

## *Chapter IV*

### ***BOSE'S STRUGGLE AGAINST THE BRITISH FROM ABROAD :***

#### ***JAPAN AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA, 1943-1945***

Subhas Chandra Bose arrived in Tokyo on May 16, 1943. Long before his arrival in South-East Asia, Rash Behari Bose, an Indian revolutionary had already prepared a ground of revolution for India's independence. Rash Behari started it in 1926 to unite all Asian revolutionaries who were always against the exploitation of eastern countries by the West. He also made regular anti-British propaganda through a journal named 'Voice of India' published in Tokyo.

In South-East Asia, the aim of the activities of Rash Behari Bose was to secure active assistance from the Japanese for India's struggle for independence. Thus he always tried to motivate the Japanese Government to formulate a plan of action against the British Raj with military assistance. On his request, Japan convened a conference in Bangkok in June, 1942 where a large number of delegates from the Indian revolutionaries attended. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, from Europe, sent his message to the conference and it was read by Rash Behari Bose. In his message, Netaji said, "..... the emancipation of India must be the work primarily of Indians themselves. We who are the vanguard of the National Army have the sacred mission of leading the national struggle to a successful conclusion. .... We, who form the vanguard of the national army feel however that the time will soon come when it will be necessary to take up arms in the final stage of the struggle. .... I am convinced that during the course of this war India will be free. India's liberation will mean the expulsion of Anglo-American Imperialism, the goal of victorious Japanese Army. The freedom of India will also afford powerful stimulus to freedom movements all over the world." In the same message, he justified the foreign

help to India's cause. He stated, "And we also feel that since the British Empire is seeking help all over the world and is trying to flood India with foreign soldiers and foreign war materials, it is the right and duty of the Indian nationalists to accept help that may be offered to them"<sup>1</sup>

Rash Behari Bose became enthusiastic to welcome Netaji shortly to South-East Asia from Germany. He had already prepared the ground for Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose to assume the leadership of the movement. To make constitutional and social recognition of Netaji's leadership in the movement against the British Raj in India, from the soil of South-East Asia, Rash Behari Bose convened a conference of the Indian Independence League (I.I.L.) from April 27 to 30, 1943. Amidst the representatives from the various East Asian countries at Singapore, Rash Behari Bose announced that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, who was expected to reach South-East Asia very soon, would succeed him as the president of the I.I.L. "With this announcement, Rash Behari virtually completed the task of giving the Indian Independence League the shape of a revolutionary organisation to be handed over to his illustrious successor."<sup>2</sup>

The most important thing was that the Japanese government liked to see a change in the leadership of the Indian independence movement in East Asia from Rash Behari Bose to Subhas Chandra Bose. The Japanese Prime Minister, Tojo rightly believed that Subhas Chandra Bose was a great Indian, fully qualified to command the I.N.A. and was a great personality with magnetic and almost hypnotic charm.

Finally on June 10, 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose had his first meeting with Tojo. "The prime minister, a reserved man of rather narrowly military and nationalistic outlook, was impressed. The passionate nature, confidence and very presence of the Indian made a suprisingly positive impact on Tojo. He became a firm supporter of Bose."<sup>3</sup> In view of Bose's pressure, Tojo said that he would unreservedly back the struggle for Indian independence.

After one month of his arrival, Subhas Chandra Bose was invited, on June 16,

1943, by the Prime Minister of Japan, Tojo, to the 82nd Extraordinary Session of the National Diet. A great honour was conferred on Netaji by inviting him to Japan's National Diet where the Japanese Prime Minister said :

We are indignant about the fact that India is still under the ruthless suppression of Britain and are in full sympathy with her desperate struggle for independence. We are determined to extend every possible assistance to the cause of India's independence"<sup>4</sup>.

The Japanese Premier was frank to help and appreciate any action taken by the Indians for achievement of India's freedom. In the Diet Tojo openly declared that Japan is firmly resolved to extend all means in order to help expel and eliminate from India the Anglo-Saxon influences which are hostile to Indian people, and enable India to achieve full independence in the true sense of the term.

Netaji was so happy with the declaration of the Japanese Diet that he hurried to declare openly to act as an ally of Japan. Netaji had also undoubtedly come to see that Tojo was not a dictator like Hitler or Mussolini and the Japanese ruling group was also very different from the Germans and Italians.

