CHAPTER V
Bose’s Armed Struggle in Southeast Asia and the INA Trials

This chapter discusses the years 1943-1946 in the context of the activities of Bose. The chapter also analyses the unique place of Bose amongst Indian revolutionaries and the characteristics that set him apart from his fellow revolutionaries and which allowed him to single-handedly create a "Free India" movement in Occupied Europe and Southeast Asia. The reshaping of Indian National Army by Bose and the internal dynamics and limitations of the movements that Bose headed with Japanese collaboration is also discussed. This chapter critically examines the role of Bose in taking over the Andaman Nicobar Islands and the level of success of his visit to Andaman as the head of Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The specifics of Bose's strategies for alliances, armed struggle and revolting against the British are critically analysed. The chapter also looks at how the Indian National Congress viewed the policies and action of Bose and the Free India struggle during the war and how it utilized the countrywide unrest in favour of Bose during the INA Officers Trial of 1945 for their own ends. The chapter also looks at how the British viewed Bose during this period, the precautions they took against the Indian National Army and the impact of the INA Officers Trial of 1945.

5.1 Bose’s U-Boat Journey

On 8th February 1943, Bose left Berlin by train for Kiel accompanied by Abid Hassan. From there they boarded German submarine U-190. Bose’s journey was kept top secret and except Werth, Kepler, Nambiar and the military people concerned, nobody else knew about his departure from Germany. Bose’s journey by U-190 was first ever human transportation of that kind. It had space enough for a bed alone and the entire crew, the doctors and Bose with Abid Hassan had to manage with it. There was not even enough elbow room that everyone felt cramped. It was like solitary confinement and Bose was losing weight. The submarine was filled with the smell of diesel and even the food smelled of diesel. Another problem faced by Bose during his journey by submarine was regarding food. Only beef or ham was available as food.
There was a bag of rice and some lentils with which kichree was made by Abid Hassan for a change. The most remarkable event in the journey was the meeting of the German and Japanese submarines in the Indian Ocean, some 400 miles (600 km) off the coast of Madagascar after 77 days.¹

On 26th April 1943, the Japanese submarine I-29, commanded by Captain Mesao Teraoka arrived in the Mozambique Channel, near neutral Portuguese territory. Six days earlier it had left Penang amidst tight security and ostensibly on a routine mission hunting enemy ships. In fact locals - many of them Indians- had been intrigued to see Teraoka, a submarine flotilla commander, take charge of the boat and were convinced something was afoot when they learnt that the ship’s cooks had been busy buying spices for Indian curries. Long before the I-29 arrived in Portuguese waters, rumours had circulated throughout Penang that the man they had long heard about was about to arrive. Fortunately for Bose, these rumours did not reach the British. It was only when the ship reached its destination that Captain Teraoka told his crew that their mission was to fetch Bose.²

The I-29 had arrived in the Mozambique Channel some ten hours ahead of schedule and it was only on the evening of the 26th April that the Japanese sighted the U- Boat. In the enveloping darkness, transfer was impossible and with both submarines required to maintain strict radio silence there could not even be any conversation or exchange of views. Sunrise on the 27th brought fresh problems: the seas were now so rough that the two boats could not even get near one another. All they could do was circling each other and waiting for the weather to get better. In the evening, as the sun was about to set, the Japanese officers saw two men jump overboard from the German vessel and swim towards them. Quickly hauled on board by the Japanese, they turned out to be a German officer and signals man. The reason for their daredevilry was quickly made clear. The U-boat was low on fuel and could not carry on any longer.³


³ Ibid., pp.206-207.
As day dawned on the 28th the sea was still rough, but it was decided that the exchange must take place. The two Germans, on a rubber raft, dragged a strong Manila hemp rope back to their boat. Bose and Hasan boarded the raft, clung to the rope and were literally hauled into the I-29. The submarine started its return voyage the mortality rate on German U-boat was more than eighty percent and the risk had been immense. The German officers and crew had been friendly with Bose throughout the arduous journey, in the most cramped conditions. Yet on boarding the Japanese submarine I-29, Bose and Hassan felt something akin to a home coming.4

The flotilla commander, Masao Teraoka, vacated his cabin for Bose. Bose could not have timed his arrival better. The captain of the submarine, Juichi Izu, organised a party on 29th April as the Japanese celebrated the emperor’s birthday and for the successful transfer of Bose. Bose and Hassan felt they had come back to an Asian nation. The transition from the unpalatable German diet was a great relief, but Bose was not yet used to four meals a day. When the Japanese kept insisting, he asked, ‘do we have to eat again, captain Teraoka?5 with a smile as he was overwhelmed with their hospitality.

The Japanese submarine I-29 passed to the South of India on its way to Southeast Asia outside the British patrolling radius. It picked up a radio message from Penang instructing a detour to Sabang, on the northern Sumatra coast. On 6th May 1943, the I-29 was safely docked in the harbour at Sabang. Before disembarking, Bose posed for a photograph with the entire crew of the I-29. He autographed this picture with a heartfelt message: “It was great pleasure to sail aboard this submarine. I believe this will mark a milestone in our fight for victory and peace.”6 Bose’s friend Colonel Yamamoto whom he had met earlier in Germany was already there to greet him at the pier in Sabang.

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5.2 Bose in Japan

After his arrival in Sabang, Japanese officials were most concerned that he should rest and recuperate before making plans and Bose replied that he had had all the rest he needed. Bose boarded a small Japanese combat aircraft on his way to Tokyo. The aircraft made stops in Penang, Saigon, Manila, Taipei and Hamamatsu. His journey to Tokyo took five days and eventually he arrived at the Japanese capital in mid-May.

The Japanese had decided to treat Bose with great honour. One the way to Tokyo, as they reached Formosa, the Japanese military unrolled the red carpet, obviously because Tojo had sent instructions that Bose should be received with great honour so as to put him in a good mood. The top military brass came to honour him and they did this in the Japanese way. Bose was informed that the Japanese would receive him with the Japanese protocol and not the international protocol and that this was a special honour reserved for him. Bose was now familiar with Yamamoto and the military attaché and did not know how the civilians would deal with him. Bose was invited to a banquet. Some senior military officers came with swords hanging at their sides and bowed before him. Bose was about to do the same in response but he was instructed that he would bend only half an inch or so. This was the Japanese way of honouring royal guests. The reception given to Bose at Tokyo was overwhelming. The honour given to him had never been extended to any foreigner. But for all their hospitality, the Japanese still did not know what to do with Bose and feared that their deteriorating war position would not permit them to accept the idea that Bose had long advocated: a march on India. Bose himself was soon to become aware that everything was not right in the Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Arrangements were made for Bose to stay at the Imperial Hotel where he checked in under the assumed Japanese name ‘Matsuda’. Bose was happy that very soon Indian can once again hear his familiar voice: “this is Subhas Chandra Bose

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speaking to his countrymen in East Asia." In the warfront Japan was clearly on the run: Guadalcanal was lost, and she had no answer to American submarines. German defeats in Stalingrad and Africa had turned the tide against the Axis. Bose had arrived at the wrong time and Tojo, struggling with his problems, could see no good reason why he should receive Bose and kept him waiting for three weeks.

He relented on 10th June 1943. Not knowing what to expect, Bose began the meeting quietly, but soon he launched into passionate argument for liberating India. Tojo was so taken by this that all his doubts seemed to vanish and he requested a second, more detailed meeting. This took place four days later, with Tojo flanked by his Foreign Minister, Shigemitsu Mamoru and his Chief of Staff, General Sugiyama. When Tojo had finished trying to present the satisfactory face of Japan’s strategy, Bose asked, “Have you, sir, considered the question of sending the Japanese Army into India for the liberation campaign if it is deemed necessary?” Bose had raised the same question with Sugiyama earlier, suggesting a march to Chittagong, but for Tojo this was a revolutionary proposal. His response was evasive. But after Bose had left, he is said to have turned to Shigemitsu and declared, ‘He is a great Indian, fully qualified to command the I.N.A.’ [Indian National Army]. Shigemitsu had already come to that conclusion and with Rash Behari Bose having already met Bose and confirmed that he was waiting for his younger namesake to take over, the problems were finally cleared.

5.3 Earlier Developments in Japan Regarding Indian Independence

The origins of the idea of raising an armed force that would fight its way into India to bring down the Raj goes back to World War I, when the Ghadar Party and the nascent embryo of the Indian Independence League formulated plans to initiate rebellion in the British Indian Army from Punjab to Hong Kong with German Support. This plan failed after the information was leaked to British Intelligence.

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Before the outbreak of the East Asia war, there were many Indian societies in South East Asia “with different appellations”, 11 working for the cause of Indian independence. In this connection the name of Rash Behari Bose, deserves to be mentioned. He had escaped to Japan after throwing a bomb at Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy and Governor General of India in 1912, when the viceregal procession was passing through Chandni Chowk, Old Delhi.

Even after escaping to Japan he did not rest and the liberation of India from the yoke of British control became his sole mission in life. 12 With this purpose Rash Behari Bose founded the Indian Independence League in 1924 with Tokyo as its headquarters and branches spreading out in other neighboring states. 13 Through the IIL, he explained the political conditions of India to the people of South East Asia and emphasised “the supreme importance of Indian Independence as a factor of Greater Asian freedom and unity.” 14 It is due to the sustained efforts of Rash Behari Bose, that the people of East Asia were roused from their slumber and they began to “look upon the political emancipation of India as a stepping stone to Greater Asia liberation from bondage, and...became sympathisers with the Indian cause in large number.” 15 Another significant contribution of Rash Behari Bose was the promotion of Indo-Japanese cooperation, goodwill and understanding. Thus Rash Behari Bose had done ample spade-work in Japan for the Indian Freedom Movement before the arrival of Subhas Bose in South East Asia.

Rash Behari’s efforts received great impetus as similar movements were started in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok by Indian leaders. An underground organization headed by Amar Singh and assisted by Pritam Singh was operating from Bangkok which was also known as the Indian Independence League. “The I.I.L. was a secret society devoted to the cause of emancipation and independence of India. They had their like-minded comrades scattered in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Tokyo and

12 Ibid., p.146.
13 Ibid., p.147.
14 Ibid., p.147.
Berlin.‖ Amar Singh and Pritam Singh maintained close contact with Tamura, the Japanese Arms Attaché in Bangkok and because of this association with them the Japanese were able to get secret information about conditions inside India as well as military intelligence about Malaya. The Japanese side was given to understand that the IIL was well organised and was prepared to resort to force if necessary.

Though Pritam Singh sought Japanese assistance to fight against the British, he held very strong views regarding the independence of action of the IIL and like Subhas Bose he believed that India must fight for her independence not under the control by any foreign country: “The leaders of the Indian National Congress don’t welcome any outside assistance for the independence movement with open arms, as they fear that ‘after the wolf driven out by the front gate may come a tiger from the back gate.’ India is fighting only for complete independence, free from control by any foreign country. When we need outside help, we have to bear in mind that should we give any impression that we were used as political pawns, our passionate movement would lose the support of the entire people of India. In point of fact, however, we are so powerless that we need outside help to accomplish our purpose. Therein lies our headache.”

Thus it is evident from the above statement that Pritam Singh’s ideals harmonised with that of Subhas Bose. In order to make his position and that of the IIL clear and well established in the context of his collaboration with the Japanese, a note was exchanged between Pritam Singh and Tamura, just before the outbreak of the East Asia War. This note is historically important as it asserted the need of Indian independence for peace in the region and also delineated the codes by which Japanese army and the IIL were to co-operate and further set the basis for the later collaboration between Bose and Japan.

Major Fujiwara Iwaichi, who was in charge of the Japanese army in Bangkok and maintained liaison with Chinese, Malays and the Indian independence movement,

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16 Ibid., p.267.
18 Ibid., p.152.
had met Pritam Singh earlier along with Tamura. Fujiwara was overcome by the Sikh’s idealism, sincerity and enthusiasm for Indian liberation from British rule. Fujiwara offered, “I have come to help you realize your lofty ideal and I look forward to co-operating. I have confidence that Indian independence will be achieved through devotion and friendship.”19 When he next met Pritam Singh, he was informed that there were two Indian organizations in Bangkok: the Indian Independence League composed mostly of Sikhs and an Indo-Thai cultural organization centering on a swami and a man named Das. Fujiwara felt a premonition about the apparent antagonism between the two organizations and inquired about the possibility of reconciliation.

Fujiwara decided Pritam Singh’s faction was the group he must work with more closely. Pritam Singh’s organization already had men scattered through South Thailand and north-east Malayan coastal cities, whereas the Swami-Das group was an organization of intellectuals interested primarily in things cultural. The Sikh and his cohorts were already distributing propaganda leaflets among Indian officers and men in the British-Indian Army in the border states of Malaya. According to Pritam Singh, Indian soldiers in the British-Indian Army nurtured anti-British feelings. These men were fertile ground for Pritam Singh’s propaganda. Fujiwara was excited by Pritam Singh’s ideas but had to avoid giving him any hint of Japan’s military plans.20 Pritam Singh suggested anti-British broadcasts beamed to India from Tokyo. The audience would be limitless: not only soldiers in the Army but all of India. Pritam Singh already had contact by telegraph with Indians in Shanghai and Tokyo. With Japanese help the whole movement could be unified. Fujiwara transmitted a report of his meetings through Tamura to Imperial General Headquarters.21

Fujiwara and Pritam Singh continued their secret meetings. In mid-October 1941, came the news of the fall of the Konoe Cabinet and the formation of the Tojo Cabinet. The Hull-Nomura peace negotiations in Washington were deadlocked. Uneasiness spread through Bangkok. Japanese plans for the occupation of Thailand and the capture of Malaya and Singapore were laid. But intelligence reports told of

20 Ibid., p.5.
21 Ibid., p. 6.
Singapore’s defenses being strengthened. Fujiwara had to conceal information of Japanese preparations but at the same time give Pritam Singh some inkling of what Fujiwara hoped the Indian group would do when war broke out. It was a delicate position. Headquarters did not anticipate co-operation from the Indian soldiers or Pritam Singh’s group. Fujiwara and Pritam Singh concocted their own plan: as soon as war erupted they would dash behind enemy lines to reach Indian soldiers in the British-Indian Army. The propaganda activities of Pritam Singh’s Indian Independence League would be expanded in the British-Indian Army and among Indian civilians as well.22

Japan declared war on Britain and United States on 8th December 1941, All the Armed Forces of Japan received telegrams from the Imperial General Headquarters (IGHQ) to swing into action. The Indian Independence Volunteer Army marched side by side with the Japanese Army and won many victories and converts from the British ranks. Among such converts, worthy of special mention is the name of Capt. Mohan Singh, “who subsequently was to go down in history as the founder of the Indian National Army.”23

In 1941 Mohan Singh was a captain, aged thirty-three, second in command of a battalion of the 15th Brigade, 1/14 Punjab Regiment of the British-Indian Army. In Thailand Mohan Singh’s battalion was detailed to stop the Japanese at the border near Jitra. The Japanese advance took Mohan Singh and his battalion by surprise. On 11th December Japanese reconnaissance planes pinpointed the British-Indian position. The Japanese immediately opened mortar fire on the road. Mohan Singh’s battalion withdrew along both sides of the road. Later with the surrender accomplished and order maintained, Fujiwara and Pritam Singh began discussions with Mohan Singh. Fujiwara explained the aims of the Japanese Army in aiding Indian independence and his own personal views on achieving independence. He was convinced independence would come only from a struggle of the Indian people themselves. The Pacific War was a chance for the Indians to rise and win freedom with Japanese help. Fujiwara pointed out Japan and India had several things in common:

22 Ibid., pp.10-15.
1. a common enemy;
2. historical ties, for India was the home of the Buddhist faith:
3. geographic and ethnic ties: and
4. Common indignation at India’s subjugated position.”

Mohan Singh expressed his own and India’s indignation toward Britain. He told Fujiwara he agreed that Indian freedom depended on the Indian people. Mohan Singh was impressed but not completely convinced by Fujiwara’s words. Indians should be suspicious of Japanese help because of Japanese actions in Korea, Manchuria and China. Mohan Singh thought that Indian independence would never succeed without the support of the INC. He explained to Fujiwara the effectiveness of the nonviolent posture of Gandhi and of Congress within the Indian political context. Fujiwara pointed out that the Congress Party would have to recognise Pritam Singh’s League and its role in the struggle.

