waiting for British approval. He thought a government would also provide an alternative to what he perceived as the politically stagnant Gandhi dominated Congress and a new pivot around which to mobilise Indian public opinion. German recognition also implied recognition of future independent Indian state. This was of critical importance at a time when Germany seemed destined to win the war.

The Free India Centre started functioning with the full status of a diplomatic mission. The next important work on which the Free India Centre set its heart, after it attempted to straighten out the many issues with German authorities, was to develop and expand daily radio broadcasts to India. The Special India Division of the German Foreign Office provided the necessary technical facilities for organisation of the

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radio-broadcast programmes. With the only exception of the technicians, the broadcasting programme of the Azad Hind Radio was completely manned by Indians. The political talks were prepared by Indians under the guidance of Bose and were exclusively on Indian subjects. The programme was transmitted on a “special independent wave length and was on no account to be mixed up with any German broadcasting programme.”\(^{68}\) The increased tempo of the war in the Far East intensified the programmes of the Azad Hind Radio. In the beginning, the programme led the German authorities to give three hours of time to the Free India Centre on the transmission line for its Indian programme. The German representative in Kabul reported that the broadcasts from the Azad Hind Radio were very popular in India and they were eagerly listened to by the people of all shades of political opinion.

Bose had an interview with the German Foreign Minister Herr Joachim von Ribbentrop on 29\(^{th}\) November 1941. Thanking him for the help extended so far, he expressed his keen desire to speed up the training of the Indian prisoners of war for the Indian Legion. The response of this meeting was prompt, positive and encouraging as the German Government agreed to treat Bose as the representative of Free India and the talks with him as binding. He expressed his desire of meeting Herr Hitler to Ribbentrop, but it took some time for it to materialise.

The circle of Indians Bose gathered around him interacted with the special India division of the German Foreign Office headed by the Oxford-educated Adam von Trott and his deputy, Alexander Werth. A Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, the aristocratic Trott was a skilled international lawyer and had travelled widely in China, Britain, and the United States. After the outbreak of the war, he had been assigned to the Foreign Office desk dealing with the United States, Britain, and the British Empire. He used this position as a cover for his anti-Nazi activities, and was later executed for his part in Claus von Stauffenberg’s failed plot, in July 1944, to assassinate Hitler. As a result of his political opposition, Werth had already suffered imprisonment at the hands of the Nazis in 1934 and subsequently went to Britain, where he was called to the bar at the Middle Temple. He was permitted to return to Germany in 1939, on condition that he joins the army; he was recruited in 1940 by the

Foreign Office because of his knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon world. These diplomats shielded the Indians, many of whom had left-leaning political beliefs, from what might have been rougher encounters with the Nazi party hierarchy. Werth believed that without Trott and his devoted team of workers at the Foreign Office, Bose would “probably not have remained in Berlin.” From the spring of 1941 onward, they met often with Bose. They “felt the strength of his will power, the honesty of his intentions and inexorability of his personal dedication to India’s cause”\textsuperscript{69}

In the beginning the number of the Indian co-workers in the Free India Centre was thirty five and they were mostly students. The number of members of the center gradually increased. In one of his trips to Rome, Paris and Prague for collecting co-workers and sympathizers, Bose contacted A.C.N. Nambiar, who had been working as a journalist in Europe for 18 years and was at the time living in the ‘unoccupied zone’ of France. Nambiar agreed to work for the Azad Hind Government or the Provisional Government of Free India in Europe. Among the Indians who joined Bose in Germany in his work to emancipate India from British control, N.G. Ganpuley is a noteworthy person. He contacted Bose immediately after his arrival in Germany and helped him in organising the Free India Centre-the Provisional Government of Free India in Europe. Ganpuley was a former member of the Congress in Bombay and had spent a considerable part of his life in Germany. Both Nambiar and Ganpuley were well acquainted with German life.\textsuperscript{70}

Ganpuley was sent frequently by Bose to Indian prisoners of war camps for persuading them to join the Legion and was connected with the formation, administration and the welfare of the members of the Legion.\textsuperscript{71} Besides Nambiar and Ganpuley there were other prominent Indians like Dr. G.K. Mookerjee and M.R. Vyas who became Bose’s closest friends and assisted him in all matters concerning broadcasting activities. In 1942 Bose appointed Nambiar as his deputy and successor. He remained in charge of all activities of the Indian Freedom Movement in Germany after Bose left for South East Asia. In this connection the names of Habibur Rahman

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., appendix. p. 190.
and N. G. Swamy also deserve to be mentioned. Both of them rendered remarkable service in organising and training the Legionaries.  