On June 19, 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose appeared in his own name in Tokyo at his first press conference which was attended by representatives of sixty newspapers and diplomatic missions. There he stated about Tojo's announcement of all possible assistance to Indian struggle. He also said that the movement would develop into an armed struggle. In his statement to the press conference, Subhas Chandra said, "Indians view the present World War as a struggle between two ideologies. It is a struggle between those who want the status quo to continue and those who are determined to tear that old rag into pieces .... Our sincere support is for the New Order .... We should ..... get our freedom only by shedding our own blood. .... Since the enemy fights with his sword we too should fight with the sword. .... Only if a large number of Indians undergo this baptism of fire can they win the race and get the reward of freedom."<sup>5</sup>. He also appreciated the pro-Asian policy of the Japanese which all the Asians, including the besieged Chinese, should back.

On June 21 and 22, 1943, he made two broadcasts over radio to the people of India to tell them of great importance of Tojo's assurance of all possible assistance to India's struggle for independence and also Tojo's personal anxiousness to see India free from the British Raj at an early date. On June 24, 1943 in a broadcast speech, Netaji confidently stated that India shall be free and before long. And free India shall 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 fulfilment.

After forty days' stay in Tokyo, Netaji was prepared to go to Singapore, Malaya and other South-East Asian countries. Before leaving Tokyo, he put a written request to the Government of Japan that he be allowed to establish a Provisional Government of free India with headquarters for the time being at Singapore. The Government replied positively. Before leaving Tokyo, on June 23, 1943, Netaji received a message from the Prime Minister of Burma, Dr. Ba Maw who expressed in the message his goodwill and assured all help to Netaji. On June 27, 1943, Netaji made a broadcast addressed to the people of Japan.

Netaji left Tokyo for Singapore. He accompanied by Rash Behari Bose, Abid Hasan, Mr. Senda, the expert on India and the interpreter Kazunori Kunizuka was greeted by a large crowd at the airport on June 27, 1943 and a guard of honour. He met the leaders of the Indian Independence League and the officers of the INA at an informal discussion.

On July 4, 1943, the General Assembly of the Indian Independence League was convened and attended by delegates from different East-Asian countries. In the convention, Rash Behari Bose, the President of the I.I.L. announced his resignation and conferred his crown on the head of Subhas Chandra Bose as the new President. Presenting Subhas Chandra Bose to the cheering throng, Rash Behari Bose said, "Friends and comrades-at-arms! ..... I have brought you this present. Subhas Chandra Bose ..... symbolizes all that is best, noblest, the most daring, and the most dynamic in the youth of India ..... In your presence today, I resign my office as President of the Indian

Independence League in East Asia. From now on, Subhas Chandra Bose is your President, your leader in the fight for India's independence, and I am confident that ..... you will march on to battle and to victory."<sup>6</sup>

The convention witnessed a change in the leadership of the movement. It seemed that Subhas Chandra Bose was the expected leader for the cheering people present in the convention. Accepting the leadership, Netaji, immediately after Rash Behari's introductory address, rose to speak and pointed out that India was ready for a revolution and such an impending revolution must be expedited by an armed struggle from outside India. He informed the delegates of the Prime Minister, Tojo's sincere support to the Indian Independence movement. He also told them that he had planned to set up a Provisional Government of Free India.

On July 5, 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose first met Ba Maw of Burma. His cause and Subhas Chandra's were linked, both wanted freedom from the British Raj and both wanted no subservience to a new foreign ruler. Subhas Chandra built a good relationship with Ba Maw as his cooperation would be more effective in fighting the British Raj in India through Burma.

On the same day Subhas Chandra Bose addressed a rally of 13,000 men of the I.N.A. In his speech to the soldiers, he said :

"Soldiers of India's Army of Liberation! Today is the proudest day of my life. Today it has pleased Providence to give me the unique privilege and honour of announcing to the whole world that India's army of Liberation has been come into being. This army has now been drawn in military formation on the battlefield of Singapore— which was once the bulwark of the British Empire. This is not only the army that will emancipate India from the British yoke; it is also the army that will hereafter create the future national army of Free India. Every Indian must feel proud that this army — his own army— has been organised entirely under Indian leadership and that when the historic moment arrives under Indian leadership it will go to battle...."

I have said that today is the proudest day of my life. For an enslaved people, there can be no greater pride, no higher honour, than to be the first soldier in the army of liberation ....."<sup>7</sup>

The speech of Netaji had an overwhelming effect on the men present in the rally. They were encouraged by the decisiveness and the noblest sentiment of Subhas Chandra Bose.