Fujiwara and Mohan Singh were each impressed by the sincerity and devotion of the other. Mohan Singh told Fujiwara about the Indian revolutionary leader and former Congress president Bose, who was in exile in Berlin. If Bose were brought to the East all Indians in Asia would rise against the British. Fujiwara was impressed by the character of Bose as every Indian he talked with seemed to worship Bose. Fujiwara reported this observation to IGHQ again and again, hoping the Japanese Government might approach Berlin to bring Bose to Asia. The commanders operating in East Asia had kept the Imperial General Headquarters informed about the significant role of the Indians: “The grand design of establishing a new order in the greater East Asia will be accomplished only with the cooperation of 350 million people of India. We have first to get rid of the British influence. However, there is a limit to our ability to carry on the war. We cannot go on fighting a winning war forever. Burma is as far as we can get. In any event, we can’t expect to advance far enough to reach India. Even if we could go far enough to reach India in pursuit of British troops the Indian people would turn against us. From this, it follows that the best way would be to help the Indian people win their independence and freedom by

themselves... To develop this guiding principle on a global basis, it is essential to keeping close touch with Subhas Chandra Bose in Berlin so that we can move in from both the East and the West. The East front, however, is more important and consequently we had better invite Subhas Chandra Bose to move to East Asia.26 But the matter was out of Fujiwara’s hands and there might be opposition to the idea in Tokyo. Mohan Singh knew that many Japanese felt that Congress leaders were anti-Japanese. Meanwhile Fujiwara urged Mohan Singh and Pritam Singh to work to develop the movement among Indians in Asia.27

After long discussions with Fujiwara, Mohan Singh’s determination to fight for the liberation of his country had crystallized; but he asked Fujiwara for a clear-cut assurance that Japan had no designs on India. Fujiwara tried in the strongest possible terms to assure Mohan Singh. Finally Fujiwara decided to arrange a meeting of Mohan Singh and Pritam Singh with Lieutenant-General Yamashita, commander of the 25th Army in the hope that Yamashita could perhaps convince the Indian leaders of Japan’s sincerity. On 20th December 1941, Fujiwara and the two Indians met Yamashita. Pointing to his operations map he explained the progress of operations and stated that he was prepared to give unconditional aid to the Indian independence movement through Major Fujiwara. Fujiwara hoped the interview had had its effect. But for Mohan Singh there were still three matters to be confirmed through discussions with his officers before he could commit himself working with Fujiwara and the Japanese:

“1. Japanese sincerity in offering aid,
2. Support of India, including the Congress Party, for the idea of co-operation with the Japanese, and
3. The solid agreement of Indian officers and men.”28

After discussing for several days with his officers, Mohan Singh decided in favour of fighting together with the Japanese. He credited Fujiwara with the deep mutual trust

28 Ibid., pp. 22-23
and confidence that had been generated. Fujiwara’s sincerity, persuasiveness and lack of artifice impressed Mohan Singh.\(^\text{29}\)

### 5.3.1 The Formation of INA

Capt. Mohan Singh on the New Year Eve of 1941, presented a proposal to Fujiwara with six points:

1. the Indians would organise an Indian people’s army;
2. the Japanese Army would give it whole-hearted aid;
3. the Indian army and IIL would co-operate for the time being;
4. the Japanese Army would recognize Mohan Singh as leader of the Indian captives;
5. the Japanese Army would treat Indian captives as friends and liberate those who wished to join the Indian army;
6. The Indian army would be recognised as a friendly allied army by the Japanese Army.”\(^\text{30}\)

Fujiwara and Mohan Singh chose the name Indian National Army for the new revolutionary army. Like Pritam Singh, Mohan Singh also avoided the use of the name “Indian Volunteer Army” and called it the “Indian National Army” instead, as he believed that a “Revolutionary Army” would never be able to accomplish its purpose without the support of the people. They discussed the relationship between the IIL and the INA. Mohan Singh wanted a stronger man than Pritam Singh to lead the political arm of the struggle. Pritam Singh’s passive attitude made Mohan Singh seriously doubt the sincerity of his Sikh colleague. Pritam Singh’s quiet, religious nature was indeed unlike Mohan Singh’s ebullience and verve.

Again Mohan Singh raised the name of Bose and asked that the Japanese Government bring him East. Mohan Singh agreed to co-operate with Pritam Singh on a temporary basis. Units of the INA would infiltrate the lines of the British Indian Army as Pritam Singh’s group was already doing. Mohan Singh insisted that the INA

\(^{29}\) Ibid., p. 23.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., pp. 23-24.
would fight only on the Indo-Bur­mese border, not elsewhere in Asia. He requested the same training and equipment that the Japanese Army got and the status of an allied army for INA if they were to fight together. Fujiwara gave Mohan Singh his personal consent but said recognising the INA as an allied army might create technical difficulties for the Japanese. The INA was a small, new revolutionary force starting with a handful of men. Lieutenant-General Yamashita and his chief of staff both approved Mohan Singh’s proposal but with the reservation Fujiwara had already made about the allied status of the INA.\textsuperscript{31}

By this time Fujiwara moved his headquarters to Ipoh in Malaya as the British Army fell back before the Japanese advance everywhere in Malaya. Headquarters in a school building were shared with the IIL, INA, YMA (Young Malays Association) and now the Sumatra Youth League as well. IIL propaganda units had already gone to the front with members of the F Kikan (Fujiwara’s staff co-operating with IIL). As soon as headquarters opened and flags were hung, Indian citizens of Ipoh began assembling. Word of Japanese help for Indians had spread throughout Malaya.\textsuperscript{32}

Meanwhile the I.N.A. gained more popularity and attracted a large number of Indian prisoners of war to join it. On 17\textsuperscript{th} February 1942, as many as forty-five thousand Indian prisoners of war assembled for a meeting and after speeches made by Pritam Singh and Mohan Singh respectively, their “excitement had reached the climax. They all vowed to cast in their lot with their leaders.\textsuperscript{33} The contention that the success of the INA in recruiting a vast number of Indian prisoners of war depended on ‘force and misleading propaganda”\textsuperscript{34} miserably fails to take note of the patriotic feelings of an Army when its nationalist sentiments are roused under proper leadership and the hope of liberation of their Motherland. Though some cases of forced conversion cannot be ruled out, the fact that some thirty-five thousand POWs did not join the INA is sufficient evidence that a great majority of those POWs who joined the INA were fervent nationalists and certainly it was not a fact that they,

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., pp. 24-25.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 25.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., Philip mason foreword, p. xi.
“were puzzled, misinformed, misled, and on the whole believed the course they took was the most honourable open to them.”

The IIL organised a conference in Tokyo in March 1942 under the chairmanship of Rash Behari Bose to discuss plans for the liberation of their motherland. This meeting was attended by representatives of the Indians from all over East Asia and great importance was attached to this meeting. But this conference revealed that there was serious divergence of opinion between the Indians hailing from the Southern regions and those residing in Japan. The Indians in Japan were accused of being puppets of Japan. The Indians in Japan, on the other hand, thought that those who came from the Southern region had long since lost their revolutionary character as once they pledged their allegiance to Britain. The Indian freedom movement in South East Asia was considerably affected by these divergences and the situation was further worsened after the death of Pritam Singh in an plane accident and the departure of Major Fujiwara, “who was looked upon as the ‘foster father’ of the Indian National Army.” He was succeeded by Col. Hideo Iwakuro in March 1942.

In accordance with the resolution adopted in Tokyo a meeting of the Indians of South East Asia was held at Bangkok on 15th May 1942. Rash Behari Bose was elected as President and a sixty point proposal was adopted for presentation to the Japanese Government. “It was unanimously decided that the object of the movement was the attainment of the complete and immediate Independence of India, free from any foreign control, domination or interference of whatsoever nature.” Japan was not pleased with the proceedings of the Bangkok Conference and the demand for a categorical reply to the sixty point proposal embarrassed the IGHQ and other Japanese authorities. Premier Tajo and other Government leaders were dissatisfied with these developments, “because they had intentions of imposing some restrictions

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upon the Indian Movement all along.”  

The Japanese Government therefore gave a vague reply to the sixty point proposal of the Council of Action, greatly appreciating the sincerity of the Indians in their fight for independence and offering utmost cooperation with them. This led the Council, to look upon the Japanese Government with great suspicion as “it was the council’s intention to take nothing less.”

The Bangkok Conference revealed the breach not only among the Indians residing in Japan and those hailing from other parts of East Asia but also the breach developing in the Indo-Japanese unity. Rash Behari Bose was suspected of being a puppet of the Japanese, who were trying to exploit the Indian people for their own interest. British propaganda was also partly responsible for promoting disunity among the Indians and their suspicion of the Japanese motives. This resulted in a revolt led by Capt. Mohan Singh at the end of November 1942, as he genuinely suspected the Japanese motives. The collision between the League and the Japanese authorities had started in Burma regarding the management, according to the resolutions of the Bangkok Conference, of the property left by the Indians who fled the country. The Japanese confiscated such property as the property of enemy allies and the office-bearers of the League were bluntly told that the Bangkok resolutions were never accepted by Japan. When the League members protested saying that they could not be mere puppets of Japan, the Japanese Army officers replied: “Absentee property according to international law is enemy property. You must acknowledge the generosity of the Japanese in entrusting you with the management of absentee property at all…. As for Indian prestige, that is secondary to the execution of the Commander-in-Chief’s orders….Puppets? What is the harm in being puppets?... You should be proud to be the puppets of the Japanese.”

Another factor that contributed to the breach between the League and the Japanese authorities was General Mohan Singh’s desire to effect a rapid expansion of

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39 Ibid., P.22.  
43 Ibid., p.11.
the INA. As many as forty thousand men had signed a pledge to serve the Indian National Army by the end of August, 1942. A Combat Division of over sixteen thousand officers and men was ready by the middle of September and Mohan Singh had the object of raising an army of two hundred and fifty thousand from the POW’s and the civilians. Far from being satisfied with the rapid expansion of the INA, the Japanese were positively opposed to this as this posed not only organisational problems but also severe problems in collecting labour gangs, essential for Japanese war preparations.

Matters became worse when the Japanese demand to send nine hundred men of the INA to Burma was turned down by General Mohan Singh who made it clear that there could be no movement of Indian troops until there was a clarification of Japan’s intentions towards India. He told the Japanese that if they tried to replace the British in India, India would fight them: she did not want the sort of bogus independence given to Manchuria. The League’s memorandum to Col. Iwakuro demanding clarification of the Japanese stand towards India amid the arrest of Colonel N.S. Gill, the Commander of the INA in Burma on a trumped-up charge, resulted in a revolt by General Mohan Singh. He resigned from the Council of Action along with two other members and on 21st December 1942 and ordered the disbanding of the INA. There was an open conflict between Rash Behari Bose and Mohan Singh, as the former wanted to have the control of both the League and the INA in his own hands. On 29th December 1942, Mohan Singh was called to the office of Col. Iwakuro and was forced to accept some conditions which he valiantly refused. He was dismissed by Rash Behari who was present in Iwakuro’s office and was arrested. Lt. Col. Bhonsle was appointed in his place as the Commander of the INA and the League and the INA were reorganised. It was, therefore, the same INA which entered a new phase of development.44

Before Mohan Singh was actually arrested he took several steps in anticipation of his arrest. He held a secret meeting with the officers to discuss the dissolution of the INA in case of his arrest. He also left sealed instructions for the burning of all INA

44 Ibid., p.12.
records at the time of dissolution. Rash Behari Bose was anxious to avoid a confrontation and he tried to improve matters through negotiation. He was not a soldier like Mohan Singh who lacked the duplicity, tact and diplomacy necessary for a politician. He was a seasoned politician and did not want to spoil the rousing spirit of the Indian freedom movement in East Asia by embittering the relations between the IIL and the Japanese Government as it was impossible to think of the war of liberation without the support of Japan. Japan was also equally interested to maintain cordial relations with the IIL and the INA after the unfortunate incident and they decided to be extremely tactful in dealing with Rash Behari Bose. The revolt of the INA was due to the lack of adequate understanding between the Indians and the Japanese concerned.

Things were set right when Major Fujiwara the former Director of the “F Kikan” was placed on the staff of the Southern Army Command. There was a noticeable change in the Japanese policy towards the Indian Freedom Movement in East Asia. In 1943, the self-asserting and suspicious Col. Iwakuro was transferred and was succeeded by Col. Satoshi Yamamoto who was formerly a Military Attache to the Japanese Embassy in Berlin and had intimate personal relation with Subhas Bose. He took all steps to expedite the arrival of Bose in Japan from Berlin.

Meanwhile in Germany, Bose had already been in contact with Rash Behari Bose and his group through the Japanese Embassy in Berlin and Rome; and had received an invitation from them to come to East Asia as soon as possible and assume the leadership of India’s freedom movement. Besides this unofficial invitation the Japanese Government had also extended an official invitation to come to East Asia. Moreover, he had been able to feel the pulse of Japanese bureaucracy regarding the matter of Indian independence through Dwijendranath Bose who was in touch with the Japanese consul in Calcutta. Thus Bose was confident of the Japanese support and with that help he thought he would be able to persuade all Indians in East Asia to unite for fighting India’s battle for freedom. Bose requested Oshima, the Japanese Ambassador in Berlin to enlist the help of the Japanese Government in implementing

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his plan. In the beginning Tokyo did not take much interest in such a project, but subsequently it became more enthusiastic about the matter. In January 1943, Hitler approved the Japanese request to send Bose to Japan. Bose told Shun Higuchi, the then Military Attache to the Japanese Embassy in Berlin that he wanted a more vigorous and active development of India’s freedom movement. Bose expected that the journey to East Asia would be safe; but in case anything happened to him, he instructed Higuchi to see that Nambiar and Rash Behari Bose work in close touch with each other. Bose also expressed that he desired to take with him the Indian soldiers recruited in Germany.  

5.4 Bose Takes Over the INA

It may be mentioned that like his earlier experience in Germany, Bose’s experience in Japan in the initial stages were not very pleasant. Bose knew there were many problems awaiting solution in the Far East. Though he knew something, he was not aware of the events that took place during his journey in 1942. He knew that a force of sixteen thousand men had been raised; but it seemed that he leader had lost patience just when he might, by perseverance, have obtained all he asked. Perhaps the trouble had been short-sighted political leadership. Before he took charge of the Presidentship of the League, Bose met the Japanese Army Chief of Staff, the Minister of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations and Foreign Minister Shigemitsu. These meetings were successful and he could impress them considerably. But Japanese Premier Tojo refused an interview with Bose on the pretext of pressure of work. “Some Japanese sources suggest that India did not figure very prominently on Tojo’s list of priorities at this time.” The fact was that Tojo was himself prejudiced against the Indian Freedom Movement after the developments of the Bangkok meeting and the Mohan Singh incident. In holding such a view Tojo was influenced by officers in the Army who had definite hostility towards the Indian Independence Movement in East Asia.

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Bose understood that Tojo’s position-as the first among equals- was quite different from the European dictators. While Hitler and Mussolini had frequent contact with each other, Tojo had never met either of them in person. Before meeting with Tojo, Bose wanted to create a lobby in support of Indian Independence among the political and the military elite in Tokyo. He took enough efforts to educate the top military commanders of Japan about India and its freedom struggle.\(^{50}\)

Finally on June 10, 1943 the meeting took place between Bose and Tojo: “Once Tojo met Bose his prejudice was completely dispelled … with his appearance and manners Bose cut an imposing figure. The sincerity and intelligence he displayed in spelling out his opinion struck a responsive chord. Tojo was very deeply impressed by Bose’s personality, and underwent a complete change of heart about India and the Indian people as a whole.”\(^{51}\) The single-minded devotion of Bose to the cause of Indian Freedom and his preparedness to sacrifice everything for that cause had its unavoidable impact on everybody. His leadership and the dignified way in which he conducted himself changed the attitude of the local inhabitants in the Far East about the Indians in general. Bose also knew that the Japanese had a poor opinion of the Indians in general and the INA in particular. This consciousness made him determined to impress everybody by his flawless manners and the righteousness of the cause to which he was devoted.

Bose’s impact was so great that even the cynical Tojo could not remain uninfluenced by him. After their first meeting he offered to meet Bose again on 14\(^{th}\) June for the second time. During the discussion Tojo was frank and he told Bose: “whether India was invaded or not, she would come under Japanese control on the defeat of the British. But Japan had no demands to make on her beyond the necessities of war and intended her to be independent. Any action Indians could take themselves would be helped an appreciated by Japan; such action was in their own interests. Bose was encouraged in his project of provisional Government which would take control of

\(^{50}\) Ibid., p. 240.

Indian Territory as the Japanese forces moved on.”

He then heard Tojo make a declaration about India in the Diet: “Japan is firmly resolved to extend all means in order to help to expel and eliminate from India the Anglo-Saxon influence which are the enemy of Indian People, and enable India to achieve full independence in the true sense of the term.”

Bose, visiting Japan for first time, liked what he saw of these disarming people and was impressed by their vigour and discipline. Within a few days he had heard all that Rash Behari Bose could tell him of the League and the INA and discussed Japanese policy towards them with the war department. He studied the Japanese relation with the governments of Manchukuo and Nanking-China and their arrangements to grant ‘independence’ to Burma and the Philippine Islands. After trying to understand the Japanese mind, Bose thought it is no longer necessary for him to remain in disguise and on 19th June 1943, he had a press conference and followed it with two broadcasts to publicize further his presence in the Far East. Through these broadcasts he appealed once more to the people who doubted the merits of Axis powers: “If India did not trust the Axis, let it trust him: for ‘if the wily cunning and resourceful British politicians have failed to cajole and corrupt me, nobody else can do so.’ Let there be no more thought of compromise in England: it was economically impossible for her to give up India and madness on India’s part to expect it. But the three Axis powers had mortally wounded her and India was grateful for this and for offers of direct assistance. Indian liberty must however, be won with Indian blood. Only so would Indian strength suffice to preserve it.”

Bose saw his purpose of escape from India is being materialized, as by now he knew the international situation. The Axis powers, particularly Japan, were ready to help India; all Indians in Axis-controlled countries were organized as one, to bring assistance to those at home. Now India should do her part: “Civil disobedience must develop into armed struggle. And only when the Indian people receive the baptism of fire on a large scale will they qualify for their freedom...India shall be free- and

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53 Ibid., pp. 81-82.
54 Ibid., p. 82.
before long. And a free India will throw open the prison gates so that her worthy sons may step out of the darkness of the prison cells into the light of freedom, joy and self-fulfillment.”

There was the necessity of a dynamic leader, a man of commanding personality and indomitable will, energy and political ability, to lead the Indian Freedom Movement in East Asia. When the arrival of Bose was finalised, the Japanese wanted to know the reaction of Rash Behari Bose. There were doubts whether he would agree to turn the leadership over to S C Bose. But when Col. Iwakuro broke this news to Rash Behari Bose, he replied: “That is a good idea. He is a born leader. I will be glad to turn the leadership over to Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose. Our ultimate goal is to win our independence. Since I have done my bit, I would like Mr. Chandra Bose to take over. He is young and bouncy.”

Bose had heard about Rash Behari from V.D. Savarkar, when on 22nd June 1940, he had come to Savarkar to seek his advice on the vexed question of Hindu-Muslim unity. Rash Behari had correspondence with Savarkar and kept him informed about the political developments in Japan and the possibility of Japan joining the World War II, against Anglo-American imperialism. It seems that Savarkar had advised Bose to go to Germany and organise an Army from among the Indian Prisoners of War and then come to Japan with German help where he could join hands with Rash Behari Bose.