The two civilian recruiters who were sent by Bose to Annaburg Camp in 1941, N. G. Swami and Abid Hasan, had volunteered to join the military wing of the movement. Swami became the leading figure among ninety young men who received sophisticated training as members of an elite commando force at Meseritz, near Hamburg. The commander in charge of the training camp was a very capable German officer named Walter Harbich. Indian members of this unit wore a German-style uniform with a silk emblem—the Indian national tricolor with a springing tiger in the center-stitched on their left sleeve. While most wore a German field cap or helmet as headgear, Sikh soldiers wore green cloth turbans and Sikh officers were distinguished by turbans made of light-blue silk. A veteran of First World War, Harbich had the political sophistication to implement Bose’s ideas about mingling members of the different religious and linguistic communities, instead of keeping them separate, as the British had done. Bose wanted Indians to be united in the smallest tactical unit, regardless of their religious affiliation. “Contrary to the original doubts,” Harbich reported, “the result was surprisingly good.” According to a British intelligence officer who later interrogated the Meseritz recruits, “Morale, discipline and Indo-German relations were excellent” and “the German officer’s first-rate.” Hasan’s primary role was to make the initial overtures to Indian prisoners-of-war being held since early 1941 in a camp at Annaberg, near Dresden, before Bose himself came to persuade them to switch their allegiance to the cause of free India. The actual recruitment had to await the transfer of the majority of the prisoners taken in North Africa, who were being held in Italy and a formal decision by the German war office to permit the raising of an Indian legion. Once this permission came, toward the end of 1941, a second and larger training camp was established at Frankenberg, later moved to Konigsbruck, in Saxony. The Legion at Frankenberg was under the Reserve Forces

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headed by General Fromm, who, like Trott, would later be executed for his involvement in the July 1944 plot to assassinate Hitler.\footnote{Sugata Bose, \textit{His Majesty’s Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India’s struggle against empire}, New Delhi: Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd, 2011, pp. 209-210.}

In July 1942, when the supply of recruits from Annaberg had come to an end, the Germans began to threaten that the Indian Legion would be disbanded if it could not quickly be brought to battalion strength. This made it urgent to obtain many hundreds of volunteers from the new prisoners in North Africa and Bose worried the Italians until large contingents were arriving regularly in Germany. His propagandists would greet the new drafts- or even go to the Italian frontier to meet them- and prepare them for their first meeting with him. For he was quite tireless in this matter and at the height of his eloquence: “I know what you have suffered: I know how shattered you feel by the defeat of your British leaders. But to one who has seen as much of the world as I have, this defeat is not surprising: the British were lions, they are so longer; they deserve no longer your allegiance or your fear: 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 present from other nations because such 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 bring it to perfection, or spend your life in imprisonment…”\footnote{Hugh Toye, \textit{Subhas Chandra Bose: The Springing Tiger}, Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 2007, p. 73.} Observers have told of the enthusiastic response of the prisoners whose mind still bore the mark of recent calamity- quite.

The Free India Centre organised the activities of Indians who devoted themselves to work for the emancipation of India and Bose was the undisputed supreme leader who decided what kind of work was to be done and assigned work to different persons according to his judgment. There were no regular meetings and
discussion nor were there elected office-bearers.76 “Everyone was on a footing of equality in regard to money he got for living, irrespective of the kind of work he did. As the risk involved was the same for all of us, Subhas did not want to create a hierarchy...”77 The Free India Centre resolved to address Bose as ‘Netaji’ which combined both a sense of affection and respect for the national hero. Since that day Bose has come to be known as ‘Netaji’-the beloved leader. This was in keeping with the Indian tradition of expressing regard for the elders and for the national heroes. The Indian people had given such appellations like ‘Mahatma’, ‘Pandit, ‘Sardar’ and ‘Maulana’ to other national leaders too.78

Bose succeeded in convincing his German as well as Indian co-workers about the great importance of his work and was able to get their willing support and cooperation. Bose’s indomitable personality inspired them all with a “sense of mission, common objectives and mutual co-operation.”79 He was the driving spirit and the symbol of inspiration for all. “He showed his remarkable capacity of keeping thread of all the activities of his political, military and technical co-workers in his hands so that the over-all control of the whole organisation remained with him.”80

The Free India Centre established a Planning Commission and took up the work of planning for the social and economical reorganization of India after she became independent. The Centre also participated in social and political functions of international significance and maintained contact with foreign Legations, which were sympathetic to the Indian cause. The Congress tricolour with the outline of the Springing Tiger embossed on it was accepted as the insignia of the Azad Hind Movement. The image of a springing tiger, reminiscent of the eighteenth-century anti-British warrior Tipu Sultan of Mysore, replaced the charkha (“spinning wheel”) in the middle, though Bose would revert to the Gandhian symbol in Southeast Asia. After