He met General Tojo in Singapore on July 6, 1943 and in an effective discussion, Subhas Chandra Bose expressed his intention to organise a Provisional Government of Free India to mobilize all of the forces effectively to lead the Indian Revolution and to prepare the Indian people inside and outside India, for an armed struggle. The Prime Minister, Tojo told Subhas Chandra to go ahead with the establishment of the Provisional Government of India. He also agreed to provide more arms to expand the I.N.A. The I.N.A. got a new sunshine of enthusiasm. Netaji invoked the civilians in South-East Asia for a "Total Mobilization for a Total War". He promised, "Give me the total mobilization of Indian man power and material resources in East Asia and I promise you a second front in India's war of independence"<sup>8</sup>.

By July 6, 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose had gone through the steps essentials for beginning his work. He took over the charge of the Indian Independence League as its President and of the I.N.A. He proceeded on his work of the I.N.A. revolution through the mutual understanding of the Japanese Government. Subhas Chandra and his colleagues had to set themselves to the work of re-organising the I.N.A so that it could stand side by side with the Japanese at the battle front, had to shape the provisional government and collect resources for it to carry on. Within the next few days, he completed the work of reorganisation of the League (I.I.L.). According to Hugh Toye, Netaji had decided that Burma and Malaya would be his main source of supply of men and Thailand of materials.

For administrative convenience, the functions of the Indian Independence League were redistributed among 13 departments– (1) General Affairs, (2) Publicity and

Propaganda, (3) Finance, (4) Education, (5) Social Welfare, (6) Housing and Transport, (7) Women's Department, (8) Supplies, (9) Recruitment, (10) Training, (11) Intelligence, (12) Reconstruction, (13) One department specially for Ceylon.

On July 9, 1943, the campaign began with a mass rally in Singapore. Then Netji took a tour to Thailand, Indo-China, Burma and to all parts of Malay with a view to generating support of both men and materials, mobilizing public opinion, establishing new branches of the Indian Independence League, strengthening the existing ones, opening new recruitment centres for the army, arranging for the training of the men, inspiring civilians to join the army, collecting funds, enrolling voluntary workers, picking up talented people for the Provisional Government and concurrently thinking of the reorganisation of the army and planning the set up of his government.

Then a meeting was held in Singapore among the Indians where Subhas Chandra asked the Indians for unprecedented sacrifices of wealth and lives of men as well as women. He also gave the call for the formation of a women regiment to fight the enemy. He then led fund-raising drive as well as recruitment campaign simultaneously. Everywhere he received spontaneous support from the Indians of Bangkok, Saigon, Penang, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore etc.

At the end of July, 1943, Netaji went to Rangoon on an invitation to attend the ceremony of inauguration of Burma's independence to be held on August 1, 1943. As a guest of honour at the ceremony, he appreciated Japan handsomely in his speech and also said: "The independence of Burma in the momentous crisis has a two fold significance for us. It shows, in the first place, what a nation can achieve if it knows how to seize an opportunity what history has offered. Secondly just as the conquest of India supplied the British with a jumping off ground for their attack on Burma in the nineteenth century, similarly, the emancipation of Burma has supplied the Indian independence movement in East Asia with a springboard for its attack on Britain's Army of occupation in India during the twentieth century".

Dr. Ba Maw, the head of the independent Burma, expressed his willingness to Netaji to extend necessary help to the armed revolution against the British Raj and also openly welcomed him (Netaji); and so on January, 6, 1944 and the days following, Netaji Bose and his army arrived in Burma and remained there till the final defeat of the Japanese in 1945.

On August 4, 1943, Netaji went to Bangkok again to meet the Thai Prime Minister and received from him his tacit consent to pass the I.N.A men to Bangkok through Thailand.

On August 9, 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose flew to Saigon, which stood between Tokyo and Singapore as the halting station for reinforcement of troops to Singapore. There he was able to understand the situation that an all-out offensive against the British Raj in India was under preparation. He was fully satisfied to feel that.

Netaji returned to Singapore on August 14, 1943 and spoke at a giant rally of Indians on the occasion of the anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's arrest the previous year after the beginning of the Quit India Movement. Meanwhile, the work of reorganizations of the army had progressed well.