Bose left for Singapore from Tokyo with Rash Behari and Abid Hassan. He had persuaded Tokyo to replace Iwakuro with men of his choice; Yamamoto, as the head of Hikari Kikan, Japan’s liaison agency. His radio speeches had already created an atmosphere of eager anticipation among Indians in Southeast Asia. He reached Singapore on 2nd July 1943.He was given a tumultuous welcome and was received by the top military commanders J.K. Bhonsle and Mohammad Zaman Kiani at the

55 Ibid., pp. 82-83.
57 Ibid., p.159.
airport, and the Indian National Army gave him a guard of honor. Everywhere he went, Indians garlanded him with flowers and shouted greetings. Rash Behari introduced Bose to leaders of the IIL and officers of INA. Both of them tried to allay the doubts of some of their fellow revolutionaries regarding Japanese motive towards India. Bose remarked “we shall have to be awake and alive, on our guard, not only against the enemy British imperialism, against imperialistically inclined Japanese bureaucrats, among the Indians in our rank.”59 On 4th July 1943, representatives of the Indian Independence League assembled at the Cathya Theater to witness Bose’s acceptance of the leadership of the movement from Rash Behari Bose. Rash Behari formally handed over Bose the leadership of IIL and I.N.A. describing Bose as symbolizing all that is “best, noblest, the most daring and the most dynamic in the youth of India,”60

Bose addressed the gathering, reviewed the political crises in India and the war situation in Europe and Asia, expressing his confidence in Axis victory. He announced his plan to organize a provisional Government of Free India. “It will be the task of this Provisional Government to lead the Indian Revolution to successful conclusion… the Provisional Government will have to prepare the Indian people, inside and outside India, for an armed struggle which will be the culmination of all our national efforts since 1883.” 61 Bose concluded his speech with a flourish of Bengali oratory: “we have a grim fight ahead of us… In this final march to freedom, you will have to face danger, thirst, privation, forced marches- and death. Only when you pass this test will freedom be yours.”62

The next day, 5th July 1943, at 10:30 in the morning, Bose came in military uniform to address Indian army of liberation. Twelve thousand soldiers had gathered in front of Singapore’s municipal building. He insisted that this army had been formed and would go into battle entirely under Indian leadership. He named the army as Azad

60 Sugata Bose, His Majesty’s Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India’s struggle against empire, New Delhi: Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd, 2011, p.244.
62 Ibid., p.120.
Hind Fauj (“Free India Army”) and their battle cry: “Chalo Delhi!” (“Onward to Delhi”). “For an enslaved people,” he said with emotion, “there can be no greater pride, no higher honour, than to be the first soldier in the army of liberation.” He promised his troops that he would be with them “in darkness and sunshine, in sorrow and in joy, in suffering and in victory.” The soldiers responded with shouts of “Inquilab Zindabad!” (Long live Revolution) and cries of victory to Gandhi and Bose. “For the present,” Bose warned them, “I can offer you nothing except hunger, thirst, privation, forced marches and death. But if you follow me in life and in death- as I am confident you will – I shall lead you to victory and freedom.”

The same day, Premier Tojo on a visit from Manila, arrived in Singapore. On 6th July I.N.A. held another parade which was witnessed by Tojo and listened to Bose’s call to revolution. His presence at Bose’s side seemed proof again of Japan’s good faith. The parade was followed by the address of Tojo assuring that Japan had no territorial, military or economic ambitions in India and that India would achieve independence from foreign domination and that Japan would extend all-out aid for Indian liberation.

The news of the existence of Azad Hind Fauj was announced all over the East Asia. In months that followed, Bose impressed massive audience of soldiers and civilians with his speeches in Hindi and elicited an overwhelming positive response to his call for men and materiel for the final struggle against the British Raj. As the majority of Indian immigrants in Southeast Asia were from southern India, his speeches were translated into Tamil. On 9th July, there was another mass rally in Singapore, attended by Indians together with some Malays and Chinese. Bose recounted his earlier action on behalf of Indian Freedom. He addressed a crowd of more than sixty thousand civilians in Singapore; “Indians outside India, particularly Indians in East Asia are going to organise a fighting force which will be powerful enough to attack the British army of occupation in India. When we do so, a revolution will break out, not only among the civilian population at home, but also among the Indian Army, which is now standing under the British flag. From inside India and

63 Sugata Bose, His Majesty’s Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India’s struggle against empire, New Delhi: Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd, 2011, p.245.
64 Joyce Chapman Lebra, The Indian National Army and Japan, Singapore: ISEAS, 2008, p.120.
from outside, it will collapse and the Indian people will then regain their liberty.”

Bose’s belief that the INA would spark a revolution within India came to be shared by officers and men of the INA. Bose called for a total mobilisation of Indian manpower and financial resources in East Asia. He wanted three hundred thousand men under arms.

5.4.1 Rani Jhansi Regiment

Bose asked for a unit of Indian women to be raised and named it as Rani of Jhansi Regiment after the leading figure of the mutiny of 1857 who led her troops against the British. Women volunteered immediately and women training camps were opened under the command of Captain Lakshmi Swaminadhan, a doctor from Madras (present day Chennai). The women were provided with uniforms and military training to fight for Indian freedom. The Japanese were astonished at the idea of a women’s regiment and at first refused to supply ammunition for their training. The opposition was based on the traditional position of women in Japan. Women had no position in Japanese military tradition. The head of the Indian Independence League’s branch in Singapore, Attavar Yellappa, overcame the Japanese objection and found barracks and equipment for the women. Bose personally took great care in the selection of the trainers for the women recruits, out of the Non-Commissioned Officers from the INA veterans who were categorically advised to strictly avoid inadvertent use of rough and vulgar language while training. On 12th July 1943, Captain Lakshmi Swaminadhan arranged to have a Women’s Guard of Honour for Bose with a small squad of about twenty women dressed in blue-bordered white saris.

Soon the Rani Jhansi Regiment was trained in simple Hindi in Roman script and they were promoted to the ranks according to their abilities. The regiment was taught map reading, coding and decoding of secret messages, reconnoitring, necessary first aid to injuries and other related subjects with stress on maintaining strict discipline. As most of them lived away from India, they were taught some common aspects of India’s history and geography.

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At the advance camps of Rangoon and Maymyo, they did more practice of route marches with haversacks on their backs, carrying their arms and ammunitions and other field equipment. In the hilly forest areas of Maymyo, they had training in jungle warfare, camouflaging, ambush, mock-fighting, digging of trenches and guerrilla warfare. A good number of recruits from Rani Jhansi regiment took nursing training from Captain Lakshmi. Every one of them had to have the knowledge of using small arms, military equipments, military rules and information. A few notable soldiers of this regiment were Lt. Col. Lakshmi Sahgal, Puan Sri Janaki Thevar Nahappan, Protima Sen Anjali, Punnuswami Muniammeh Rangaswamy, Lt. Manwati Arya, Stella, Josephine, Bhagyalakshmi Davies, Anjali Suppiah, and S. Dhannalakshmi. Stella and Josephine were killed in the Malaysian front by British soldiers.

There was a large-scale reshuffling and expansion of departments at the IIL Headquarters, in preparation of organising the provisional Government. New departments were created: reconstruction department to administer freed territory, intelligence department, planning department and department of women’s organisations. The Publicity department under S.A Ayer was renamed the Department of Publicity and Propaganda. Lieutenant Colonel A.C Chatterji was appointed as the first secretary-general of League Headquarters. Bose discussed the functions of various departments in personal conversations with the new department heads and members. In this course of discussion Bose suggested that neither Gandhi nor Nehru would fight the British that both of them were working for some sort compromise and that compromise was not his way of gaining freedom.

Bose had underestimated the difficulties in raising the money needed to finance the I.N.A. and the provisional government. He did get contributions from the Indian community, often more enthusiastically from the poorer and middle class sections than from the rich. After taking charge of IIL and INA, from July to September 1943, Bose visited various South-east Asian countries galvanising support

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for his cause among Indian expatriates. He quickly grasped that Malaya, Thailand and Burma would be the most important countries for his goal. Malaya had nearly a million Indians—some wealthy financiers and bankers, as well as larger numbers of poor migrant labourers. The latter, in particular, had their first taste of human dignity and feeling of equal citizenship by joining the Azad Hind movement. Thailand, with its nominally neutral but effectively pro-Japanese government headed by Phibul Songkhram, supplied the crucial connection between Malaya and Burma. It too had an Indian immigrant community of about sixty thousand, Bose realised Burma would be the springboard for the march into India. There had been a large number of Indians, well-settled in Burma. But they were disliked by many Burmese who felt that Indian businessman and professionals were holding positions which should be filled by Burmese.

The Japanese conquest of Burma in co-operation with some Burmese nationalists followed the British debacle in Malaya and Singapore in the first half of 1942. Aung San and Ba Maw and other Burmese nationalists had reached out to the Japanese as Bose had to the Germans and other enemies of the British Empire. The Japanese, particularly Colonel Keiji Suzuki, who played the Fujiwara role in the Burmese drama, helped create the Burmese Independence Army. This force went out of control during and immediately after the Japanese conquest and was disbanded. In its place the Japanese later set up a civil administration, which Ba Maw agreed to head, and the Burma Defence Army. 69

Ba Maw and many other Burmese nationalists began their cooperation with Japanese holding great expectations. But Ba Maw describes the fate of the Burmese and other Asian people under Japanese occupation as follows: “As for the Japanese militarists, few people were mentally so race-bound….and in consequence so totally incapable either of understanding others or of making themselves understood by others …. For them there was only one way to do a thing, the Japanese way…. Only one destiny …. To become so many Manchukuos or Koreas tied forever to Japan.

69Ibid., pp. 499-500.
These racial impositions….made any real understanding between the Japanese militarists and the peoples of our region virtually impossible.”

Before becoming aware of the hard realities of the Japanese drive to use and humiliate other Asians, Ba Maw had headed the ‘trust Japan” program. As a concession to Burmese nationalist objections to their harsh rule, the Japanese agreed to grant ‘Independence’ to Burma on 1st August 1943. A Burmese constitution and native structure was elaborated, but the Japanese army remained and relations between the Japanese and the Burmese were often harsh and unpleasant. Ba Maw became the head of this new government which contained authoritarian elements, but was established in the name of the people. He invited Bose who was in Singapore to be a honoured guest for the celebration of Burmese independence. Ba Maw had met Bose in Singapore on 6th July and was impressed by his personality. On 1st August, Bose made a moving speech on the occasion of Burma’s freedom: “From 1925 to 1927, I used to gaze from the verandah of my cell in Mandalay prison on the palace of the last independent King of Burma and I used to wonder when Burma would be free once again. Today Burma is an independent country.” He concluded his speech saying “Just as the peacock emblem now flies over Government House in Rangoon—so will the tricolour soon fly over the Red Fortress of Delhi.” He reached Burma at the end of September for further celebrations. Bose addressed the people and the Indian expatriates for next two days with rousing speeches.

Bose assumed command of the Azad Hind Fauj in August. Though he became supreme commander of INA, he did not take any military rank. He gave up the civilian dress he preferred to be in military uniform. After the crisis of late 1942, there was a drastic fall of number in the INA. Bose and his staff officers discussed with Colonel Yamamoto and other Japanese officers the role of INA in the pending campaign on the Indian border. It was decided by all the officers in view of the small size of the I.N.A. that the troops should be trained and used in guerrilla warfare. They

70 Ibid., p. 500.
would be lightly equipped for mobility and for penetrating enemy lines and would have to live off the country in which they were operating.

As decided, the INA units were given guerrilla training including musketry and bayonet practice by the Japanese officers. Bose met with Field –Marshal Count Terauchi, the commander of the Southern Army, when the reorganisation of INA was over by August. Terauchi explained Bose that Japanese forces were preparing a campaign into India. The burden of the battle would be borne by the Japanese army, and India would be freed of British domination and handed over to the Indians as an independent territory. What the Japanese wanted of Bose was personal co-operation. The conversation clearly pointed to propaganda as the primary purpose of Japan’s co-operation with the INA. Bose did not accept the role of INA as explained by Terauchi. Bose made it clear to Terauchi that the only role acceptable to the INA in Indian campaign would be spearheading the advance. Indian freedom had to be won by Indians. Freedom secured through Japanese sacrifices would be worse than slavery. He told “The first drop of blood shed on Indian soil must be that of a soldier of the INA.”

On 9th October 1943, in a Liaison Conference it was decided that Bose should establish the FIPG (Free India Provisional Government) and it would be recognised by the Japanese government. On 21st October 1943, Bose proclaimed the formation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind in Cathay cinema building in Singapore. Indians from all parts of Southeast Asia assembled there. Bose announced the formation of the government and the composition of its first cabinet. “It will be the task of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind to launch and conduct the struggle that will bring about the expulsion of the British and their allies from the soil of India. It will then be the task of the Provisional Government to bring about the establishment of a permanent National Government of Azad Hind constituted in accordance with the will of Indian people and enjoying their confidence,” and he told “the provincial Government is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Indian. It guarantees religious liberty as well as equal rights and equal opportunities to all its

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When Bose had read the independence proclamation, he took an oath of allegiance to India as the Head of the state and Minister for War and Foreign Affairs, and as the Supreme Commander of the INA. Each member of the newly formed cabinet took the oath to liberate India. The FIPG was recognised by the Japanese government by 23rd October 1943. Japan’s recognition of the FIPG was immediately followed by eight other governments: Germany, Italy, Croatia, Manchukuo, Nanking, the Philippines, Thailand and Burma.

By midnight of 23rd October 1943, the FIPG declared war on the United States and Britain. Bose, as chief of State and commander of the INA, ordered the INA to initiate the attack. Bose proclaimed the declaration of war to a rally of fifty thousand Indians. He told them: “I want you to demonstrate to the world that you are resolved as one man to follow up this declaration with action that will show to the world that you mean bloody war when you declare war—so when I say ‘war’ I mean WAR- war to the finish- a war that can only end in the Freedom of India.” At a cabinet meeting A.D Loganathan asked “why drag in America, sir” as Indians had no quarrel with United States. Bose replied that the presence of American forces on Indian soil was “grim reality” that would make INA’s task of defeating the British “double difficult.” The United States should have put pressure on Britain to accede to India’s demand for independence immediately. Since the INA would have to fight against British and American troops on Indian soil, he wanted to include the United States in his government’s declaration of war. If Bose had not taken this step, his appeals to the American public the following year to support the cause of India’s freedom might have carried more weight.

Bose achieved remarkable success in forging a spirit of unity and solidarity among different religious communities and linguistic groups. He did so without asking his followers to give up their own ethnic affiliation. Bridging the disparities of class posed a somewhat greater challenge. Poorer Indians initially responded to Bose’s call with greater enthusiasm. He could barely conceal his exasperation with the

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76 Ibid., p. 130.
stinginess of a few of the richer Indians, though there were also stunning instances in which millionaires chose to become fakirs. “When the INA is getting trained either to march to victory or to spill its last drop of blood on the way,” he said to the Chettiars (the leading Tamil community of financiers) and other merchants on 25th October 1943, “the rich people are asking me whether total mobilisation means 10 percent or 5 percent. I would like to ask these people who are speaking of percentage whether we can tell our soldiers to fight and spill only 10 percent of their blood and save the rest.”78 Bose turned out to be a very successful fundraiser, ensuring receipts of nearly two million dollars a month by the close of 1943. The Chettiars from Tamil Nadu were among the big contributors to the coffers of the Azad Hind government.

Bose met Mohan Singh by December 1943 and expressed gratitude for his efforts and appreciated the problems he encountered in dealing with the Japanese. Mohan Singh in reply to Bose’s written questions told him that Nehru was Mohan Singh’s hero and he could not change his ideals overnight. In the course of a four-hour conversation Bose told him, “There is a group outside who is discontent with your leadership. The moment you come out there will be trouble. It is in the interest of the movement that you remain here longer.”79 Mohan Singh who had serious doubt about the Japanese policy questioned Bose about his faith in Japanese Military victory and successful campaign to India’s border. Bose replied “My name carries enough weight. When I land in Bengal everyone will revolt. Wavell’s whole army will join me.”80 Mohan Singh was not fully convinced by Bose’s thought. Bose left Mohan Singh in a somewhat altered mood. Bose do not want to put any pressure to Japanese for the release of Mohan Singh. Bose understood that Mohan Singh is unwilling to accept a position under Bhonsle, and he secured the transfer of Mohan Singh to better quarters in a comfortable bungalow where he can spend the duration of the war.

5.5 South East Asian Conference

On 5th and 6th November 1943, South East Asian Conference, with the representatives of Burma, Malaya, Netherland East Indies (now Indonesia),

78 Ibid., pp. 255-256.
80 Ibid., p.124.
Philippines and occupied China, was convened at Tokyo. As Bose represented no Indian territory, he refused to take part in the conference as a representative of India, but on the insistence of the Japanese government, he took part as an observer. In this conference, Tojo, to show his goodwill towards Bose and the cause of Indian Independence, decided that the territory of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, being a part of the Indian sub-continent, will be placed under him. This was done to give Bose the status of the Head of an Indian province so that he could be treated as other Heads of Governments in South East Asia. History shall record that a trick more sinister than this was never played by any nation. Events that followed in the Andamans after this declaration by the Japanese Government showed, in the course of time, that their declaration was a mere mockery. It is asserted that these Islands were never handed over either to Bose or on his behalf to his appointed Chief Commissioner Col. Loganathan who actually went there later with his staff to take over the charge of the Islands, on account of the superiority the islands gave them in the Bay of Bengal and access to the entire coast of India at this stage of the war. And later, after their reverses in Burma, it would have been too late anyway. From the point of Bose launching an attack on British India, these islands were of no consequence. So the only importance that this seat of his government had for him was a symbolic one and probably he knew it. For him, the centre of action was in Burma.

The South East Asian Conference was held at the Capitol Building, Tokyo in a rage of publicity and opened a new chapter in History of East Asia. At a rally held at the Hibiya Park on 8th November, Bose delivered a speech to the Japanese people in India. He pointed out that “as a result of the enemy’s propaganda, there are some misconceptions even among our friends and sympathizers….The Indian people had no experience of unity and they always fought among themselves. During their 100 years of fighting against Britain, the Indians never united to make common cause against Britain. It was unfortunate that India had no outstanding leader. Therefore, Indians need most a strong leadership that will keep them under discipline, a nation with vision and confidence never perishes. As long as a country has a living tradition

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no other country can destroy it…. British propaganda makes use of religious differences. It attempts to set the Muslim against the Hindu to divide us…the British discovered rather recently that they could possibly exploit the scheduled caste people. As the British admitted, however, they failed in this attempt, as they had failed in the case of religion…. They attempted to divide India into four or five states to make it easier for them to rule.”\(^{83}\)

After the South East Asian Conference, Bose was invited by the Chinese delegate Oseiei to visit Nanking. Like many others Oseiei was favourably impressed by Bose. By 17\(^{th}\) November, Bose took a flight from Tokyo to Nanking where he was received with great honour. The real purpose of Bose’s visit to Nanking was to have an opportunity to convey his belief and conviction to Chungking Government and Chinese people. On 20\(^{th}\) November, he made a radio broadcast in Nanking in which he talked about the Sino-Japanese relation. After two days, by 23\(^{rd}\) November, he made another broadcast from Nanking in which he made one protest against the military action China had taken on Burma-India border and also to take it to task for depending solely upon the United States and Britain.