80 Ibid., p.129.
independence, both the *charkha* and the tiger would give way to the Asokan *chakra* ("wheel"), evocative of the ancient Maurya Empire.\(^{81}\)

Rabindranath Tagore’s song—“Jana Gana Mana Adhinayak Jaya He,” seeking divine benediction for India—was adopted by Bose as the national anthem; this choice would be ratified by the Indian government after independence was achieved in 1947. Bose had played a key role in resolving the controversy surrounding the other song, “Bande Mataram,” in 1937—he had opted not to use it, since he was keen to win Muslim support. He was open to accepting Muhammad Iqbal’s song “Sare Jahan se achha Hindustan Hamara”—proclaiming the excellence of India compared to the whole world—as the national anthem, but in the end the collective decision was in favor of Tagore.\(^{82}\)

For the first time in modern Indian History, a common and universal Indian form of greeting, ‘Jai Hind’, was introduced. It may be mentioned here that when India became free, Nehru as the Prime Minister, adopted Jai Hind as the national form of greeting.\(^{83}\) Bose aimed at bringing unity in diversity and reminding the Indians about his great objective of Free India by the introduction of this common national greeting. “It has come to stay as a national greeting irrespective of caste, creed or religion.”\(^{84}\) India needed a symbol of unity that would forge a sense of oneness amongst the people who had much diversity on the basis of language, religion, culture and ethnic origin.\(^{85}\) Jai Hind (Victory to India) as a national symbol embodied “a feeling of oneness, a feeling of belonging to one national family... All earlier forms of greeting were limited and helped to nurture only a group feeling which did not bring us any nearer as nationals of a single country.”\(^{86}\)

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\(^{84}\) Ibid., p. 42


anthem and greeting were examples of Bose’s well-honed political intuition, and would be among his lasting legacies to independent India.

Bose wanted to introduce ‘Hindustani written in Roman Script’ as the official language of India for making it easy to understand for the people of different provinces and for foreigners. It is a great tribute to Bose and the small group of freedom fighters in Germany that India has adopted ‘Jana Gana Mana’ as the national anthem of independent India and Hindustani in the Devanagari script has been accepted as the Official language. The Free India Centre functioned but with some difficulties from the day of its inception due to the fact that the question of liberation of India which was Bose’s main concern “did not evoke the right sort of echo or sympathy from amongst the higher officials and leaders of the Third Reich.”

Meanwhile, Japan’s entry into the Second World War on 7th December 1941, and the rapid advance of Japanese troops across Southeast Asia against the Western Colonial powers opened up new strategic possibilities for Bose. The fall of Singapore on 15th February 1942 provided the occasion for Bose to discard his identity as Orlando Mazzotta: he made his first open broadcast to India on 19th February 1942. More than a year after his dramatic escape from India, his countrymen heard his voice: “This is Subhas Chandra Bose speaking to you over the Azad Hind Free India Radio... The fall of Singapore” he declared, “means the collapse of the British Empire, the end of the iniquitous regime which it has symbolized and the dawn of a new era in Indian history. Through India’s liberation will Asia and the world move forward towards the larger goal of human emancipation.”

The broadcasts on Azad Hind Radio usually began with the stirring English lines, “To arms, to arms, / The Heavens ring, / With the clarion call, /To Freedom’s fray”; and ended with “Our cause is just!” When Japanese forces took Rangoon from the British, Bose hailed the prospect of Burmese freedom. He derided the propaganda of the British viceroy Archibald Wavell: that India was under threat of enemy attack and that its frontiers, therefore, were at Suez and Hong Kong, which had to be

defended with Indian troops. India, Bose pointed out, had “no imaginary Wavellian frontiers,” only “a national geographical boundary determined by Providence and nature.” The British were now trying to bring “the war into India”, after having brought “India into the war” in September 1939.

Having shed his Italian disguise, Bose was ready to take full advantage of the military and psychological repercussions of the fall of Singapore. On 26th February 1942, he submitted an ambitious eleven-point plan to the tripartite powers. He had made his first broadcast on 19th February from Berlin, but that was not where he wanted to be. He wanted to go to Rangoon-the capital of Burma, soon to be freed by the Japanese-and make it the base for Indian nationalist propaganda and the springboard for Indian nationalist action. His friends in the German Foreign Office supported his efforts and a declaration in support of Indian freedom seemed on the anvil. The draft declaration produced by the German Foreign Office on 22nd February contained everything Bose could have asked for:

“Germany, Italy and Japan are convinced that the Indian nation will break the political and economic bonds of British Imperialism and then as master of its own fate will carry out a sweeping transformation of its national life for the lasting benefit of its own people and as contribution to the welfare and the peace of the world. It is no concern of the Tripartite Powers what form the Indian people, after their liberation, will in future give to their interior political organization. It is a matter to be decided upon by the Indian people themselves and their leaders what constitution is the most suitable for their country and how it is to be put into practice. The Tripartite Powers are concerned to end-on a basis of social justice-the misery and poverty of the Indian people, and to see the exploited masses assisted to a proper standard of living as well as to employment and prosperity.”