On August 25, 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose took over the command of the Azad Hind Fauz. In a special order of the day, he said, "In the interest of the Indian Independence Movement and the Azad Hind Fauz, I have taken over the direct command of our army from this day."<sup>9</sup>

Subhas Chandra Bose made an innovation in the I.N.A. recognition of the role of women in the freedom struggle of India by way of organization of a women regiment to be a part of the Azad Hind Fauz, who were to be trained to work alongside the Indian men. He also rightly believed that seeing Indian women fighting at their side, the Indian men would fight more actively. Inspired by Netaji many women under the leadership of Lakshmi Swaminathan came forward. The lady was a private medical practitioner in

Singapore before the war and had been active in the women section of the Indian Independence League. Her perseverance, intelligence, determination, oratory were so impressive that Bose was fortunate enough to have such a lady as the women leader of the I.N.A.'s struggle for freedom.

The women regiment was named as the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. The powerful impact of Subhas Chandra Bose on these women encouraged them to do their valuable service for India's independence.

In September, 1943, the women recruits, still wearing saris, presented a guard of honour to Netaji taking rifles in their hands. Soon the number of recruits increased upto 500 in Singapore and 300 more in other areas. On October 22, 1943, Netaji opened a training camp for the women regiment in the barrack near the local office of the Indian Independence League. He addressed the women regiment on the occasion and said: "..... what had an brave women done in the past? What did the brave Rani of Jhansi do in the Revolution of 1857, India's First War of Independence? Therefore in the last and final war of independence we want not one Rani of Jhansi, but thousands of thousands of Ranis of Jhansi. It is not the number of rifles you may carry or the number of shots you may fire which is important. Equally important is the moral effect of your brave example."<sup>10</sup>

The women regiment was so enthusiastic that some of the women promised to work as suicide squads of the Azad Hind Fauj. Some of them were devoted to the Azad Hind Fauj Hospitals where they rendered valuable and memorable service to the patients.

The Indian Independence League, on Netaji's proposal, approved the establishment of the Provisional Government of Free India on October 21, 1943 and elected him as the Chief Executive of the Government. Then Netaji read out his statement :

"As a student of history of revolutions in the world throughout the twenty-two

years of my political career, I have always felt that India lacks two vital requirements for its struggle for independence. They are a national army and a national government."<sup>11</sup> He again stated : "It is organised on a war footing, and its primary objective is to launch the final phase of the struggle against the British in India and its allies..... The final phase of the struggle will begin when the Indian National Army crosses into India to start on a historic march towards Delhi. Only when the Indian flag is hoisted over the Governor-General's residence after Britain and the USA have been driven out of India, our march will come to an end."<sup>12</sup>

In his statement also projected the functions of the Government. He liked to see the Provisional Government of Azad Hind not just a peace-time Government, but a fighting organization. The main object of the Government was to launch and conduct the last war against the British and their allies in India. The Provisional Government would maintainin close connection with the entire community in East Asia and mobilize all their resources for the war against the British Raj.

The Provisional Government of Free India was based in Singapore and consisted of five ministers, eight representatives from the I.N.A. and eight civilian advisers representing the Indians of South-East and East Asia. Netaji was the head of state, the Prime Minister and minister for war and foreign affairs. The four other ministers were captain Lakshmi Swaminathan(women's organizations), S.A. Ayer (Publicity and Propaganda), Lt. Col. A.C. Chatterjee (Finance), and A.M. Sahay (Secretary) with ministerial rank.

Netaji announced the names of the Cabinet members, read out the Proclamation of Independence and began the ceremony of taking oath of allegiance. Amidst cheers, Netaji rose to read sacred oath and began "In the name of God I take this sacred oath that to liberate India and 38 crores of my countrymen, I, Subhas Chandra Bose will continue the sacred war of freedom till the last breath of my life." Reading the oath, Subhas Chandra became so emotional that he could not, but to wipe his eyes with his

handkerchief. Then he began again in a steady voice : "I shall always remain a servant of India and look after the welfar of 38 crores of Indian brothers and sisters. This shall be for me my highest duty. Even after winning freedom I will always be prepared to shed the last drop of my blood for the preservation of India's freedom." Then one by one other members of the Cabinet took the oath and promised their duty to the cause of the nation and faithfulness to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

The Provisional Government of Azad Hind got recognition from Japan on October 23, 1943. It was followed by other eight countries of the world. Those were Germany, Croatia, China (Nanking), Manchukuo, Philippines, Burma, Italy and Siam.

Two days after its establishment, the Provisional Government took a bold decision to declare war against England and America. The declaration was followed by a rally of about thirty thousand men of the Azad Hind Fauz where Netaji delivered his first public speech after the establishment of the Provisional Government. The declaration of war on the Anglo-American allies made a joyous excitement to the public.