From Nanking he made his next visit to Shanghai for meeting with the Indian residents there. He found in Shanghai a large number of Indian residents anxious to join the INA, but unfortunately they could not join the INA for lack of transportation facilities from there to Singapore. From Shanghai he left for Manila where he tried to raise some funds instead of soldiers. Bose arrived back in Singapore after an interval of four weeks.

5.6 Bose’s Visit to Andaman

The Andaman Islands lie 950 kilo meters away from the mouth of the river Hooghly and are at a distance of 194 kilo meters from Cape Negrais in Burma. The Andaman group of islands is 353 kilo meters in length; its extreme width, however is nowhere more than 52 kilo meters.\(^{84}\) The Japanese navy occupied the islands by 23\(^{rd}\)

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March 1942. Bose visited the Islands on 29th December 1943 in Japanese Air Force Aircraft and was received at the airport by Ishikawa, the Admiral in charge of the islands. The spy case known locally as the second spy case was in full swing at that time and unheard of tortures were perpetrated within the four walls of the Cellular Jail. Outside it, considerable panic prevailed. As Bose’s visit could not be put off and as the country could not be brought hurriedly to normal, precautions, by various ingenious methods, were taken to obliterate the abnormality prevailing in the Islands and keep Bose in the dark about the Japanese torture of Indians. No member of the public was given a chance to speak to him freely. Some Japanese official was always present to report the conversation that took place between him and a few Indians the Japanese allowed him to meet.

On Bose’s arrival at the aerodrome, a select band of officials were made to stand in two rows at the aerodrome. This was the party which had ostensibly gone to welcome Bose. They were all picked up overnight as the news of Bose’s arrival was kept off from the public on account of the war exigencies. He met them without speaking to any one of them as though he was inspecting a guard of honour. He, with his staff, after landing, was carried to the erstwhile Government House at Ross Island. The road from the aerodrome to Aberdeen Jetty, from which a crossing by boat is made to reach Ross Island, was ordered to be lined up by men, women and children. Of this order Bose was unaware. If he thought that this entire crowd had come to pay him homage, no one dared dispel the wrong impression. The Japanese were mortally afraid of the leakage of the news of the torture that they were perpetrating there.85

It must be mentioned here that, when Ross Island was the capital of the Andaman, the Government House, the Central Hospital with the office of the Senior Medical Officer, the Central Supply Stores with the Office of the Supply Officer, the Secretariat and the Cantonment with one company of English soldiers were located there. On account of all those activities, there was regular service of steam launches between it and Aberdeen which connected the mainland. At the time of the general evacuation, everything was shifted to Aberdeen for fear of naval bombardment by the

enemy. Consequently the launches plying between Ross and Aberdeen stopped. The Japanese did not resume this service because the island was barren when they came, neither did they populate it. Therefore the object of the Japanese, as it was apparent, was not actually to honour Bose by giving him the use of the derelict Government House, but to segregate him and isolate him on the unpopulated surface of this island. All this was done in the garb of security measures. There was no one on this island to give him news about the conditions prevailing in the Andamans. Their objective to keep Bose marooned, so to say, for so long as he was here, was achieved. Bose, being a casual visitor who saw the islands for the first time and who was quite unaware of the facts of torture and maltreatment meted out to Indians on ground of espionage, took everything here as normal and never suspected that the Japanese officials would deliberately hoodwink him. He was very cautiously taken out of Ross Island on two occasions, once, on a prearranged tour of outlying villages after visiting the Jail and the second time, ceremoniously to a crowded meeting at the only maidan of Port Blair.

He was taken to a certain village with a number of army and naval officers surrounding him. When the news reached villages that Bose was coming to them, the general feeling was that they would get a chance to speak to him face to face and tell him or his staff about some of their sufferings; but to the disappointment of all, surrounded as he was, that chance never came. At places he was made to meet some villagers in a crowd. Things were so arranged that he heard no one from the crowd but spoke himself to the crowd. The moment the Japanese thought that someone would stand up to talk to him; the meeting abruptly came to a close without anyone realizing what the next move was. All vehicles of transport being under Japanese control, no Indian could accompany him. In other words, he spoke to public, but actually he spoke to no one in particular nor did he hear anyone.  

A public meeting was arranged on the only maidan of Port Blair on 30th December 1943, in which a large number of people were ordered to attend. Bose came from Ross and reached the maidan in a ceremonious procession made up of

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Japanese officers in a number of cars. As usual no Indians from the Andamans were included in this procession. On arrival, he went up the rostrum and unfurled the Indian National flag, the first one to be hoisted on an Indian territory and renamed the islands as Shahid (Martyr) and Swaraj (Independence). The Chairman of the Andaman branch of the Indian Independence League, Mr Rama Krishna, gave a welcome address and presented a purse for the INA, after which Bose addressed the gathering. Without meeting any of the residents, he was again very ceremoniously driven back to Ross. 87

A visit to the jail was the itinerary of Bose. He was to go there on a morning. Now at the time of the visit of Bose, there were barely a score of actually imprisoned persons in the Jail. But the so-called second Spy case being on, there were more than a hundred persons undergoing tortures and interrogations daily. Bose was shown a score of persons who were actual prisoners and were at various jobs such as cleaning the garden, planting vegetables, sweeping the compound and cooking for the prisoners and such other routine jail work. He was taken to one or two wings to show him that there were hardly any prisoners to fill such a large jail and that for that reason it was practically empty. No Indians from the administration were allowed to accompany him on this occasion also. He never saw the wing in which tortured people were. It appears that Bose was totally taken in by the Japanese who covered his eyes with wool very successfully.

If he had seen persons whose skins were missing from thighs, scrotum, abdomen and chest and could not wear any apparel; a few who had no flesh on their breeches; a few who had no skin on parts of their bodies, the result of burns by petrol; a few who could not walk straight, the result of constant kneeling on sticks; a few who had deep knife cuts all over the fleshy parts of their bodies on which salt had been sprinkled; and questioned them about their predicament, things could have been different. He was taken to the jail deliberately, so that later, when news reached him by some chance from some source at his headquarters at Singapore, he might be perplexed and even say that he had seen nothing wrong there when he had actually visited it. That was the ulterior motive of the Japanese in showing him the jail. After

87 Ibid., p.62.
visiting the jail Bose told: “For Indians the return of the Andamans represents the first territory to be liberated from British yoke…The liberation of the Andamans has symbolic significance because the Andamans was always used by British as a prison for political prisoners. Most of the political prisoners sentenced to penal servitude for conspiracies to overthrow the British Government, and there have been hundreds of them, were locked up in this Island…Like the Bastille in Paris which was liberated first in the French Revolution setting free political prisoners, the Andamans where our patriots suffered, is the first to be liberated in the India’s fight for Independence…”

As Bose was to leave and as he had no chance to meet any of the members of the public, although he saw them everywhere, the Chairman of the Andaman branch of the Indian Independence League, Rama Krishna, suggested to him whether it would be possible for him to visit the headquarters of the League, and meet the Working Committee before he took off for Singapore. Bose readily accepted the invitation. But this was an unexpected event in the cut and dried programme of the Japanese. His aide informed the Admiral about this development. The Admiral met the Japanese Civil Officers immediately to discuss the eventualities. As all vehicles were in the charge of the Japanese, Bose had to inform them of his movement. The Japanese were visibly perturbed at the turn of the event. They were perplexed momentarily but their ingenuity gave birth to a novel procedure to frustrate the disclosure of the facts.

What was actually contemplated in inviting Bose to the headquarters was that he and his staff might find an opportunity to mix with a few persons other than the heads of departments who he had already seen twice at the two dinner parties. The idea was that he might get a clue to the true position and suffering and panic of the populace there. The Japanese had forestalled this and filled the hall and its precinct with men, women and children overnight and the noise of weeping children and conversing men and women drowned the two speeches that were delivered. The numbers of Japanese officers that accompanied Bose was exceptionally large. When the Chairman, Rama Krishna, arrived there to arrange for Bose’s reception and

89 Ibid., p. 65.
ordered these people out, he was politely told by an Inspector of Police on duty that those people had gathered there by the order of the Japanese. When a few members of the League and practically all the members of the working committee arrived a little earlier than 8 a.m. they found that the hall was filled up to capacity and that they could not themselves enter the hall. There was utter confusion in the hall. Bose arrived at the appointed time, with an unusual retinue of Japanese naval and army officers. Members of the league were lost in the crowd. With great difficulty, a way was found for him and others to enter the hall. He saw the crowd but actually he met no one. This procedure gave no chance to Bose to speak to anyone individually.

Outwardly the Japanese demonstrated by their action that the large crowd was attracted there by his name and popularity. The Chairman asked him to take over the administration as soon as possible and Bose immediately agreed to this. Bose left the islands at the early hours of 1st January 1944. Speaking on his Andaman visit a few days later at the headquarters of the Azad Hind Government, Bose observed: “During the visit, I and the members of my party had the unique experience of our lives when we stood on the soil of free India for the first time. It was an unforgettable event for us to see our Tricolour National Flag fluttering in the air over the former British Chief Commissioner’s residence on Ross Island…And we wondered all the time how the wheels of history were now moving in India’s favour…”. A month after his departure, the much dreaded Spy Case came to an end. Thirty three persons were shot dead and the like number were given long terms of imprisonment. This took place before the arrival of Col. Loganathan and his staff in February 1944.

With the closure of the so-called Second Spy Case, people on the Islands thought, that their misery had come to an end. Bose’s visit to the Islands gave people certain amount of consolation. They considered that there was someone who would extend his protective hand in their hour of adversity. Soon after his departure came the Chief Commissioner and his staff from Singapore. People were now doubly assured by the progress of events, and felt certain that the administration having come to the hands of Indians, conditions would improve and the reign of cruelty and terror would

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90 Ibid., p.92.
cease. Although Col. Loganathan, the Chief Commissioner, appointed by the Provisional Government of India established at Singapore, arrived in Port Blair in the beginning of 1944, up to the middle of the year there were no changes in the administration. The Chief Commissioner made several attempts to elicit information about his position and that of his staff, but no clarification was ever made. However, the Japanese never gave over the charge of the islands to Col. Loganathan and his coming here was a mere farce, as there was no record of any Commission of inquiry. However, the Japanese never gave over the charge of the islands to Col. Loganathan and his coming here was a mere farce, as there was no record of any Commission of inquiry.92

There was something else that, in all probability, was a direct consequence of Bose’s visit to Port Blair. This was a Proclamation issued by Bose as Supreme Commander of the Azad Hind Fauj, in March, 1944, classifying the duties of the Japanese forces and the Azad Hind Fauj on entering India. Actually, more than the soldiers it was meant for the civilian population of India who are the addressee. Bose exhorts them to go about their daily work without fear. The only people who, at that point in time, could qualify as the intended recipients of this proclamation were the people of the Andamans. “If any person fails to understand the intentions of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and the Indian National Army, or of our Ally, the Nippon Army, and dares to commit such acts as are itemised hereunder which would hamper the sacred task of emancipating India, he shall be executed or severely punished in accordance with the Criminal law of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and Indian National Army or with the martial Law of the Nippon Army, the application of which has been agreed upon between the two allied armies, namely the Indian national Army and its ally, the Imperial Nipponese Army.”93

Punishable Acts:

1. Rebellious acts against the Provisional Government of Azad Hind or the Indian National Army, or ours ally, the Nipponese Army.


92 Ibid., pp.66-68.
3. Acts of stealing and taking by force, damaging and destroying war materials which are in the possession of the Provisional Government or belong to our Ally, the Nippon Army.

4. Acts of damaging or destroying valuable material resource controlled or utilised by the Provisional Government of Azad Hind or the Nippon Army under previous arrangement with the Provisional Government.

5. Acts of destroying various installations or equipments for traffic, communication, broadcasting etc.

6. Violent acts against, intimidation of, killing or wounding of, or doing other harmful acts to those who belong to the provisional Government of Azad hind and the Indian Army or our ally, the Nippon Army.

7. Acts of spreading enemy propaganda or wild and false rumours, and other acts of disturbing and misleading the minds of inhabitants.

8. Acts of disturbing the money circulation and economic organisation or of obstructing the production and free interchange of commodities.

9. Any act other than those contained in the above items, that benefits the enemy or is harmful to peace and order, and the well-being of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind and the Indian National Army or our ally, the Nippon Army.

10. Acts of attempting, instigating and abetting those acts contained in the above items."

The trial and punishment of such criminals will entirely be the discretion of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind except when crimes committed are of such a nature as must be dealt with the Nippon Army as agreed upon between the two Allied Armies.

This proclamation and its various items are essential in understanding the situation under review. The essence of Bose’s personality was a curious mixture of idealism (which many have perceived as misplaced) and pragmatism. Perhaps it was his pragmatic side which chose to ignore acts of highhandedness on the part of his ally, the Nippon Army, in the interest of larger picture. Perhaps he was convinced by

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the Japanese that these cases of espionage were real, as they frequently are under conditions of occupation. There is certainly reason to believe, in light of above proclamation, that he was aware that all Indians were not necessarily anti British and that his ally, the Nippon Army, would not be welcomed by all and sundry on Indian soil.

There was a second proclamation issued by Bose, this time as Head of State, on 4th April 1944, which reiterates all that was stated in the first one and the tone is just severe and business like. And the suggestion that he believed that people in the Japanese conquered areas might want to work against their interests, is unmistakable, as the paragraph below will show. “The Provisional Government guarantees the safety of life and property of the Indian population in the liberated areas, but will inflict severe punishment on those who carry on any activities, overt or covert, which might be of help to our Anglo-American enemies or their allies, or might disturb the work of reconstruction to be started by the Provisional Government.”95 Whatever may have been the compulsions, he did not want anything to come in the way of his alliance with Nippon. Also quite clear in both these Proclamations, by the Supreme Commander and the Head of State respectively, is the allusion to the affairs in the Andamans.

Before the close of 1943, secret agents sent by Bose had already reached Calcutta. Soon after his arrival in Singapore, he had felt the need for a wireless link with Bengal. The spies that the Japanese had sent into India had not been very successful. Bose tried to assert control over intelligence operations based in Penang and Rangoon, and put N. G. Swami in charge of what came to be called the Azad Scholl. In March, four well-trained intelligence operatives- Bhagwan Lu, Harbans Lal, Kanwal Singh, and Kartar Singh- had accompanied Swami on the journey from Europe to Asia on the blockade runner S.S. Osorno. On 8th December, Bose, Swami and Hasan put these four together with another four trained in Penang and dispatched this group of eight under the leadership of S. N. Chopra toward India on board a Japanese submarine. The group landed with weapons, money and sophisticated

wireless equipment on the Kathiawar coast of Gujarat on the night of 22nd or 23rd December 1943. They had been instructed to split into four pairs and head toward Bengal, the North-West Frontier, the United Provinces in northern India and Bombay. They were captured the very next day, and Bose espionage network folded.

In January 1944, radio contact was successfully established between partisans in Calcutta and Bose in Burma. One of the earliest messages transmitted did not contain any valuable military intelligence. It conveyed the news of Prabhabati’s death. “You look tired,” Debnath Das said to Bose that evening. “No, I am not tired,” Bose replied. “I heard today that I have lost my mother.”

5.7 The Free India Provisional Government Moves to Burma

In December Bose moved FIPG Headquarters and the INA from Singapore to Rangoon. The second division was being organized and trained. On 7th January 1944 the Hikari Kikan also moved to Rangoon. Bose had always planned to use Burma as a springboard to attack the enemy in India. After moving to Burma, Bose declared independence in August. In the meantime, the Japanese Army was regrouping itself to make preparations against a possible counter-attack on the part of the British-Chinese forces. In Burma Colonel Yamamoto was replaced as head of the Kikan by Lieutenant-General Isoda Sabur. Several things prompted the replacement of Yamamoto by Isoda and Yamamoto’s relegation to a secondary position in the Kikan. Bose wanted INA strength increased to three divisions; to which Yamamoto strongly resisted. Second, the offensive into India was pending and it would be logical to have a higher-ranking officer as chief of the Hikari Kikan. Furthermore, Isoda was as benign a general as anyone could ask for and he would be able to placate Bose, even though Japan could not always agree to Bose’s insistent demands. The only person unhappy with the new arrangement was Yamamoto, whose relations with Bose continued to deteriorate.

96 Sugata Bose, His Majesty’s Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India’s struggle against empire, New Delhi: Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd, 2011, p. 266.
The orders of the reorganized Hikari Kikan were virtually the same as for its predecessor. The Kikan was to maintain liaison during the forthcoming campaign between the Southern Army and the newly created (BAA) Burma Area Army under it, and the 15th Army below the BAA on the one hand and the INA and FIPG on the other. The Kikan would deal with the old IIL too. Problems of liaison were compounded as preparations for the campaign progressed. Special sections were added to the Kikan to handle administrative, medical and weapons supply problems with the INA. Fujiwara had established the first contacts with the Indian POWs, helped strengthen the IIL and ushered the INA into being. Under Iwakuro, the Kikan had been mainly a political and propaganda organ. Under Yamamoto, most of the political appointments of the Iwakuro Kikan were replaced by military men and the Kikan took on an increasingly military character. Now under Isoda the Kikan was called on to function as a military liaison unit during the Imphal campaign. 98

Isoda was immediately plunged into problems of maintaining liaison and cooperation between the BAA-15the Army Headquarters and the INA in the midst of the campaign. Liaison requirements were much more urgent than they had been under Isoda’s predecessors. Issues arose at all levels of co-operation, from chiefs of staff to the fighting man in the jungles around Imphal. Isoda was at Bose’s side during meetings with General Mutaguchi, commander of the 15th Army to which INA units were attached, meetings with General Kawabe, commander of the BAA, and meetings with Field-marsharl Terauchi of the Southern Army. Isoda watched as agreements were concluded regarding administration of captured territory which was to be handed over to the INA and for the operation of the INA First Division under command of the 15th Army and ultimately under the BAA. The agreements were sanctioned in each case by the 15th Army command, the BAA command, and IGHQ in Tokyo. At the outset of the Imphal campaign in January, relations between Bose and the Japanese commanders appeared to Isoda to be good. Optimistic pronouncements about the liberation of India were issued by Bose and Tojo at the start of the campaign.