The lack of trust and coordination between Japan and Germany ensured that the moment was lost. The presence of someone of Bose’s stature on its soil gave Germany a lever not just in relation to Britain, but also in its negotiations with Japan.

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The Japanese had launched their war without caring to inform either enemies or their allies, and did not intend to follow German directives in matters to do with Asia. Japan wanted Germany to give up its obsession with the Soviet Union and instead concentrate its military might on the British in the Suez. The naval commands of both Japan and Germany wished to establish a link across the Indian Ocean. If this could be done, “the war would be practically won and the British Empire would be finished.”92 This breakthrough, according to the naval strategists, had to “occur soon in order to bring the war to a speedy and happy conclusion.”93 The Japanese even advocated a separate peace between Germany and the Soviet Union, to facilitate Germany’s ability to focus on the Mediterranean and link up with the Japanese in the Indian Ocean. Hitler, however, would not entertain the possibility of a truce on the Eastern Front and was determined to wrestle once more with the Soviet Union during the summer. With Germany and Japan out of sync, Ribbentrop turned down Bose’s request that he be permitted to travel to Asia. Bitter at being let down yet again, Bose left Berlin in a huff for Badgastein. When the Germans sent an emissary to persuade him to return, Bose denounced their lack of seriousness about Indian independence and suggested that he and the Indian cause were being used as a bargaining chip for a possible German compromise with the British.

In India, Gandhi now shared Bose’s perspective on the war that the Viceroy was trying to bring the war into India. Though Bose had failed to persuade Gandhi to issue an ultimatum to the British in 1939, the British debacle at the hands of the Japanese in Southeast Asia emboldened Gandhi to prepare for a final showdown with the British Raj. Gandhi believed that India could be spared the devastation of war if the British left India. He was confident of his ability to negotiate with the Japanese who would have no reason to enter India if it was rid of the British presence. He regarded the “ordered anarchy” represented by the British Raj to be worse than “real anarchy.” In the spring of 1942, the apostle of nonviolence was even “prepared to take the risk of violence” to end “the great calamity of slavery.”94

93 Ibid., p. 216.
From October 1941, the Japanese ambassador in Berlin, Lieutenant General Oshima Hiroshi, and the military attache, Colonel Yamamoto Bin, had been holding meetings with Bose. The Japanese military victories in Southeast Asia, Bose’s activities abroad, and Gandhi’s increasingly militant mood combined to cause great nervousness among British war leaders. Winston Churchill came under pressure from the U.S. president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and from his own Labour party colleagues in the British government to do something to conciliate Indian nationalist opinion. Stafford Cripps had returned from a successful stint as British ambassador to Moscow and had joined the cabinet a few days after the fall of Singapore. The British viceroy in India, Lord Linlithgow, was a hard-liner opposed to any concessions to Indian demands. In late January he had reported the existence of “a large and dangerous 5th column in Bengal, Assam, Bihar and Orissa,” and said he regarded the “potential of pro-enemy sympathy and activity in Eastern India” to be “enormous.”95 “Sarat Bose has been a lesson,” the viceroy told L. S. Amery, the secretary of state for India.96 “India and Burma,” Linlithgow wrote in prose that would have made Macaulay proud, “have no natural association with the empire, from which they are alien by race, history and religion, and for which as such neither of them have any natural affection, and both are in the empire because they are conquered countries, which have been brought there by force, kept there by our controls, and which hitherto it has suited to remain under our protection.”97 After the British surrendered at Singapore and fled from Rangoon, Linlithgow’s candid observations sounded more like stubbornness in London. With utmost reluctance, the British prime minister agreed to send Cripps on a mission to India, hoping both that it would placate his ally across the Atlantic and that it would fail.