In his INA struggle for Indian Independence from South-East Asia, Netaji faced the greatest single problem -- money. He expected financial help not only from Japan, but also and largely from the Indian merchants in South-East Asia. On October 25, 1943, he addressed the merchants of Malaya with severity. He told them that when India was in a state of war, wealth, possession, lives and properties did not belong to anybody's own; they belonged to India and India alone. He was confident that the Indian merchants would realise the simple truth.

Then Netaji left for Tokyo to attend the Greater East Asia Conference to be held on 5th and 6th November, 1943. Among many other matters, the conference discussed about the independence struggle of India from the soils of East Asia. Dr. Ba Maw moved a resolution extending full sympathy and active support to the Indian struggle for freedom, which was passed unanimously. Netaji delivered his speech and praised the greater East Asia Conference for adopting a Charter in favour of the suppressed nations of the whole world. Japan's Prime Minister Tojo gave his consent to return Andaman and

Nicobar islands to the Provisional Government of Free India. Those islands were then under the control of the Japanese. Netaji also requested the Japanese leaders to extend additional military and financial assistance to strengthen the I.N.A.

In Tokyo, the Japanese Government also committed to Netaji to hand over authority over the Indian territories which came under the Japanese occupation. It was also agreed that in the Imphal campaign, the I.N.A. would be treated as Japan's allied army. The Japanese Government also agreed that a second division of the I.N.A. would be immediately formed and a third would be planned and cadets be trained. The expenses of all those would be borne by Japan. The settlement of all those issues through negotiations was a great success of Netaji in the East Asia for the interest of Indian struggle for freedom.

On November 17, 1943, he left Tokyo for Nanking, Shanghai and Manila, Indonesia, Diakarta, Surabaya and other towns of Borneo and Sumatra. He took those tours for raising funds from Indians and for recruitment of people for the army as well as for other services. He ended the trip and returned to Singapore late 1943.

On December 29, 1943, Netaji visited Andaman and Nicobar islands for its ceremonial transfer by Japan to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind. He renamed the islands as Swaheed and Swaraj respectively. Lt. Col. A.D. Loganathan was placed as the chief Commissioner of the islands under the Provisional Government of Free India.

In January, 1944, the decision to launch an offensive in Burma was finally undertaken by the Japanese. The I.N.A. would be the ally of the Japanese Army in the offensive campaign to Imphal. The I.N.A. was to assist these operations in two ways—there was to be an espionage and propaganda group with each Japanese division, and an independent role of the Subhas regiment.

The 7th January, 1944 became an important day for Azad Hind movement in two ways. Firstly, it was on this day that Tojo's order to start the Imphal operation ended a

long period of uncertainty. On this day again Netaji's Provisional Government of Free India shifted its headquarter from Singapore to Rangoon in order to be nearer the field of action. Here, Subhas Chandra had to deal with the mortal enemy, the British, and thus he advised the Indian soldiers to remain cordial and thankful to the Burmese, their wartime host.

At the very beginning, the Japanese Army was not willing to deploy the I.N.A. in the Imphal campaign. But on the pressure of Subhas Chandra, the Japanese agreed to deploy the men of the Subhas Brigade of the I.N.A., which would proceed in two groups. In the Imphal campaign, Netaji wanted the I.N.A. to have a vital function and also expected that the first drop of blood to be shed on Indian soil should be that of a member of the I.N.A.

While Netaji and the men of the I.N.A. were determined to do everything themselves in the Imphal campaign, the Japanese Army did not share this view. Netaji warned the Indian soldiers beforehand that they should not suffer from any kind of inferiority complex. He also told them that they should never think that the Japanese were doing a great favour to India. They would do for their own interest for expelling the British out of India and the Japanese would help themselves through the I.N.A. fighters. Freedom of India from the British would mean the safety of the areas conquered by Japan in East Asia. Besides once India was free, the Japanese could make considerable gains through trade with India. He also firmly asked the Indian soldiers of the I.N.A. to turn their guns against those soldiers whether Indians or Japanese who were found to be guilty (indulging in crimes like looting and rape) after crossing India's border. He was also vigilant about attitude of the Japanese soldiers in the battlefield at this critical juncture, and if any of them was suspected of treachery and betrayal against the Indian cause, the I.N.A. soldiers were instructed by him to shoot the traitors without any hesitation.