Meanwhile, there was increasing indication of the enemy’s counter-attack. 10th March was set as the target date for the army command to swing into action. The

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98 Ibid., pp.135-136.
Japanese had to prepare ground for the FIPG and INA to move into Burma and they had to obtain concurrence of the Burmese before they could let the Indians move in. As the strategic plans of the Japanese army to launch the operations progressed, it became urgently necessary to work out the plans for Indo-Japanese collaboration. In the view of the fact that feelings in India were anti-British but not yet pro-Japanese enough to allow the Japanese army moving in, the Japanese made it a principle to stick to their basic policy of helping India to achieve her independence. The strategic aims of the Japanese and the Indians were quite different. Japan saw the invasion as a pre-emptive strike to forestall British attempts to re-conquer Burma. The INA, on the other hand, saw its role as that of a catalyst for a civilian uprising against British rule. The capture of Imphal and Kohima would open the way for its advance into the rest of Assam and Bengal, where heroes’ welcome awaited them. All that was required for “ultimate success,” Bose said on 8th January 1944, was that “action within the country must synchronize with the action from without.”

Bose met Gen. Kawabe, commander of the BAA. And Gen. Kawabe promised Bose to extend every possible co-operation and assistance to India for achieving her freedom. In explaining his ideas and plans to Gen. Kawabe, Bose reiterated his belief that he should take up arms now to fight the British taking advantage of present war and join hands with any country which would regard Britain and the United States as common enemies. He declared:

“1. The Indian National Army should be the spearhead of the whole advance into India. The first drop of blood to be shed on Indian soil should be that of the member of the Indian National Army.

2. In view of the fact that the present war will be prolonged, I want to improve the quality and quantity of the Indian National Army.

3. Since the existing situation is working to the disadvantage of the Axis Powers, the Indian public are in two minds as to which side to support. They are susceptible to a compromise with the British. There is an urgent need to take a

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decisive action. Should this action be delayed, the Indian public might be won over to the enemy side.

4. One way to prevent this from happening is to set up the provisional Army moving into India; then the evidence of our political capability will win radical elements over to our side. Then support will increase at a snow-ball ing pace if they learn that we have Japan behind us.”

In the month of January 1944, Bose was gathering civilian recruits in Burma for the INA and raising resources from wealthy Indians for his war chest. Many Bengali women joined the Rani of Jhansi Regiment in Burma. Lakshmi Swaminathan had come to Burma with several hundred soldiers of her women’s regiment, leaving M. Satyavati Thevar in charge of the rear headquarters in Singapore. Men from the Tamil and Telugu speaking communities in Burma swelled the ranks of the INA. The civilian response at Bose’s public rallies in Burma was as enthusiastic as it had been in Malaya.

Two issues precipitated conferences in March 1944 between Bose and Kikan officials. Each series of conferences lasted at least three days with threats and counter-threats. Each series ended finally in Bose winning his point when the Kikan reluctantly conceded. One issue was the establishment of a National Bank. Bose had already been assured of necessary capital and of objections. The second issue was over the appointment of a Japanese military officer as chairman of the proposed Indo-Japanese War Co-operation Council to function on Indian soil after the entry of the INA and Japan into India. Bose refused to consider the Japanese suggestion. Whenever Kikan officials hinted that high-ranking officials in Tokyo would be upset at Bose’s stand, Bose threatened to cable Tojo or Sugiyama himself. This was an effective counter-threat which Bose used on more than one occasion in dealing with the Hikari Kikan.

5.8 The Imphal Campaign

By 18th March 1944, the INA was moved towards Imphal and Kohima, the north-eastern part of India, with “Chalo Delhi” on their lips, crossing the Indo-Burman frontier and carried the armed struggle onto Indian soil. By this time in Tokyo, Tojo declared in the Imperial Diet on 22nd March: “What-ever area the India National Army liberated should be placed under the administrative control of the FIPG. It is the aim of Japan to crush the enemy and help to place India under the complete control of Indian people. Wherever the INA goes, the Indian people will welcome it with open arms. With their patriotism aroused, one area after another will be liberated, ending up with the achievement of independence of whole of India.”

Bose issued a call to the Indian people to co-operate with the invaders and prepared a proclamation as Supreme Commander and as Head of State. On 24th March, with General Kawabe, Bose attended a full conference between the Provisional Government and the Japanese Army on the problems of the occupation. Bose had not agreed to the Japanese Chairman and hence the problem remained unsettled.

While the Imphal offensive was in progress, relations between the Japanese and INA fighting men deteriorated. Under battle conditions in the midst of monsoon jungle, with no supplies, tempers were short. Each side accused men from the other side of arrogance. Protocol regarding saluting was the immediate cause of numerous incidents. Isoda and his Kikan staff were called on to assuage the wounded pride of the Indians. From the INA standpoint, Japanese-MNA cooperation was a relationship between equals. The INA had been recognised as an allied army before the fighting began and the INA was the army of a government now legally recognized in international law. From the Japanese standpoint, however, and especially in the eyes of some fighting men, prejudice remained because the INA was composed largely of POWs. Surrender had no legitimate place in Japan’s long military tradition and ideal. The INA therefore suffered from a taint of disloyalty from the Japanese viewpoint. Furthermore, to many Japanese who dealt with the INA on an operational level, it seemed that INA demands often far exceeded reason and reality. When Japanese

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supply officers were pressed to extend one day’s rations to three days, Indian fighting men were likely to insist on their right to consume the rations in one day. Japanese often felt Indians were prone to insist on rights when the business of fighting was more pressing. Furthermore, the Japanese who dealt with Indians on a day-to-day basis did not always understand Japan’s India policy.

From the standpoint of the INA, the campaign was an all-out struggle to the finish for Indian liberation; while for Japan, Imphal was a limited holding operation defending Burma while the higher priority campaigns in the Pacific were being fought. The Pacific theatre had first claims on Japan’s fast-diminishing supplies. Just as there were no limits to the INA objective, Indian demands for material support were insatiable. No degree of assistance the Japanese could give would satisfy Indian requirements. And the Japanese capacity for response was decreasing rapidly. The gap would never be closed. Despite General Isoda’s gentle nature, Bose grew increasingly insistent and could not be placated.

Indian leaders felt the difference among Japanese in the degree of understanding shown toward the independence movement. S.A. Ayer, Minister of Publicity and Propaganda in the FIPG, classified the liaison officers into three types:

1. The “Manchurians” – “the arrogant, obstinate type who had reduced the people of Manchuria to virtual serfdom. They did not see much point in Japan offering all-out aid to Bose except on condition of something concrete in return - say, at least a promise of military, economic or political concessions to be given to Japan in Free India. They suffered from a fit of racial superiority”,
2. “the true sincere but rather impotent group of juniors who went out of their way to help us, to encourage us, and to apologize for the shot-sighted attitude” of the first group, and
3. “the colourless group which fully endorsed Tokyo policy, but would only pray and hope that the INA would somehow win India’s independence, even in spite of the ‘Manchurian’ group”. Further, Ayer charged the Manchurians
“tried hard to pick puppets from among insignificant Indians and also to play off one man against another”.”104

On 5th April 1944 Bose announced the formation of the National bank of Azad Hind. After two days on 7th April with Imphal Campaign being fairly launched, Bose moved a small headquarters north, from Rangoon to Maymyo near Mandalay. The Japanese General Mutaguchi had his base there. Bose urged Mutaguchi to avoid the cutting of Imphal-Kohima road and to leave a route open for the British to retreat. He reckoned that once the British were forced back from Imphal, the plains of Assam and Bengal would be open to his army. According to his plan the next line of defence for the British will be the chhota Nagpur plateau, after his triumphant entry into Calcutta by the autumn of 1944. The fall of Imphal was expected in three weeks, the consequence of which might well be “a revolt in Bengal and Bihar against British rule in India on a far large scale.”105 His expectation was that this would be the climax of his whole life: “the work would be endless, the strain greater than the greatest he had known. It was good therefore to escape for a time from the surging militancy of torrid Rangoon, into coolness and peace.”106 On 8th April, the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters made the following announcement concerning the military development in Burma:

1. Our crack troops, fighting side by side with the INA, captured Kohima early on 6th April.
2. Our attack on the enemy’s airborne troops in the Kata area is moving along smoothly.”107

Mutaguchi did not find it necessary to follow Bose’s preferred strategy; he closed the Imphal-Kohima road, denying the British any chance of escape toward the railhead of Dimapur and the route to Ledo. Bose decided to make a virtue out of necessity and persuaded himself that a large number of British Indian troops and war

107 Ibid., p.109.
materiel captured in Imphal would strengthen his leverage with the Japanese. Soon it was understood that the 2nd and 3rd INA regiments would have to face the enemy before it entered Imphal. Bose was happy about it, realising that it would increase his stake in Japanese victory. On 25th April just before the Japanese Army Headquarters moved to the front, Gen. Mutaguchi realised his wrong move. Colonel M.Z.Kiani, the INA Divisional Commander, sent information that whole of his Division was now going into action and that the first regiment should join him. On the other side, from Chin Hills, where Shah Nawaz Khan was commanding two battalions, were complaints about the poor condition of his battalions as there was much malaria and poor supply of food and other resources. Shah Nawaz Khan was convinced that the Japanese were deliberately short-changing the INA. He wrote later:

“The Japanese could, if they wanted to, help us in this respect, but they did not do so and I am of the opinion that they did it deliberately. They had seen the spirit and determination of our men and had realized that they would stand no nonsense from the Japanese. The actual fact was, as Field marshal Terauchi had told Netaji long before in Singapore, the Japanese did not want large formations of INA to come to the front and now that they were there the Japanese wished to break their spirit and health by putting impossible obstacles in their way. All that they wanted to do was to break the morale of the INA and tell Netaji that his army could not face the rigours of hard campaign... the Japanese were putting us through a terrible test indeed.”

Shah Nawaz Khan always had deep mistrust of the Japanese and he was not completely fair in his thinking as there were many Japanese who also died due to lack of supplies of medicine food and air cover. Bose took the matter to Mutaguchi, who confessed that lack of supplies and transport difficulties were affecting his whole force and he promised to let the regiment join Kiani on the main Imphal front as soon as possible. Meanwhile the monsoon had started and Bose shifted back to Rangoon from Maymyo where he was not able to get proper news of the front. Bose heard from both M.Z Kiani and Shah Nawaz Khan about the supply shortage and transportation bottlenecks in the front. He set up a supply board in Rangoon and instructed

Alagappan, the supply minister, to buy local produce in Mandalay to provide for the INA. Bose made a visit to the headquarters in Singapore and collected some fund and asked the second division to be ready to move to the front in July or August. He also made a visit to third division which was in Johore.¹¹⁰

Till 6th May, the Imphal campaign was going positively but somewhat slower than was anticipated. A statement was issued by Bose about the progress of the year. He affirmed that the achievements were far more than he had expected and told that there could be no relaxation, the fight must go on, reinforcement and supplies must be sent in the front and that total mobilisation must be hastened. Some problems now required more attention, like the creation of the revolution in India, propaganda to the Indian Army and administrative backing for the INA. The administrative task, in particular, was developing. The anniversary of INA was also marked by carefully worded broadcasting on the war situation and the situation in India. The Allied invasion of Europe happened by this time, which did not disturb Bose any more than American success in the pacific. The march to Delhi might take two more years, but he had no doubt ‘that we shall be able to liberate India’ provided that there were no compromise between Gandhi and the British, which would make his task more difficult. He scorned the two agents of Allied propaganda, the ‘Bluff and Bluster Corporation’ (BBC) and the ‘Anti-India Radio’ (AIR), and refuted arguments and statements which they had made about him. Their propaganda was false; he had redeemed all he had promised. He had the strength and organisation to accomplish it, strength which came, not from superior allowance and equipment, but faith and sacrifice, heroism and fortitude. When India would be free, “All those who are now in the service of the British government and are efficient in their work will be taken over by the new Government… provided they were not pro-British at heart, and … had not gone out of their way to harm the independence movement.”¹¹¹

Soldiers of the Indian Army would be received on the same terms and their Indian Army service would be allowed to count for their INA pensions. The British

¹¹⁰ Sugata Bose, His Majesty’s Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India’s struggle against empire, New Delhi: Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd, 2011, p.278.
should now accept the ‘Quit India’ resolution and give effect to it and ‘I guarantee that no single Japanese soldier will set foot on Indian soil’. Yet: “The British who spilt the blood of innocent freedom-loving Indians and torture them inhumanly…must pay for their crimes. We Indians do not hate the enemy enough. If you want your countrymen to rise to heights of superhuman courage and heroism- you must teach them- not only to love their country-but also to hate their enemy.”

By June 1944, two hundred thirty thousand Indians took written oaths of allegiance to the government in Malaya alone. These oaths were produced after the war during the Red Fort trial as legal evidence that the war had been waged by a duly constituted government. On 6th July, Bose gave a detailed justification of his course of action during the Second World War to Gandhi who was recently released from jail with broken health. He told Gandhi that he found nothing wrong in seeking help in the form of loans from abroad if the almighty British Empire could go around with a begging bowl for foreign help. As one who had stood resolutely for national self-respect and honour all his life, he would be the last person to succumb to any foreign power. Whatever he had done was “for enhancing India’s prestige before the world and for advancing the cause of India’s freedom.” Once India became free, the mission of the provisional government he had set up would be over. The Indian people would then choose their form of government and decide who should be in charge of that government. He and his co-workers regarded themselves as servants of the Indian people. Freedom of their motherland was the only reward they sought in the return for their suffering and sacrifice. “There are many among us who would like to retire from the political field, once India is free. The remainder will be content to take up any position in Free India, however humble it may be. The spirit that animates all of us today is that it is more honourable to be even a sweeper in Free India than to have the highest position under British rule.”

The monsoon altered the entire topography on the Indo-Burma border. The muddy terrain made the situation worst for the Army to perform to the best of their

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112 Ibid., p.118.
114 Ibid., pp.278-279.
ability. On 10th July the Japanese informed Bose that their military position had become untenable and they had no option but to order a withdrawal from Imphal. The Japanese had taken an enormous risk in deciding to travel light with limited supplies across long distance, over difficult and treacherous terrain. The Japanese counted on capturing “Churchill rations” in Imphal and Kohima, as the supply links connecting Rangoon and Mandalay with the front line were tenuous. The British Army was more in number and with all escape routes blocked, the British fought with their back to the wall in Imphal. The Americans organised a continuous airlift of supplies into Imphal throughout the siege, which lasted three and half months.\(^{115}\)

The adverse turn in the operation worried the Japanese Army commander. He did everything possible to turn the tide, but it now appeared that the Indo-Japanese joint operation was doomed to fail. As a follow-up in the development of his strategic operation, Bose was planning to reorganise the functions of the Provisional Government. The idea was to divide the area of his activities into three parts. The first was East Asia, which he would continue to use as his political and military base. The second part was the liberated territories, where every effort had to be made to expand civil administration and start reconstruction programmes. The third part was the areas still under enemy occupation and earmarked for liberation by INA. The 15th Army was forced to give up completely its original operation plans knowing the situation. On 3rd July, a telegram was sent from the Southern Army Headquarters to Gen. Kawabe instructing him to fall back on Manipur and hold the line there. On 5th July the Regional Army issued orders for cancelling the Imphal Operations. This put an end to the long-cherished dream of Bose to move on to Delhi. Some soldiers of the INA of Kiani Division surrendered to the enemy at the base of Chamol. The Nagas, the major tribal community around Kohima were helpful to the INA troops lead by Shah Nawaz Khan. The Manipuri around Imphal also supported the INA and a few joined the INA and went back to Burma with the troops.\(^{116}\) Japan’s decision to suspend the Imphal campaign was made public on 26th July, the day Tojo resigned as prime minister. On 21st August 1944, Bose publicly acknowledged the failure of the Imphal offensive in a radio address from Rangoon he blamed the early monsoon,

\(^{115}\) Ibid., pp.275-276.
which compounded defects in transport and supply. The troops made their way back to Yeu and Mandalay by September. Women of the Rani Jhansi Regiment who were trained in nursing took care of the sick and wounded veterans of the battle. Bose was deeply affected by the suffering of his soldiers. He met all the officers in person and embraced them for their brave deeds.

5.8.1 Back to Burma

The full account of the dead and missing could not be compiled until the regiments were back to the stations in September and October. INA witnessed a heavy loss of men. The division had started out for Imphal with six thousand and only two thousand six hundred returned, with broken health. During the campaign, seven hundred and fifteen men deserted, about four hundred were killed in battle, about eight hundred surrendered and about fifteen hundred died of disease and starvation.117

Arriving in Rangoon following INA and Japanese withdrawal from the Imphal front, Bose thanked Japanese authorities for their help, without which the transfer of the Provisional Government from Shonan to Burma would have been quite impossible. At the same time, Bose was of course dissatisfied with the handling of the military situation at Imphal. If the INA had been built up to full strength of three divisions and used as regular fighting units rather than in guerrilla operations and for intelligence, he felt the outcome might have been different. He decided that these problems would have to be remedied.

Even the sympathetic Fujiwara, who spent the campaign as General Mutaguchi’s liaison officer with the Japanese force of which the INA Division was a part, was disappointed. ‘As a revolutionary Army,’ he says, ‘its morale was high and it was quite well organised; but the standard of its tactics, training and leadership was low…. It lacked, in particular; offensive strength and tenacity.’118 Apart from this they lacked equipments also in the front. INA had no wireless sets, telephones, transport and weapons heavier than light machine guns. The INA soldiers were in old British

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118 Ibid., p.127.
Khaki uniforms in which they were easily distinguishable from the Japanese and British–Indians; they were quite conspicuous in the jungle.119

Bose was unhappy about having to deal with Hikari Kikan rather than directly with the BAA and the Japanese Government. He regarded the liaison agency as an unnecessary hindrance and cause of misunderstanding. Furthermore, he felt that Japan’s strategy had been at fault. Japan and the INA should have made an immediate attack on Chittagong. This would have sparked the anti-British revolution in Bengal which would have spread rapidly all over India. Bose did not want the INA soldiers to be subject to Japanese military jurisdiction even though they were fighting under Japanese commanders. A compromise was arranged whereby Japanese military jurisdiction and discipline will prevail in cases of emergency only.