An Indian compromise with the British Raj, however, was something that Bose was not prepared to allow without having his say on the matter. He came back to Berlin to wage a propaganda battle against the Cripps mission. On 24th March 1942, British news agencies reported that Bose had been killed in an air crash on his way to attend an important conference in Tokyo. Having heard the news of his own death on 95 G.S Chhabra, *Advance Study in the History of Modern India (1920-1947)*. Vol 3, New Delhi: lotus Press, 2005, p. 135.
the BBC News, Bose was very concerned about what effect it would have on his old and ailing mother. Before Bose could contradict the false news by making a statement on Azad Hind Radio, Gandhi sent a condolence message to Prabhabati: “The whole nation mourns with you the death of your brave son. I share your sorrow to the full. May God give you courage to bear this unexpected loss.”98 But Prabhabati suspected that the news of her son’s death was not true. Bose himself made a radio broadcast on 25th March: “My death is perhaps an instance of wishful thinking.”99 He could imagine that the British government would like to see him dead, since they were trying to win India over for “the purpose of their imperialistic war.”

He warned the Indian people to be wary of Britain’s divisive policies—the sort that had been deployed with such damaging effect in Ireland and Palestine. Gandhi wired Prabhabati again, expressing his joy and relief. The reaction in India to the fabricated news had only confirmed Bose’s high standing among his people, at a time when the British were eager to brand him a quisling. In a series of broadcasts in late March and early April 1942, Bose criticized Stafford Cripps for donning the imperialist mantle and urged the Indian people and leaders to contemptuously reject the offer of dominion status after the end of the war. Bose went on the radio on the 11th March to attack the British policy of deception and warn the Indian people:

“A victory of the British Empire means a perpetuation of slavish status of the Indian people. The emancipation of India is possible only through a complete collapse of Britain. Therefore, those Indians who are working for the British are working against the interests of their country. In other words, they are traitors. Indian patriots will fight not only against the British but also against their henchmen. Everyone can easily realise how stupid it is to believe in compromise with the country which is bound to disappear from the surface of the earth someday. The British Prime Minister Churchill promised, in his recent speech before the Parliament, to give India the status of a Dominion as soon as possible after the war is over. Acting on his instructions, Cripps is in India to unify all the different ways of thinking among the Indian people and figure out how best to appease them politically. But it is a delusion to think India still wants the status of a Dominion and that there is any Indian who believes in what

99 Ibid., p. 216.
Britain has promised. Indians know full well that the existing division among Indians themselves has resulted from the machinations of the British and that as long as they remain in India, they will continue to pursue their policy of ‘divide and rule’. Churchill will soon realize that it is no longer possible to keep Indians on their side by a piece of bread they are going to throw to the Indian people. The British Empire is going the way of those many empires which have long since been ruined. From the ashes of Britain will emerge a unified India.”

Bose need not have worried. Gandhi was not prepared to accept anything less than full independence. Nehru and Azad may have been open to a compromise, if the defense portfolio in the central government could be handed over to the Congress. But Cripps had nothing to offer in the here-and-now: he could only hold out promises for the future. Linlithgow worked closely with Churchill and Amery to make certain that Cripps did not concede anything of substance. Abul Kalam Azad found that “Subhas Bose’s escape to Germany had made a great impression on Gandhiji.” “He had not formerly approved many of Bose’s actions,” Azad explained, “but now I found a change in his outlook. Many of his remarks convinced me that he admired the courage and resourcefulness Subhas Bose had displayed in making his escape from India. His admiration for Subhas Bose unconsciously colored his view about the whole war situation.”

While deriding the Cripps offer, Bose had welcomed the assurances of Japanese premier Hideki Tojo, who promised “India for the Indians.” On 11th April 1942, as the Cripps mission teetered on the verge of failure, the Japanese sent a draft declaration to Germany and Italy, advocating freedom for the Indians and Arabs. The German Foreign Office deemed the draft “too journalistic,” but produced an amended draft of its own. On 16th April, Ribbentrop presented it to Hitler and urged that it be accepted. The German foreign minister suggested that “peace-favoring circles in Britain” would welcome such a move. Hitler did not take the bait and rejected the declaration the following day. He saw no reason to accept the declaration just when the Japanese sought it. He was wary—and not a little envious—of Japan’s spectacular successes against the European colonial powers in Asia. Italy was more inclined to go

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along with the Japanese; but at a meeting on 29\textsuperscript{th} April at Klessheim Castle, near Salzburg, Hitler persuaded Mussolini not to issue the declaration. Only when the world was collapsing around him, in the spring of 1945, did Hitler regret his decision not to back the struggle of the colonized peoples of Asia and the Arab world.\textsuperscript{102}

The tenacity of Bose now came into play. He thought he could get Italy on his side. On 19\textsuperscript{th} April, the renowned Italian journalist Luigi Barzini had published an interview with him in \textit{Il Popolo d’Italia}, describing him as “a Buddha, vivacious and dynamic, though peaceful in his speeches and gestures.” Bose had spoken “with devotion and admiration of the Mahatma” and his “composure and self-control” Barzini interpreted as “a sign of Asian nobility.”\textsuperscript{103} On 5\textsuperscript{th} May, putting all his persuasive powers to the test, Bose went to Rome to meet Mussolini in an attempt to get the Salzburg decisions reversed. Galeazzo Ciano, Italy’s foreign minister and Mussolini’s son-in-law, recorded what transpired in his diary: “I go with Bose to the Duce. A long conference without any new developments, except the fact that Mussolini allowed himself to be persuaded by the arguments produced by Bose to obtain a tripartite declaration in favor of Indian independence. He has telegraphed the Germans, proposing-contrary to the Salzburg decisions-proceeding at once with the declaration. I feel that Hitler will not agree to it very willingly.”\textsuperscript{104} Ciano was right and Hitler turned down Mussolini’s proposal.

While seeking the tripartite powers’ endorsement of Indian independence, Bose was keen to distance himself from the ideologies of their totalitarian regimes. In a candid broadcast on 1\textsuperscript{st} May 1942, he made it clear that he was “not an apologist of the Tripartite Powers” and did not see it as his task “to defend what they have done or may do in future.”\textsuperscript{105} He rebutted “Britain’s paid propagandists,” and justified his own wartime strategy in the quest of India’s liberation in these terms: “I need no credentials when I speak to my own people. My whole life, which has been one long, consistent and continuous record of uncompromising struggle against British


\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., p. 218.


Imperialism, is the best guarantee of my bona fides. If the Britishers who are the past masters in the art of diplomacy and political seduction, have in spite of their best efforts failed to tempt, corrupt or mislead me, no other power on earth can do so. All my life I have been a servant of India and till the last hours of my life I shall remain one. My allegiance and my loyalty has ever been and will ever be to India and India alone, no matter in which part of the world I may live at any given time.”

He had no doubt about where he should be at that particular moment in world history. “Now the time has come,” he wrote to Ribbentrop on 22nd May 1942, “when the final effort should be made for achieving India’s political emancipation. For this purpose, it is absolutely essential that I should be in the East. Only when I am there, shall I be able to direct the revolution along the right channels.”

4.6 Bose Meets Hitler

On 29th May 1942, Bose found himself face to face with Hitler. The official record filed by Paul Schmidt, Hitler’s interpreter, gave the date of the meeting as 27th May and the venue as the “Führer’s Headquarters.” But it is clear from other sources-including the supreme command of the Wehrmacht, the Führer’s diary, and the report of the German News Bureau (DNB)-that Bose’s one and only encounter with Hitler took place in Berlin on 29th May at the Reich Chancellory. According to Schmidt’s detailed account of the conversation, Bose raised the issue of his “journey to East Asia,” “motivated by the desire to find a point as close to India as possible, from where the Indian revolution could be directed.” Fortunately, Hitler agreed with this proposal and promised logistical support for Bose to travel by submarine from Europe to Asia. Hitler warned Bose against taking the risk of a journey by air, which might entail a forced landing in British territory-he, was “too important a personality to let his life be endangered by such an experiment.” Either he could travel in a Japanese submarine, or the Hitler would “place a German submarine at his disposal, which would take him to Bangkok.” Later in the conversation, Bose brought up the matter of Hitler’s anti-Indian racist remarks in Mein Kampf and sought a clarifying statement.

108 Ibid., p.219.
for the Indian nation. Hitler evaded the question, saying that he had not wanted “passive resistance for the Reich of the Indian pattern.” Bose was lucky not to have the offer of the submarine withdrawn.  

A German declaration supporting Indian independence still eluded Bose. Hitler launched into a long monologue on the virtues of political and military realism. He gave the example of Egypt, where Erwin Rommel had launched an offensive the day before. If his general achieved only limited success, a declaration supporting Egyptian independence would be premature. A decisive defeat inflicted on the British forces, on the other hand, would be the occasion for Hitler to goad the Egyptians to throw off the British yoke. India, Hitler pointed out, was “endlessly far” from Germany. Japan, by contrast, “had practically advanced to the borders of India.” Revealing the yawning communications gap between the Axis powers, Hitler confessed that “Japan’s aim was not known to him.” He did not know whether Japan’s priority was “to relieve their flanks from being threatened by Chiang-Kai-Shek or to seek a rapprochement with him” or “to turn to Australia or India.” Britain’s military defeats in Asia “would possibly lead to the collapse of the British Empire.” In the prevailing war situation, “Bose should negotiate with the Japanese, not only for influencing events in his motherland, but also for restraining the Japanese themselves from committing psychological mistakes by appropriate advice.” Withholding a clear declaration in support of Indian independence, Hitler instead “extended his best wishes to Bose for the success of his journey and plans.”