Bose complained bitterly about the Kikan in a letter to Foreign Minister Shigemitsu. In it he asked for the elimination of the Kikan and for a Japanese diplomat accredited to the FIPG. His letter concluded with the threat that, unless he received a favourable reply, he would resign from leadership of the FIPG and INA and lead a suicide squad into India. This proved to be a successful stratagem. Another problem was the transfer of captured territory to FIPG Commissioner A. C. Chatterji. Agreement provided for the transfer of captured territory to the FIPG, but the territory would be in Burma, and Premier Ba Maw objected. This created problems for the Hikari Kikan in dealing with the Burmese Government. There was behind the immediate dispute accumulated hostility of the Burmese toward Indians, who were often successful businessmen in Burma.120

Toward the end of October, Bose left Singapore for Tokyo. On 1st November, as the head of the Provisional Government, he met with Tojo. He expressed displeasure with the attitude of the liaison agency Hikari Kikan, and of Japanese military officers in Southeast Asia. He wanted to deploy the entire first division of the INA in the Indian offensive and to train two further divisions in Malaya. He demanded full control of intelligence operatives to be sent to India. He sought

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119 Ibid., p.127.
acknowledgment of his government’s right to issue currency and exercise jurisdiction over abandoned Indian property all over Southeast Asia. Tojo yielded on the political and economic questions and promised to discuss the military matters with his commander.\textsuperscript{121}

According to a secret British Intelligence survey dated 2\textsuperscript{nd} October 1944, there were about twelve thousand INA troops in Burma in March 1944, of whom about four thousand were in the forward areas. Another seven thousand were believed to be on the way from Malaya to Burma and the third division was under training in Malaya. In Manipur the INA suffered heavy losses, and “this shock, coupled with disease and hard living conditions, soon began to tell”: “Several gave themselves up, including a few INA officers of some importance, and still greater numbers were captured. Nevertheless, as in the case of Arakan, there was no question of mass desertion: some 700 of the INA have come into our hands since the end of February 1944, and the rest have retired with the Japanese forces.” In September 1944, the numbers of INA troops in Burma were “still very considerable,” and reinforcement from Malaya since March may have raised the total to “something in the neighbourhood of 20,000.” “If for no other reason,” the report stated, “the numbers involved alone would make the INA a major security problem.” Desertions from the INA were not only very limited in number; “going over” was a two-way street. More than a hundred Indian soldiers on the British side had crossed over to the INA in the early weeks of fighting in Arakan, and were welcomed by Bose as “our new comrades” in Rangoon. If the early success had been sustained and if the INA had reached the plains of Assam, “defections by Slim’s sepoys might have grown from a trickle to a flood and destroy the 14\textsuperscript{th} Army—as Bose was convinced they could.” Shah Nawaz Khan may have been too harsh in saying that the Japanese had let them down badly and that but for “their betrayal of the INA, the history of the Imphal Campaign may have been different one.” Yet even the British assessment in September 1944 suggested that it was “the Japanese Army which failed the INA,” and the failure of the Japanese to attain their objectives prevented the INA from “being used in the role for which it was designed.”\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., pp. 282-283.
5.8.2 Again at The Mission

Despite the failure of Imphal Campaign, Bose still maintained his fighting spirit. He wanted India to be freed from the British at any cost. On the occasion of the opening of the first Diet session under the Koiso cabinet, Bose sent a message to Premier Koiso expressing his unyielding determination. “I hereby declare that we will fight side by side with Japanese and other friendly powers until we win independence by crushing our common enemy.”

In the middle of October, Bose was invited by the new Japanese Prime Minister, General Kuniaki Koiso, for a conference in Rangoon where he met with his top military commanders and discussed INA’s future course of action. On 21st October, Bose expressed the hope of taking Imphal and Chittagong in a new offensive. Bose made a visit to Tokyo accompanied by Chatterji, Lieutenant Colonel Kiani and Major Habibur Rahman by 31st October. Bose stayed there for ten days in preparation for a new Indian offensive. He made an announcement over radio on 8th November, “I have come to Tokyo to see General Koiso and other Japanese Ministers personally, as I want greater collaboration of military officials… the battle for Chittagong and Imphal will be much more than a local battle, it will be in essence and in substance the battle of India. In other words, the future fate of India will be decided in the hills and in the jungles which bar the way to Chittagong and Imphal.”123

Prime Minister Koiso gave a state dinner in the honour of Bose and reaffirmed Japan’s pledge to aid the cause of Indian independence. He also renewed Tojo’s earlier promise that Japan sought no territorial, economic or military gains in India. Koiso told him that Japan was repaying an ancient cultural debt to India. During his stay there, there was a mass meeting at Hibiya hall under the auspices of Japan-India Society at which Bose addressed a mixed Indian-Japanese audience. There were negotiations with Army Chief of Staff Umezu Yoshijiro, Army Minister Sugiyama, Navy Minister Yonai Mitsumasa and Naval Chief of Staff Oikawa Koshiro. Present at most of the meetings were Isoda, General Arisue- chief of Second Bureau IGHQ- and Lieutenant General Sato Kenryo- Chief of the Military Affairs Bureau of the general

Staff. Bose made his demands during the negotiations: an expansion in the size of the INA by at least fifty Thousand and an ambassador accredited to the FIPG, a loan agreement, better weapons including tanks, planes and guns to supplement captured British stores, distribution of propaganda literature written by himself, and transfer of all Indian POW’s to the INA.124

Bose found the Japanese authorities in Tokyo sympathetic and became convinced that INA difficulties in the field were not their making. It was racial and military arrogance at lower levels that had been the cause and he might have dealt with it if, like Ba Maw, he had access to Tokyo through a Japanese ambassador. Therefore, in addition to his proposal on INA supplies and fire support in battle, he asked for the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and the provisional Government. Japanese agreement to this was announced on November 26th; the Ambassador, a diplomat named Hachiya, was nominated at the end of December. The Japanese also accepted that the function of the Hikari Kikan should be reduced to simple military liaison. Political matters would be the concern of the Japanese ambassador to the Provisional Government and military orders would come directly from the Japanese military commanders. From this stemmed other agreements: the INA would not be subject to the Japanese military code of law, but to its own, even in respect of offences against the Japanese Army. Bose’s army now numbered about thirty three thousand; around sixteen thousand nine hundred in Burma, thirteen thousand and seven fifty in Malaya and two thousand staffing the recruit training camps, whose capacity was fifteen thousand. The Japanese accordingly agreed to strengths of thirty five thousand under arms, for whom they would pay and fifteen thousand in training, for whom Bose would continue to provide.

The supply system was to be considerably changed. Hitherto all supplies had come from the Japanese; although the INA had under taken distribution. The agreement reached was that in future only the staple rations-rice, sugar, dhal–were to come from Japanese while Bose’s supply organisation would have provide the meat, fish and vegetables. For this the Japanese undertook to pay him ten million rupees per month from March 1945. So rapidly was the value of the Japanese rupee falling in the

124 Ibid., p.143.
frontier areas of Burma, the exchange rate with Indian rupees was already twenty to one, that even this vast subsidy had to be doubled by the time the first payment was due.125

During his stay in Tokyo, he met the Indian students in Tokyo and gave a speech at Tokyo University where he boosted the morale of Indians by talking about his new approaches with Japan. To the U.S.A. he addressed a serious defence of himself and of the new Asian nationalism that was being fostered by Japan. “We are making for ourselves with Japanese help,” he said, “what you failed to help us achieve before the war; real national independence. Burma and Malaya does not want the British back, China does not want Chiang Kai Shek and the Philippines do not want you… I want to tell my American friends that Asia in now surging with revolutionary fervour from one end to the other… we are men as much as you are. We want our freedom and we shall have it by any means. You had an opportunity of helping us but you did not do so. Now Japan is offering us help and we have reason to trust her sincerity. That is why we have plunged into the struggle alongside of her. It is not Japan that we are helping by waging war on you and on our mortal enemy-England. We are helping ourselves- we are helping Asia…” 126

Bose had a final wish before he left Tokyo. He wanted to have a meeting with the Soviet Ambassador Malik. As Bose desperately wanted to resume his failed mission, though he continued to hope that Britain’s Maginot Line in Imphal could be breached with the second attempt, talks with Japanese, along with the American bombs being dropped on Tokyo, have convinced him that he should not expect any further help from Japan. He wrote to him, but Malik refused to see him. But Bose’s idea of securing Soviet aid persisted and motivated his last act at the close of the war. Early in July, Col. Yamamomo of the Hikari Kikan suggested to Bose that now the Imphal Campaign was doomed to failure and hence he should switch his plan for possible attack from the northwest. Bose replied that he would proceed with the idea if he could get the concurrence of the Japanese Government.

126 Ibid., p.130.
Bose, having done every possible arrangement he could have done for the second attack, returned from Tokyo by 29th November towards south Asia. He stopped in Shanghai, Taihoku, Saigon and Singapore to meet the INA and IIL branch heads and Japanese authorities. In Saigon he talked with Terauchi about his Tokyo discussion. He reached Rangoon by the end of the year. A week of storms delayed Bose’s arrival in Malaya until 14th December. One of the first he met in Singapore was his Chief Commissioner in the Andamans, Col. Loganathan who had returned for consultation, bitterly disappointed at the failure of his administration. The only department taken over was that of Education; the Japanese had prevented or hindered all other work and had continued their harsh oppression of the islanders. The worst feature of this had been their atrocities towards the islanders in the name of the so called spy case. Fifty-five Indians had been executed and thirty-three been imprisoned as British spies up to September 1944 and in October two hundred were brought under arrest and investigation. Savage torture and blackmail supported this rule of terror, of which the educated were the main victims. There were some cases of mass killing also near Havelock Island. The chief Commissioner had been quite unable to stop it, though his personal influence may have been felt in a few individual cases. Whatever might be said in Tokyo, the local Japanese would not part with their authority. Bose, who intended to appoint a new Chief Commissioner, changed his mind. The Andamans were too exposed for the new strategic situation; the provisional Government might have to write off its commitment and turn to what was more worth saving. Bose as the head of the Government of Andaman may be held responsible for some, if not all of those unhappy events.

By the time he finally reached Rangoon, the war situation had become even worse. The sky was dominated by the enemy air force and the ground by enemy tanks. An increasing number of British battleships began to be seen throughout the Bay of Bengal which seemed to be a prelude to the landing operation of British troops. This made the chances of transporting artillery and AFV battalions to the front impossible for the Japanese. In Malaya, the INA had to take up defensive positions in the areas it happened to occupy. Meanwhile, Major-General Yamamoto was transferred elsewhere. It came as a big blow to Bose. After Bose returned to East Asia,
Yamamoto, in his capacity as the director of Hikari Kikan, was a great relief to Bose.\textsuperscript{128}

On 31\textsuperscript{st} December, the British force landed at Akyab. Ironically it was the Akyab-Chittagong route that Bose had always wished to use to march towards Delhi. Even though he changed his strategic plans several times according to the changing situations, he had always kept Akyab in view as a key strategic spot for his operation plans. On 23\textsuperscript{rd} January, Bose turned forty eight and his birthday was observed. Indian residents in Rangoon held a meeting in celebration of his birthday and donated gold and other jewels one and a half times his weight. By this, more than twenty million dollars was raised for the INA.\textsuperscript{129}

Meanwhile, there was also some careful planning of intelligence activities. Bose devised with N.G. Swami an elaborate plan to send agents with wireless sets behind the enemy lines. A special group was also trained to interrupt the American pipeline north of Burma. The Nehru Brigade of the INA’s first division, which had been unscathed in Imphal, was to be joined by two more regiments of the second division that had arrived from Malaya. Gurbaks Singh Dhillon was assigned with the responsibility of obstructing the advancing British forces at the Irrawady River and Prem Kumar Sahgal was sent to the front at Mount Popa; Mehboob Ahmed who had distinguish himself in the Haka-Falam sector, took his place at Bose’s side. The war situation was getting deteriorated day by day for the INA. On 12\textsuperscript{th} January, the British Army 25\textsuperscript{th} division, supported by heavy bombardment from the sea and the air, started landing on the Miebon peninsula. As Japanese troops advanced for counterattack, the British Army 26\textsuperscript{th} division landed on the Ramley Island on 26\textsuperscript{th} January. This sparked off the full-scale landing operations of British Army.\textsuperscript{130}

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\begin{footnotes}{128} Tatsuo Hayashid, \textit{Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: His Great Struggle and Martyrdom}, trans. Biswanath Chatterjee, Calcutta: Allied Publisher, 1970, p.100
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The Japanese 15th army began to attack the British army crossing the Irrawady River. On 29th January, Major G.S. Dhillon received orders to move to battlefront in Nyaungu. He reached four days later in the front when a group of British army thrust to Meiktilaa crossed the river just to the north of his regimental area. The Japanese were not much worried about the Nyaungu. They knew the British army had been moving towards it; but thought that it was only of brigade strength and probably heading for Yenangyaung. Dhillon was only told to send covering troops across the river and to co-operate with the Japanese company on his right. But the number of his regiment was just twelve thousand men which was not enough for covering twelve miles of river bank. He posted one of his battalion at Nyaungu, another at Pagan and the other with his headquarters nearby. By 9th February a small British troop was seen on the eastern bank.\textsuperscript{131}

The 7th division of Indo-British army started crossing the Irrawady by 14th February. By early morning a British infantry company crossed about a mile in northeast of Nyaungu and establish itself, but the embarkation of the rest of that battalion was delayed and its assault craft did not begin to approach the eastern bank until well after daybreak. Medium machine-guns on the extreme right of the INA battalion at Nyaungu and in the Japanese company position opened up at about 06.10 AM. Many of the British boats were soon out of control and drifting downstream past the INA trenches for which they made perfect targets. There was much casuality, although some of the craft returned to western bank and many men escaped by swimming. But the set-back was incidental, a second British battalion crossed without loss later in the morning further upstream and by the end of the day two more battalions were safely ashore. About hundred survivors of the INA at Nyangu surrendered.\textsuperscript{132}

The initial crossing failed at Pagan also and the British soldiers attempted it a second time. They saw a boat with a white flag put out from the Japanese bank. There were two INA emissaries in it and they said that the Japanese had left Pagan and that the INA there wished to surrender. One hundred and forty of INA soldiers

\textsuperscript{131} Hugh Toye, Subhas Chandra Bose: The Springing Tiger, Mumbai: Jaico Publishing House, 2007, p.136
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., p.137.
surrendered and the new crossing was unopposed. Dhillon rallied what was left of his regiment on 16th February. The Indo-British Army had established itself in Nyaungu and Pagan and he could only withdraw with the survivors to the new INA division area at Kyaukpadaung, thirty five miles to the south-east, on the road to Meiktila.133

Japanese troops started moving towards north from Yenangyaung to defend the way to Meiktila and destroy their enemy in its weak and difficult moment of river crossing. The 2nd INA regiment was arriving under Lieutenant–Colonel Prem Sahgal. On 13th February P.K.Sahgal left Rangoon and moved towards north; by 17th February he managed to occupy defensive position on western slope of Mount Popa, a steep, isolated 5,000-foot mountain eight miles in north-east of Kyaukpadaung. The Japanese were here to hold the area strongly and entrusted the task to their 72nd Independent mixed Brigade at Yenangyaung. P.K.Sahgal met the commander of the Japanese army and assured the Japanese artillery and supplies. Bose arrived in Meiktila on 21st February while the British were reported to be advancing from Nyaungu. The situation on the front appeared confused. Shah Nawaz and Mehboob Ahmed proceeded to Mount Popa, for discovering the development and to gather information about the British.134

Shah Nawaz and Mehboob reached Mount Popa by 22nd February. They found Sahgal well in control of the Headquarters of the 2nd Division and that Dhillon had managed to gather along only four hundred out of twelve hundred men. Shah Nawaz and Mehboob Ahmed returned to Meiktila on 25th February to report to Bose the information on the situation at Mount Popa. Considering the danger in the way they requested Bose not to head towards Mount Popa. But Bose was so determined to risk the journey to Mount Popa, as he understood that Burma was out of Japanese control and his only wish was to die fighting British. On 26th February the news reached that British has reached Mahlaing-ten miles north of Meiktila - and that they had blocked the roads between Meiktila and Mandalay and the connecting road of Meiktila and Kyaukpadaung. Without any way out Bose was virtually trapped in Meiktila.

133 Ibid., p.137.
Bose decided that he would get away to the south, toward Pyinmina, if it was possible. Shah Nawaz, Bose’s doctor named Raju and a Japanese officer accompanied him. Shah Nawaz described the episode: “When we entered the car and started off, (at about 9 AM) Netaji was sitting with a loaded Tommy gun in his lap. Raju (Bose’s doctor) had two hand grenades ready. The Japanese officer was holding another Tommy gun and I had a loaded Bren…. We all ready to open fire simultaneously. The Japanese officer stood on the foot-board of the car to be on the lookout for enemy aircraft.”

During the first twenty miles of the journey there was no incident. As their car reached the village of Yindaw, the British aircraft loaded with machine guns started firing at the village. The village seemed to have been explored by the British spies. The planes were using ten-inch armour-piercing cartridge meant for destroying heavy tank and railway engines. It seems that by this time they were even looking for Bose. To escape from the firing they had to take shelter in a jungle in the outskirts of Yindaw till the dusk. Finally, Bose reached Pyinmina on 27th February.

Reaching Pyinmina, Bose formed a new fighting brigade from the remaining men of first division and named it “X regiment”. He asked Thakur Singh to take the charge of this regiment and to take defensive positions at Yezin. The rest of the division was given under the command of Muhammad Arshad. The remaining two thousand and five hundred sick soldiers were sent to a rear post at Zeyawaddy ten miles away from the main front and instructed them to surrender if the British Army succeeded in breaking through the X regiment. Shah Nawaz was posted at Pyinmina to defend against British onslaught there and to fight his last battle there, to the last man and the last round. Till March 1945, the Burma front remained static throughout.