In spite of his imminent departure, Bose carried on with his work. On 11th June, he outlined a plan to open a branch of the Free India Centre in Paris. Ever since arriving in Berlin, Nambiar and Mookerjee had been pushing for such a branch, aware that there was much scope for anti-British propaganda in France. In July, Emilie found it necessary to leave Germany, as she was to bear Bose a child by September. On 21st July, Goebbels received Bose. The discussion revolved primarily around politics and propaganda. Goebbels thought highly of Bose, confiding to an

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aide after he left that ‘the right ‘man’ was ‘being used in the right way’\textsuperscript{112}. He issued instructions so that ‘careful attention should continue to be paid to the Indian question’ while warning that ‘no mention should be made of actions in India until these are in fact imminent’. Goebbels wanted to ensure as much credibility as possible when it came to India. The central theme of German propaganda was straightforward: ‘we want to make India free’\textsuperscript{113}. It was a message that was to be repeated endlessly so that Germany would be associated with freedom in the minds of Indians.

Meanwhile in India, on 6\textsuperscript{th} July 1942, the Congress Working Committee meeting was held at Wardha and after nine days deliberations passed the famous “Quit India” resolution on 14\textsuperscript{th} July. It was demanded that “Britain’s rule in India must end immediately and in case this demand was rejected, the Congress was authorised to start “a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale.” The fundamental differences between Bose and Gandhi had now disappeared. Bose had requested Gandhi to give an ultimatum to the British to leave India, failing which the Congress should start a mass movement. Gandhi’s refusal forced Bose to leave India to organise an armed revolt against Britain from abroad. In 1942 the Congress, under the leadership of Gandhi was speaking the same language which was continuously repeated by Bose. He expressed his satisfaction on this resolution: “There is no doubt that the Congress resolution came nearest in expressing the wish of the vast majority of the Indian people. It also brought the Congress fundamentally near the stand always taken by the writer, namely, that the destruction of British power in India was the sine qua non for the solution of all India’s problems, and that the Indian people would have to fight for the achievement of this goal.”\textsuperscript{114}

The Quit India Movement of 1942 was a victory for the principles which Bose had been strongly advocating since the Calcutta Session of the Congress in December 1928. Gandhi interpreted the Congress resolution as “open rebellion,” and his decision to give an ultimatum to the British marked a radical departure from the earlier stands taken by him. The Quit India Movement, though suppressed ultimately, shook the foundations of the British Raj as nothing had done before and for the first

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., p. 126.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., p. 127.
time Gandhi subordinated both non-violence and Hindu-Muslim unity to independence: “I, therefore, want freedom immediately, this very night, before dawn, if it can be had…The mantra is ‘do or die’. We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetration of our slavery.”

The earlier Congress movements were restricted to activities like hartal, processions, picketing, boycotts and refusal to pay taxes and courting arrest as a result of these activities. But the Quit India Movement was wider in scope and was not confined to jail-going. Gandhi with a view of making the movement “as short and swift as possible,” declared that, “it will include all that a mass movement can include.” In fact Gandhi wanted the Movement to be a full-fledged open rebellion and people were “to work openly and to receive bullets on our chest, without taking to heels.”

The Quit India Movement was a vindication of the stand of Bose as Gandhi gave the ultimatum to the British to leave India “with bag and baggage.” Gandhi had refused earlier in 1939 to issue any ultimatum to the British Government as he considered it inopportune and morally unjustifiable. But in 1942, by asking the British to clear out immediately, Gandhi arrived at the same position, which Bose had taken in 1939 and due to which he was forced to resign. It is not true as contended by A.K. Majumdar that Gandhi changed his stand being influenced by the feeling that the Japanese might soon succeed in driving out the British from India. As the mass-man Gandhi understood the psychology of the Indians far better than any other leader and he knew it for certain that it was not possible to check a mass movement in 1942. The Quit India Movement was the logical development of the Indian struggle for freedom. Gandhi would have lost his claim to mass-leadership had he failed to come forward to guide the movement.

The Quit India Movement of 1942 marked the climax of the freedom struggle and was the last and final mass movement for a total and complete emancipation of India. Bose had always urged for a synchronisation of the freedom struggle fought within India and from abroad by Indians with the help of friendly countries. The

115 Harijan, July 1942
movement provided the needed opportunity to Bose to speak out his plans and to recommend his programme of action. The propaganda campaign was intensified. He asked the people not to be carried away by ideological consideration and to fight an uncompromising war. The radio broadcasts were done in such a way as to give an impression to the Indian people that they were done from a secret place somewhere in India or near India. This impression made the programme more effective.