On 2nd March 1945, Bose was shattered by the news which came from the headquarters at Rangoon. Five officers from his second division posted at Mount

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137 Ibid., p. 190.
Popa had deserted their posts. Surrender leaflets signed by them had been dropped on INA positions and further mass desertions seemed certain. “He spared himself no pang: the blame was his: his men could refuse him nothing: such a disaster could never have happened had he been to Mount Popa himself. It had been a sure instinct that had impelled him and he had allowed himself to be diverted by the fears of others. There had been no danger, he knew that now; it had been weakness to listen to those so reasonable arguments and to be disillusioned so easily”. 138 On 7th March Shah Nawaz left for Mount Popa with the best and most reliable staff and officers. March 1945 brought further complication in the war being fought in Burma. The war situation became worse when one of the Japanese divisions was pulled back from the Burmese front in order fight in Philippines. At this point it was decided to bring the Burmese National Defence Army (BNA) under the leadership of Aung San into action for the first time since it was formed. The BNA was trained for a year by the Japanese. On 15th March a parade was held in Rangoon in commemoration of their first participation in the war. Aung san turned against the Japanese and offered his assistance to the British, as the circumstances in the war have changed. The arrogance of the Japanese had not endeared them to the Burmese. But the Indians on Burmese soil were still staunch patriots and would not switch sides: their objective was to drive out the British from India. The Indians now reached an understanding with the Burmese not to fight against each other. 139 The reason behind the backfire in the case of BNA was the ill-treatment of the Burmese by the Japanese. Japan occupied Indochina and forced an uneasy collaboration on Thailand, and administrated Malaya and Singapore in an atrocious manner. Japan ill-treated Burmese after conquering there country and after having done everything to alienate them, they trained the BNA and equipped it with modern weapons. The BNA did not miss the opportunity to use it against them.

By this time Bose became sensitive about the loyalty of INA. This could be perceived in the two special orders from him on 13th March regarding desertions. He

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had already authorised the death penalty for desertion and had ordered the INA police to list ‘undesirable officers’ who might still have escaped suspicion. Now he announced the observance of a ‘Traitors’ Day’ on which the INA units would compete in publicly dishonouring the deserters, and brought in a measure which had been in his mind for a long time: “Every member of the INA -officer, NCO or sepoy-will in future be entitled to arrest any other member of the INA, no matter what his rank may be, if he behaves in a cowardly manner, or to shoot him if he acts in treacherous manner.”

In March the INA operated under increasing difficulties as the supplies were running low. There was no wireless communication. Soldiers were sent into battle with no communications, with little transport, with few support weapons and far too little ammunition. They were left without boots and clothed in rags. There were several small actions by the INA during March, as Japanese attempts against the British bridgeheads were launched and thwarted. On 10th April, the INA hospital at Kyaukpadaung was blown up by British bombardment; eighty were killed and another thirty were injured badly. On 15th March, Dhillon’s regiment suffered heavy casualties in actions near Taungzing. On 20th April, the battalion of Sahgal’s regiment lead by Captain Bagri perished about twenty miles south of Taundwingyi, as they could not face the enemy tanks and armoured vehicles with their rifles and hand grenades. Late in March, one of Dhillon’s battalion commanders deserted. The rest decided that they will sacrifice their lives to maintain the honour of the INA. In Mount Popa the remaining army was hunted down by rapid air attacks and in response Sahgal was doing his best to produce counter-attack, but the platoons could not face the heavy air attack. Virtually, the whole of Sahgal’s 1st battalion including the Commander, all company commanders and about three hundred men had deserted. Knowing that the remaining could not face another attack, he withdrew them. Eventually on 29th April 1945, Sahgal became POW near Allanmyo; Shah Nawaz

Khan and Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon were captured on 18th May near Pegu and with this the war of 2nd INA division came to an end.  

Captain Izumi, a Japanese officer of the 4th Guerilla regiment, reported to his superiors on April 8th that:

“The commanding officers who have been favoured with Chandra Bose’s personal confidence, and assisted by letters and interviews with him, are devoted to upholding the honour of the INA, and full of enthusiasm for the war. However this is not the case with those of battalion and company commander’s rank …

The Regemental Commander and his subordinates …. Recognise the power of the Imperial Army in its night fighting, its vicious pincer movements, and its close combat fighting. Their demands for material assistance, guns, planes, etc., are exorbitant as one might expect from their past record, and they are suited neither to the rough life of the trenchers nor to the violence of a night operation.

Generally speaking, they are unsuited to defensive warfare, and though they take the offensive on their front, they worry so intensely about the general war situation, that it is no exaggeration to say that a gallant and dashing attack by the INA is only a beautiful dream. However, there are some units of the INA that have lived up to the very highest standards of conduct in battle.”  

Learning that the war in Burma was over, Bose sent some of his best troops to Moulmein on the way to Thailand and Malaya. Considering the war in Southeast Asia was still to be fought, one regiment of five thousand soldiers was left back in Rangoon under the command of A.D. Loganathan along with the able assistance of Mehboob Ahmed and R.M. Arshad. They were instructed to negotiate their surrender as POWs in case of emergency. Bose sent the Rani of Jhansi regiment with some other civilians to Malaya by Japanese trucks. Bose left from Rangoon with his ministers A.C. Chatterji and S.A. Ayer, his top military commanders M.Z. Kiani and J.K. Bhonsle, his Intelligence chief N.G. Swami, the head of the Hikari Kikan Lieutenant General Isoda Saburo and the ambassador Teruo Hachiya. Loganathan

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surrendered with his men to 26th British Indian division on 4th May 1945. So the Indian independence movement peacefully ended in Burma. Seven hundred and fifty soldiers were taken to India for investigation by the month of May. Later they were followed by many thousands more from Rangoon and then from Malaya and Bangkok.

On 26th April the Rani of Jhansi Regiment crossed the Sittang river assisted by Swami and Shaukat Malik. Bose did not cross the river as he wanted to make sure that his entire entourage was safely on the other side of the river. Two of the trucks had been destroyed by air attack amidst the process. Bose and his column covered the last ten miles of the Sittang River on their foot; one young officer named Nazir Ahamed who was walking next to Bose was killed by machine gun fire from the air. On reaching Moulmein on 3rd May, the Rani of Jhansi Regiment was sent in a train to Bangkok under the charge of A.C. Chatterji and Shaukat Malik. The train could move only at night and had to be kept under camouflage colours on siding during daytime. Bose, after being assured of the safety of his Imphal veterans, resumed his journey by road toward Bangkok. He reached the Siam’s capital on 15th May and reassembled his cabinet from Burma.143

Understanding the war situation, Bose saw the immediate danger approaching towards Malaya and decided to withdraw the 3rd INA division from there and join them in Siam where the others from Burma have gathered. Bose still had a hope that the Japanese could recover, but knew that Japan would not be in a position to help him or his men if the Allied powers succeeded in beating Japanese resistance. In that case Russia was his only hope.

On 21st May, Bose addressed the public of Thailand. He gave the example of Turkey and Ireland in urging the Indians to fight for freedom. “It may be that we shall no go to Delhi via Imphal,” he told those he had roused to unprecedented patriotic fervour with his slogan “Chalo Delhi!” “But the roads to Delhi are many,” he assured them, “like the roads to Rome. And along one of these many roads we shall travel and

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143 Sugata Bose, His Majesty’s Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India’s struggle against empire, New Delhi: Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd, 2011, p. 293
ultimately reach our destination, the metropolis of India.”\textsuperscript{144} The address also contained a hidden appeal to Moscow; the conflict between the Russians and the West, he said, had already begun at San Francisco:

“The time is not far off when our enemies will realise that though they have succeeded in over throwing Germany, they have indirectly helped to bring into the arena of European politics another power-Soviet Russia-that may prove to be a greater menace to British and American imperialism than Germany was. The Provisional Government of Free India will continue to follow international development with the closest interest, and endeavour to take the fullest advantage of them. The fundamental principle of our foreign policy has been and will be –Britain’s enemy is India’s friend.”\textsuperscript{145}

5.8.3 Defeat in Burma

Bose realised that he needed help from outside to run the show. He realised the basic enmity of Russia towards the west and saw its influence rising in Eastern Asia. It might even be possible for him to preserve the FIPG in Moscow. But the Japanese were not in favour of Russian influence in Co-prosperity Sphere and had never entertained him to access the Russians in Tokyo. The growing danger of war with them was not likely to make the Japanese any less sensitive and he must be very careful of his approach now. Referring therefore to the inner ring of Japanese defence, Bose proposed in June that he be allowed to set up a ‘safe deposit’ government with in it, in Manchuria. If they allowed this, then Bose thought, it would be possible for him to continue his activity to the perimeter of Japanese resistance and then to escape to Russian territory if he had not been able to arrange something better. But unfortunately the Japanese refused the proposal of Bose.\textsuperscript{146}

In Bangkok, after assembling his troops, Bose found that he is running out of finance. The league funds in Siam had already been partly used for the supply purchases for Burma. Raghavan, his finance minister was called from Singapore. He

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., p.294.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., p.155.
came with possible resources from Singapore and Ayer managed to get a loan from Thai government. Chatterji went to Saigon, and Sahay to Hanoi, to raise funds from the Indian Communities there. Bose went to Malaya after having an understanding with the Thai government and meeting with the INA’s gunners in Thailand. The 3rd Guerrilla division was based in various parts of the peninsula, as the heavy-gun and tank battalions of the first division were not been taken to Burma.

Meanwhile in India, the then British Viceroy Archibald Wavell called for a conference in Simla to discuss the political progress after the war. The discussion in Simla was ruled out due to the disagreement of Mohammad Ali Jinnah’s Muslim League and the INC. Bose again felt that it would be against the interest of India to go for a negotiation with Britain. There were so many new factors to be considered: the growth of nationalism in South-East Asia and the disappearance of European prestige, Burma’s taste of freedom, the renewed sympathy of America with Indian aspirations. These would force the British to reconsider their position and the reconsideration would be done not by the Imperialist Churchill administration, but by the Labour Government which would surely replace it in July; by Cripps, Attlee, Bevin, the men he had met in 1938. A renewal of the Indian struggle now would turn the scale. Bose prepared a series of broadcasts and as the Bangkok Radio was not in working condition, went to Singapore and made a series of broadcasts from Singapore in June—urging the INC not to compromise with Britain at any cost.147

On 8th July 1945 in Singapore, Bose laid the foundation stone for the memorial of the martyrs of the INA who scarified their lives for the cause of Indian freedom. Still having a strong belief that he had enough time, at least one year, to resume his action, he travelled north to Seremban and Kuala Lumpur by the end of July. But unfortunately the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6th and 9th August brought the war in East Asia to an unexpected end. On 10th August in Kuala Lumpur, Bose was informed by Inayat Kiani that Russia had declared war against Japan and the most unfortunate news came to him by 13th August that the Japanese were about to surrender.148 Bose was worried about so many things, thinking about

147 Ibid., p.157.
the future of his fight and his further moves. Bose then decided to leave for Singapore and made arrangements for Raghavan and Swami from Penang and John Thivy from Ipoh to meet him in Singapore. He reached Singapore by the evening of 13th August and called for an emergency conference with his civil and military chiefs. Arrangements were made to distribute sufficient money to INA soldiers and civilians associated with FIPG which would take care of them for at least another six months. Bose received the formal notice from Hachiya that it was decided in the cabinet meeting that Japan is surrendering: “The INA would be surrendered as it stood -there could be no disagreement about that- and all records would be destroyed.”

It was a difficult situation for everyone as nobody could imagine what Bose should do next. Even Bose was unable to reach a decision. He was not ready to stay back and face surrender like and with the rest. Bose was worried about the five hundred women of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment camp in Singapore and the forty five cadets he had sent to Tokyo for training in the army and air force. He arranged to send the women of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment safely to their homes. Bose enquired to Colonel Cyril John Stracey, an Anglo-Indian Officer of the INA who had arrived on 15th August 1945 to Singapore, whether he could raise the INA memorial on the sea face of Singapore before the British arrived there. Bose got a positive reply as he had expected.

The following afternoon brought the official announcement on radio of Japan’s surrender. Bose, with great disappointment, issued his last order of the day and a special message to Indians in East Asia. “The roads to Delhi are many,” he told his soldiers, “and Delhi still remains our goal. The sacrifices of your immortal comrades and yourselves will certainly achieve their fulfilment.” And to the Indian civilians who had responded with outstanding enthusiasm to his call for total mobilisation, he had this to say:

“Sister and Brothers, a glorious chapter in the history of India’s Struggle for freedom has just come to a close and in that chapter, the sons and daughters of India in East Asia will have an undying place.

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151 Ibid., p. 300.
You set a shining example of patriotism and self-sacrifice by pouring out men, money and material into the struggle for India’s independence. I shall never forget the spontaneity and enthusiasm with which you responded to my call for ‘Total Mobilization.’ You sent an unending stream of your sons and daughters to the camps to be trained as soldiers of the Azad Hind Fauj and of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. Money and material you poured lavishly into the war chest of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. In short, you did your duty as true sons and daughters of India. I regret more than you do that your sufferings and sacrifice have not borne immediate fruit. But they have not gone in vain, because they have ensured the emancipation of our motherland and will serve as an undying inspiration to Indians all over the world. Posterity will bless your name, and will talk with pride about your offerings at the altar of India’s freedom and about your positive achievement as well.”

At 10 pm the following night, Bose called for a meeting of his cabinet and in the meeting it was decided that he should get out of Singapore. “The final decision”, according to Ayer, “was out of Malaya definitely, to some Russian territory certainly, to Russia itself if possible.” Bose conceded that it would be an “adventure into the unknown”

On 16th August, Bose sent a message to the Japanese; “Along with the trusted persons of my cabinet I would like to go to the Soviet Union. If it is necessary I shall enter the Soviet Union alone. In that case I request the Japanese Government to allow any of my cabinet members to take charge.”

One important Japanese source indicates that the Japanese agreed to help Bose reach Manchuria and to make contact with the advancing Soviet army.

5.9 Bose’s Last Journey and Death

According to Bose’s request, the Southern army headquarters brought the matter to IGHQ. The instruction from IGHQ was not in favour of Bose’s idea: “Mr. Bose should know better than to write off Japan and go over to Russia after having

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152 Ibid., p.300.
153 Ibid., p.301.
received whole-hearted assistance and co-operation from Japan.”

But Bose was successful in convincing Field-Marshal Terauchi about his idea of seeking help from Russia. Terauchi, at his own risk, decided to help Bose and arranged a special aeroplane to Saigon, Manchuria, to fly to Dairen first via Taihoku. His idea was to reach Manchuria and surrender to Russian Army and then to decide how best he could achieve his ultimate objective. Bose was to take his flight from Saigon. On 17th August 1945, with his team Bose left from Bangkok airport to Saigon where a single seat on a twin engine Japanese bomber (model 97-2-Sally) was waiting for Bose and ready to leave Saigon. Then the question arose whether Bose should go alone. It might seem that he was running away from being captured by the British. Even though his plan was to take all his cabinet with him; considering the situation and arrangement made for him, he enquired whether one more seat could be provided. The arrangement was made for one more seat and Bose decided that Habib-ur-Rahman would accompany him. Bose took leave from all those who were gathered there saying ‘Jai Hind’ and ‘I will see you later’. The plane took off at 5.15pm, reached Tourane by evening, resumed again next day and reached Taihoku in Formosa on 18th August for refuelling at about 2.30p.m. Resuming the flight again, the plane lost a part of its port propeller and was in fire the next moment. The plane crashed in Taihoku, on its way to Dairen, resulting in fatal burns on Bose’s face and eventually leading to his death on 18th August 1945 in the Nannon Army Hospital, Taihoku. The following were his last words to Habib-ur-Rahman: “I do not think I will survive this accident. When you go back to the country, tell my countrymen that I have fought for freedom to the last. And nobody could now keep our country in bondage, they should continue the struggle. India will be free before long.”

On 19th August the IGHQ sent a telegram to the Formosan Headquarters saying that his body should be sent to Tokyo by plane. The first telegram was followed by another telegram asking not to send the body to Tokyo but to cremate it

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in Taihoku.\textsuperscript{158} No reason was given for this change of orders. On 20\textsuperscript{th} August, the body was cremated in the Presence of Col. Habib-ur-Rahman, Major Nagatomo from the Formosan Army Command Headquarters, Mr Juchi Nakamura (Interpreter), a Buddhist priest and the manager of the crematorium.

After five days of Bose’s death, on 23\textsuperscript{rd} August, the Domei agency of Japan broadcast the news of his death. After hearing the news of Bose’s death, Gandhi wrote: “Subhas Bose has died well. He was undoubtedly a patriot, though misguided.”\textsuperscript{159} On 15\textsuperscript{th} February 1946 Gandhi gave one of his fullest evaluations of Bose and the INA in an article where he skilfully selected what he wanted: ‘communal and class unity, self-sacrifice and discipline.’ He also said that Shah Nawaz had declared that Bose’s last wish were for the INA to return India, retain their discipline and patriotism, but act non-violent and help the Congress. This suited Gandhi perfectly. Gandhi had assimilated the INA troops into his non-violent army. He had given due recognition to Bose, but discarded his use of violent means.\textsuperscript{160}

News of Bose's death reassured the British military services to some extent, according to a secret report:

“The Japanese report of Bose's death is also a matter of considerable importance not only in the political arena but also to those concerned with security: the continued existence of Netaji would undoubtedly maintain the fervour of the many, military and civilian, who came under what was almost a spell. Bose’s established death would solve the difficult problem of dealing with him but his patriotism and activities are likely to hold an important place in the nationalist mind.”\textsuperscript{161}

\textbf{5.10 INA Trials}

Meanwhile there had been deliberations on the part of the British on the course of action to be taken against their enemies and prisoners of war, which included Bose

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., p.118.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., p.552.
and the INA. At the end of the war, the members of the INA, the PGFI and the IIL were brought back to India. The British began to consider what action it would take on the matter of Bose and the INA. As the rightful government of India, as the British saw itself, it moved towards the position that it would publicly try and punish those who had waged war against the King-Emperor and were furthermore ‘traitors’ to India for fighting along with her enemies. However, as more and more information came back both to the British officials and to Indians at the end of the news-blackout that had been practiced by the British for the duration of the war, the situation became more complex.

Bose undoubtedly had many enemies amongst the officials of the British and Whitehall, who would have liked nothing better than to see him, if he were alive, and his entire organization tried and severely punished for their crimes against the Raj. The British seemed to have some information that Bose was not dead as popularly conceived and that he was in hiding somewhere, possibly in Russia. Yet there were many considerations to be made before a trial could even be attempted, as Sir R.F. Mudie explained to Sir Evan Meredith Jenkins, the Home Member on the viceroy’s council in August 1945 in a top secret document: “I have examined your suggestion that Bose be treated as a ‘war criminal’. He clearly is not one in the ordinary sense of the word. Nor does he appear to come within the extended definition which has now been adopted by the United Nations.”

Another problem was that the British Empire was tackling the issue of those who fought alongside the Japanese on a case-by-case basis across South and Southeast Asia. In Burma they were not taking action against the leader of the Burma National Army which had defected back to the British side in March 1945, to be humane to them and not doing this to Bose could again create political headaches in India. Singapore and Malaya seemed quite enough at the time; but the former had been the epicentre of the Indian nationalist movement and a trial there could be equally problematic. Mudie summarized the possibilities as follows:

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“1. Bring him back to India and try him either for waging war or under the enemy agents ordinance.

2. Have him tried by a court in Burma or Malaya for waging war against the king in that country.

3. Leave him to be tried by a military court outside India.

4. Intern him in India.

5. Intern him in some other British possession. e.g. Seychelles Islands

6. Leave him where he is and don’t ask for his surrender.

7. I do not think that there is much chance of Bose being hanged if he were tried in India. The pressure for his release would be too great; and also his trial would result in great publicity for his doings, motives, etc.

8. It is extremely unlikely that the Government of Burma, which is engaged in appeasing the Burma National Anny, would agree to try Bose and even more unlikely that if they did, they would hang him. The Government of Malaya might possibly have no such scruples and we might get a hanging if His Majesty’s Government agreed to ignore agitation in India and Parliament however strong. But a trial in Singapore would cause almost as much agitation in this country as a trial here, unless it was held in camera and no news released till after his execution. But in that case we would be accused of judicial murder.

9. In many ways the easiest course would be to leave him where he is and not ask for his release. He might, of course, in certain circumstances, be welcomed by the Russians. This course would raise fewest immediate political difficulties, but the security authorities consider that in certain circumstances his presence in Russia would be so dangerous to rule it out altogether.

10. The choice seems to be between deporting and interning Bose outside India or trying him in India and commuting the death sentence. The two might be combined and Bose deported (or “transported”) after conviction.”

According to affidavit submitted by Sham Lal, steno of Asaf Ali: On 27th December 1945, Nehru sent a letter to Clement Attlee to inform him that Bose has been given shelter by Stalin and that he should take up the matter with Stalin:

163 Ibid., pp.76-77.
“Mr. Clement Attlee,  
Prime Minister of Britain,  
10, Downing Street, London

Dear Mr. Attlee,

I have come to know from a reliable source that Subhas Chandra Bose, your war criminal has been allowed to enter Russian territory by Stalin. This is a clear treachery and betrayal of faith by the Russians. As Russia has been an ally of the British-Americans, it should not have been done. Please take note of it and do what you consider proper and fit.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru”  

Nehru had foreseen that the only possible political threat to him would be Bose, if he was alive and came back to India. Nehru had said in 1943 that he would personally go to the front and fight Bose and Japanese if they invaded India. Nehru during his rule always favoured Russia by taking their side at every possible turn. This course of Indian foreign policy, culminated in the Indo-Soviet friendship, was later completed by his daughter Indira Gandhi who continued the secret arrangement as she was also afraid of the possibility of Bose’s return; in that case he will be made prime minister.  

In 1971 Indira Gandhi ratified International War Criminal Treaty with retrospective effect for 30 years (1945-75) to preclude any possible appearance of Bose in public.

It was finally decided by the upper echelons of the British to give the green light to the INA Officers Trial and it was set for early November 1945. In the first instance when the men and women of the INA were brought back for trial along with the soldiers of the Indian Legion in Europe, news began to spread across the country of their deeds on the borders of India and abroad, as Michael Edwardes observed,

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“The death of Bose was now public knowledge and he had acquired a halo of martyrdom and apotheosis.”

During this time, British India was administered through the Defense of India Act of 1939. General Wavell was promoted to the Rank of Field Marshal and then was appointed as Viceroy of India in 1943, as the Supreme Head of the Civil Administration. On the other hand, Vice-Admiral Lord Mountbatten -the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces for India, South East and Far East Asian countries- was the Defecto-Adviser to the British Indian Government and Philip Mason was the War Secretary of the Government of British India. He was one of the pivotal-planner and executor of all affairs of the War basing India. His role was of course behind the screen and afar from public eye. About the Azad Hind Fauj Mason concluded: “In military law, they thus committed the offences of mutiny, desertion and waging war against the King.”

Therefore, the charges against the INA personnel were so grave that the only punishment that could be inflicted was to be shot on the spot. A majority of the INA personnel were from British Indian Defence Service and according to penal law mutiny, desertion and waging war against the master was the most dangerously serious act for military personnel. Here again, consideration has to be given to the position of the instigator who organized them, who influenced them to raise arms and fight against the master. The position of Bose, thus, was quite precarious that one could refer to the comment made by Lord Zetland, the Secretary of State for India, on 2nd December 1936 as was reported in the Times: “Bose is a man who, while of great ability had always directed his ability to destructive purposes.”

Lord Zetland’s opinion was an exemplary comment because such a comment was never uttered about any other nationalist leader of India; reason behind that could be that all nationalist leaders except Bose were co-operative and actively assisted the British Rulers to such extent that the Rulers determined the theme of Struggle for

168 Ibid., p.110.
Independence. Therefore, Bose was identified singly and treated as Enemy. Lord Zetland’s opinion further corroborates the notion of Philip Mason too, in mid-1945. But the process was changed due to changed political situation in the country to cause a smoke screen to confuse the public eye; they adopted a process of appreciation and using glamorous adjectives. Mason said:

“One must respect such a man as Subhas Chandra Bose, who resigned from Indian Civil Service because he sincerely believed it is his duty to India, that respect can hardly be extended to all who changes sides in adversity and who a second time choose the more comfortable path. …But it would be wrong to imply that opportunism was the sole motive. The story of Mohan Singh provides one example of an officer who made his choice from a genuine conviction and was prepared to suffer for his belief. And personality of Bose must have been overriding factor with many.”

Regarding the fate of INA soldiers, the British authorities were in a spot of bother and had to take a decision soon after the end of the war. Mason said:

“The Japanese overreached themselves and were defeated in long stubborn battle for Imphal. General Slim’s victorious army poured southward thorough Burma, and the INA disillusioned, defeated, starving and in rags crawled in to surrender, by two’s and three’s, by platoons, by battalions. By international and military law, they could have been tried by court martial for mutiny and desertion and shot on the spot. But clearly the problem was a big one with political implications; it was not faced at that time as there was too much to do and they were sent back to India as though they had been prisoners of War. The Indian Public at this stage did not know of their existence. But when the war with Japan suddenly ended, the problem could be postponed no longer; the public had to be told about the INA and the Government had to decide what was to be done with them.”

Mason’s analytical comment made the position of Bose and INA after the war clear. The proposed decision was that: “All were guilty of an offence legally punishable by death, but of course there could be no question of executing twenty five

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169 Ibid., p.111.
170 Ibid., p.111.
thousand men. It would have been cruel, apolitical and unjust."\textsuperscript{171} So the British decided to try and convict some of the officers of the INA. The first and main trial was conducted by the military court in the Red Fort on 5\textsuperscript{th} November 1945. It was initially recommended that the trials be held in some isolated place where it would not attract public attention. But General Auchinleck was sure that the charges against the defendants would shock public opinion and gave orders for the trials to be conducted in a public and accessible place. The Red Fort was chosen because a limited number of spectators and the Press could witness the proceedings. The British made it easier for all Indians to identify with the defendants by choosing to try together a Muslim, Captain Shah Nawaz Khan, a Hindu, Captain Prem Kumar Sahgal, and a Sikh, Lieutenant G.S. Dhillon. Distinguished lawyers and noted nationalists with legal credentials rushed to join the defense team. As the trial went forward, Nehru went on to extol the patriotism of the INA soldiers. Nehru in his remark also touched on one of the crucial issues involved in the INA trial and its impact: “the problem of the loyalty of the Indian army to the British. The British rulers had decided to try the INA officers to show that disloyalty to one’s oath to the King-Emperor would be punished. They expected that Indian troops and the Indian public would see the point. What they did not foresee was the powerful political impact that the story of the INA would have on a nation primed for independence after the war. After all, this war, like the First World War, had been fought by the British and their allies in the name of democracy and self-determination.”\textsuperscript{172} Even though Congress party supported the INA it was against the exploitation of Indian resources for European imperialist countries which is formulated as a national policy. India’s defence in this regard was considered as simple and week by the then Viceroy Linlithgow and he expected that India would join hands with British against the Axis.\textsuperscript{173}

It is clear that the British viewed the INA movements as treacherous. Two charges- “waging war against the King, and murder and abetment of murder”\textsuperscript{174} were brought forward by the prosecution. Lieutenant Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon was charged

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\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., p.111.
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with the murder of four people; Captain P.K. Sahgal was charged with abetment of murder of the same four; and Captain Shah Nawaz Khan was charged with treason/waging war against the King.\textsuperscript{175}

“The accused No.IC 58 Capt. Shah Nawaz Khan, 1/14\textsuperscript{th} Punjab Regiment; No IC 226 Capt., P.K Sahagal, 2/10\textsuperscript{th} Baluch Regiment, and No, IC 336 Lt. Gubakhsh Sing Dhillon, 1/14\textsuperscript{th} Punjab Regiment, all attached C.S.D.I.C. Delhi, Indian Commissioned Officers, are charged with committing a civil offence, that is to say, waging war against the King contrary to section 121, Indian Penal Code, in that they together at Singapore, in Malaya, at Rangoon in the vicinity of Popa, in the vicinity of Kyauknpadaung, and elsewhere in Burma, between the month of September 1942 and the 26\textsuperscript{th} day of April 1945 did wage war against His Majesty the King-Emperor of India.”\textsuperscript{176}

The prosecution called thirty witnesses and the defiance called twelve. The trial continued until 31\textsuperscript{st} December. The defence challenged the validity of the trial and the jurisdiction of the tribunal. The defence argued that the acts for which the defendants were being court-martialled were acts committed as members of the army of the Provisional Government of Free India and that the INA and FIPG were independent and not under control of the Japanese. Hence the defendants could not be tried under the Indian Army Act and Criminal Law of India for their individual actions.

The defence counsel also contended that the INA was acting independently and that it was not a puppet army of the Japanese. Evidence of the recognition of the FIPG by Japan, of Japan’s transfer of the Andaman and Nicobar islands to the FIPG, and of the dispatching of Mr Hachiya as Japanese Minister to the FIPG was produced. Defence counsel also cited the agreement between the FIPG and Japanese military authorities to turn over captured Indian territory to the FIPG. The FIPG actually administered the region of Zeawaddy in Burma and part of Manipur state in India, according to evidence introduced by the defence. These actions were presented as

\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., p.203.
\textsuperscript{176} Moti Ram ed., \textit{Two Historic Trials in Red Fort: an Authentic Account of the Trial by a General Court Martial of Captain Shah Nawaz Khan, Captain P. K. Sahgal and Lt. G. S. Dhillon; and The Trial by a European Military Commission of Emperor Bahadur Shah}, New Delhi: Moti Ram, 1946, pp.2-3.
evidence that Japan recognized the independent existence of the FIPG and its army, the INA.

The defence also argued that the FIPG was a functioning government and that it was entitled by international law to wage war for the purpose of liberating India. “What is on trial before the Court is the right to wage war with immunity on the part of a subject race for their liberation.”\textsuperscript{177} The defence sought to uphold this right by citing precedents in international law and by examining witnesses who testified to the independent action of the INA and FIPG. The defence counsel maintained that the ratio of INA to Japanese troops was irrelevant to the question of the independence of the INA. S.A. Ayer testified that the Japanese had attempted to appoint a Japanese chairman for the War Co-operation Council and that Bose had successfully resisted this demand. Ayer also testified that INA broadcasts were made independently and not under any Japanese control or coercion.\textsuperscript{178}

Shah Nawaz in a preliminary statement to counsel stated that Colonel Iwakuro had agreed that no coercion would be used in INA’s administration and that Indians would be able to continue in the INA or leave on their own choice. This supported another contention of the defence that Indian POWs were not forced into enlisting in the INA, contrary to the suggestions of the prosecution. Shah Nawaz had also told the men under his command, on the eve of battle in the Imphal campaign, that the INA was in no way subservient to Japan and “If and when India is made free and the Japanese who are now helping us try to subdue us, we shall fight them.”\textsuperscript{179} Captain P.K. Sahgal, in an interview with J.P. Chander, also reiterated the independence of the INA. “When we started the INA movement we firmly believed that if the Japanese withdrew their support or did not agree to our terms, we should be in a position to attain enough strength to follow our course of action independently, and, if need be, to oppose them… we were determined not to be dictated by any outsider.”\textsuperscript{180}

\textsuperscript{177} Lebra, Joyce, Chapman. (2008). The Indian National Army and Japan. Singapore: ISEAS, p.203
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., P.204.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., p.204.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., p.204.
Some Indian statements, however, contradicted the defence case about the independence of the INA. Lieutenant Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon, in a preliminary statement to counsel, stated, “I was a Japanese tool which I hated to be ... receiving orders from a Jap liaison officer with whom I was always at logger heads.” Lieutenant Dhillon, at one point, had ordered the officers and men under him to have no direct dealings with the Hikari Kikan or with any Japanese officer, and to report to headquarters in case they were approached by Japanese.

The defence counsel called five Japanese witnesses. These were men who had been involved with the Indian independence movement and particularly with the INA. Japanese witnesses summoned for the defence were: Ota Saburo of the Gaimusho, Mastumoto Shun’ichi - Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sawada Renzo - Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and ex-Ambassador to Burma, Hachiya Teruo- Japanese Minister to the FIPG and Lieutenant-General Katakura Tadasu of the Burma Area Army. The Japanese delegation which left Tokyo on 10th December 1945 was faced with a dilemma regarding the posture they should adopt in the court martial of the three INA officers. The INA had actually been fighting under Japanese command at Imphal; but Bose had always claimed that the INA had been an independent army and the defence was now maintaining that version. The Japanese delegation opted to testify according to the wishes of the defendants. Japanese witnesses had no desire to see the Indians with whom they had cooperated convicted of treason against their British colonial master.

Ota Saburo of the Gaimusho introduced documentary evidence that Japan recognized the free and independent status of the FIPG. Matsumoto, who was Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and chief of the Treaty Bureau during the war, testified in court that the Japanese Government had helped Bose and the INA for two reasons: to promote Japan’s own war aims and also to help India achieve independence, which was one of Japan’s war aims. Regarding the meaning of independence, Matsumoto testified that though Japanese troops were present in Manchukuo, Nanking and the Philippines, the Japanese Government recognized those governments as independent. Lieutenant-General Katakura testified that the “INA were allotted a separate

181 Ibid., p.204.
operational role in the battle of Imphal under the control of the Japanese. When there were no operations in progress, the INA and the Japanese were independent. When an operation was in progress they came under the command of the Japanese higher command. He testified that captured territory was to be turned over to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind, under an agreement signed by Terauchi and Bose. Further supporting the independent status of the INA, Katakura testified that the Japanese Army never used the INA soldiers as labourers. The testimony of Japanese witnesses in court amounted to six pages in all. The Japanese testimony and role during the war were reported favourably in the Indian Press.

In mid-October 1945, Fujiwara was summoned as a witness in Delhi. The summons had come from Allied Army Headquarters in Southeast Asia. Ex-Premier Tojo, Foreign Minister Shigemitsu, Navy Minister Shimada, Southern Army commander Marshal Terauchi and Burma Area Army commander General Kawabe were also summoned. But these men, all suspected as class A war criminals, were detained in Tokyo. On reaching India, Fujiwara found that the court martial was a gross British miscalculation. Fujiwara watched as Gandhi and Nehru took advantage of the blunder to mobilize anti-British opinion. It was as if Congress had laid a snare and the British had been caught. Newspapers and Protest demonstrations were held in Delhi, Calcutta, Lahore and Madras as the trial began. The court martial in effect was finally trying the British for their actions in controlling Indian for the past two hundred year. Fujiwara was anxious to testify in Delhi on behalf of his INA and F Kikan comrades. He attested that his Indian friends had risen to fight for Indian independence and not as Japanese puppets. He also read of his own role in the Farrer Park transfer of the British-Indian prisoners at Singapore. The whole history of Bose and the INA unfolded daily in the Press during the trial.

After the defense and prosecution summed up, the court convicted the accused and sentenced them to transportation for life imprisonment. But now, Auchinleck had to pay some attention to the vehement support and demonstrations for the accused in the public arena. He reflected on the matter and then made his decision, taking military and political consideration into account. If he had the three officers

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182 Ibid., p.206.
transported for life, the demonstrations and negative publicity would continue. His conclusions read in part:

“As regards confirmation of the sentence for ‘waging war’, I hold that it is our abject to dispose of this most difficult problem of how to deal with the so-called ‘INA’, in such a way as to leave the least amount of bitterness and racial feeling in the minds of the peoples of India and Britain…and at the same time to establish in law that those who joined the ‘INA’ committed a crime against the State…. It is of no use trying to judge these unfortunate people by the standards which we apply to British officers and men captured by the enemy… a great number of them… believe that Subhas Chandra Bose was a genuine patriot… Bose acquired a tremendous influence over them… the accused might have acted in good faith, forsaking their original allegiance. It is quite obvious that this is the general opinion held in India, not only by the public, but…by the quite a considerable part of the Indian Army as well.”¹⁸³

Since he said that he did not want to make them Martyrs and have the ‘political campaign of bitterness and racial antipathy’¹⁸⁴ continue, he decided to commute the sentence of all three to ‘one of cashiering and forfeiture of pay and allowance’.¹⁸⁵ With this Lieutenant Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon, Captain P.K. Sahgal and Captain Shah Nawaz Khan were dismissed from the Army and released. They have been lionized ever since as the three heroes of the INA and the Red Fort trial.

Though the first trial concluded at the close of 1945, the trials of other INA defendants continued into early 1946. On 24ᵗʰ April 1946, Nehru issued a statement to the British conveying his disagreement with further trials on the matter; and the British closed the INA trials and released all the defendants.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p.555.
¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p.555.