In his radio broadcasts Bose appealed to the Indian people “to continue and intensify the fight for freedom in the face of the increasingly repressive measures of the British.” In accordance with his ideological conviction he recommended a programme of action to be put into operation in India to give the mass movement new dimensions of operational strategy and effectiveness to bring the administrative machinery to a standstill.

Bose described the Quit India Movement as a non-violent guerilla war-fare and instructed the people to employ the tactics of dispersal. “In accordance with the principles of guerilla war, we should also be as mobile as possible and should move continuously from place to place. The authorities should never be able to predict where our activities will emerge next...The object of this non-violent guerilla campaign should be a two-fold one; firstly, to destroy war production in India, and secondly, to paralyse the British administration in the country. Keeping these objects in view, every section of the community should participate in the struggle.”

Bose issued detailed instructions for specific sections of people who were directly connected with the freedom struggle, as well as the general public. He asked Indians to “follow the broadcasts of Colonel Britton beamed by the B.B.C. to occupied Europe for sabotaging the German war efforts and to use the same tactics for sabotaging British war efforts in India.”

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117 Ibid., p. 253.
118 Subhas Chandra Bose, Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose, India: publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 1962, p. 150.
119 Ibid., pp. 150-152.
During the Quit India Movement another radio station was started with the name of ‘National Congress Radio’ to give expression to the militant point of view of the Indian National Congress. Then a third Radio station ‘as started with the title Azad Muslim Radio, when new tensions developed between Hindus and Muslims, towards the end of 1942, due to the activities of the Muslim League. The Free India Centre received reports from Kabul that the Azad Hind Radio and the National Congress Radio were widely listened to by the people in India and the instructions of Bose as regard to the methods of the non-violent guerrilla warfare had great impact on the conduct of the movement. From the official accounts of the Government and the non-official version as given in the official history of the Congress, it is evident that there was a wide-spread revolutionary upsurge of the people in the whole country which was an act of manifest violence.

Bose’s broadcasts had greatly influenced the public opinion in India which not only resulted in the rejection of the Cripps’ Mission but also the violent upheaval during the Quit India Movement. “The culminating effect of our political propaganda was achieved when after the rejection of Cripps’ recommendations; revolutionary disturbances broke out in India. When eventually the ‘Quit India’ campaign was launched and the British-Indian Government was forced to suppress and cancel any kind of news the transmissions of the secret stations filled in the breach.”

The effectiveness of Bose’s propaganda caused deep concern for the British administration in India. This has also been corroborated by Goebbels. “It is being heard more widely” Goebbels noted in his diary, “than I at first thought possible. All the better that we have not yet revealed where he is. This makes his propaganda all the more effective.” Goebbels expressed great satisfaction on the effectiveness of Bose’s propaganda, and observed: “Bose’s propaganda, conducted and guided from here, is gradually getting on the nerves of the British. In their broadcasts they blame me, especially, for Bose’s activity.”


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Meanwhile in Germany, Bose waited for eight months before his passage to Japan could be arranged. No land route was open to him and at first he thought that the Italians might be able to send him by air. When this project was abandoned he turned to the Japanese. A blockade-running vessel involved too great a risk of capture: a journey by submarine was the only alternative. This he undertook as soon as the necessary naval arrangement could be made. His Japanese friend, Colonel Yamamoto, who would have been the one to make them, went home through turkey and Russia in November 1942.

While he waited Bose passed on to Nambiar his policy and instructions. There were for new branches of Free India Center, for broadcasting, for Indians to study German police methods and for the training of Indian seaman and airmen. As for the Legion, it must be used actively as soon as possible, the German officers and N.C.O.’s must be quickly replaced by Indians, and there must be no communalism. Legionaries were to be trained on all the most modern German equipment, including heavy artillery and tanks: Bose would send further instructions as opportunity offered.

Christmas 1942 was spent with his wife and infant daughter in Vienna. Then, after a visit to Paris in January, Bose heard that his departure was imminent. On 26th January 1943 ‘Independence Day’ was observed in Berlin with great party where six hundred guests drank Bose’s health. Two days later he made his speech to the Legion on ‘Legion Day’. To help conceal his departure he had recorded two speeches for broadcasting after he was left, and he referred frequently in conversation to the approaching need for long visits to the Russian Front. He hoped at first to take both Hassan and Swami with him but there was no room and only Hassan accompanied him on board. Bose and Abid Hassan left Kiel in a German U-boat on 8th February 1943.123

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