The men of the Subhas Brigade reached Rangoon early in January in 1944. The men of the I.N.A. were found to be more enthusiastic than the Japanese. On their arrival

in Rangoon, Netaji tried to meet many deficiencies. On the other hand, the Japanese seemed not to extend active help to the I.N.A. They made only vague promises.

Netaji had under his command three divisions of 30,000 fully trained men. Along with this, Netaji had a reserve of 20,000 more volunteers for training. Netaji had expressed his desire on many occasions that the I.N.A. should be allowed one particular sector of the front where he would lead the men personally on battlefield. His own choice remained the Arakan region. But the Japanese rejected this on the ground that the I.N.A. would face a grave danger in the Arakan region from the British military, aerial and naval bombardment simultaneously in the coastal area.

On January 24, 1944, Netaji in a closed door discussion offered some suggestions on strategic points regarding the Imphal campaign to Col. Tadasu Katakura who not only appreciated the suggestions, but also accepted those. Then Netaji strongly rejected the plan of the Japanese Army to carry out a heavy bombardment of Calcutta. Netaji clearly stated that such an action would destroy India's faith in the Japanese as well as in Netaji. In stead of bombardment, he suggested the dropping of propaganda leaflets rather than bombs on Calcutta which would be more helpful for the purpose they had in view.

Being prepared for direct attack on the British in the Indian soil, Subhas Chandra bade the Subhas Regiment of the I.N.A. farewell on February 3, 1944.

“Blood is calling to blood. Arise ! we have no time to lose. Take up your arms. There in front of you is the road our pioneers have built. We shall march along that road... we shall die a martyr's death. And in our last sleep we shall kiss the road which will bring our Army to Delhi. The road to Delhi is the road to Freedom. On to Delhi”.

The Nehru Regiment, one of the guerilla regiments of the I.N.A., commanded by Shah Nawaz Khan successfully entered Kohima, an Indian soil, where Shah Nawaz Khan's men raised the Indian tricolor. It was a great victory of the I.N.A.

The offensive in Arakan against the British was launched on February 4, 1944 in which the Japanese-I.N.A. force became successful. Then on March 19, 1944, the Japanese army and the Indian National Army crossed the Indian frontier. Two days later Tojo stated in the Diet that the Provisional Government of Free India would administer occupied Indian territories. On April 21, 1944, the I.N.A. force successfully reached Imphal. Meanwhile it was miserably seen that the I.N.A. men suffered much from some serious problems— poor and scanty rations, the attack of malaria but no medicine.

To meet the financial crisis, Subhas Chandra Bose collected some five million rupees worth of cash and valuables from East Asia Indian civilians at a public meeting in Rangoon on May 29, 1944. The Indians of Rangoon willingly donated money, necklace, gold earrings. The Imphal campaign still seemed to be going well, if somewhat more slowly than had been anticipated.

His armed revolution in South-East Asia and aggressive campaign against the British in India had to face manifold criticism in India. But he was not moved by those critics. He simply enthused the noble effort to save the dignity and honour of India from the British bondage. Alluviating the misgivings of the critics regarding the future role of the Provisional Government, he made it clear that once the British were expelled from India and peace and order were established, the mission of the Provisional Government would be over. It would then be for the Indian people themselves to determine the form of Government that they would choose and also to decide as to who should take charge of that Government.

Meanwhile, the British-led Army hit the Japanese and the I.N.A. so aggressively that the latter were forced to acknowledge their disastrous defeat. The Japanese-I.N.A. force began to suffer reverses in the Imphal campaign from the second half of June, 1944. Suffering from the starvation, the I.N.A. soldiers were utterly demoralised. In August, 1944, they followed the retreat of the Japanese from the campaign. Subhas Chandra Bose

realised the situation and his whole work was devoted to the salvation. He made partly the I.N.A. officers responsible for the disaster and was mostly disgusted with the Japanese for their lack of cooperation with the I.N.A. in battle. In September, 1944, he visited the I.N.A. camps and hospitals where four-fifth survivors were detained. Everywhere he saw suffering and heard pitiful tales of the retreat; everywhere, too his presence was welcomed, for there was the great faith about this dedicated man – an awe and admiration which could inspire devotion and love.<sup>13</sup>

It must be borne in mind that while the Japanese were retreating, the I.N.A. soldiers continued their fighting bravely in their Imphal campaign. Before they were demoralised by the total British dominance in the campaign, the I.N.A. men fought courageously. They faced up to British equipment, tanks, guns and aircraft with rifles, bullock-carts and empty stomachs.

Shah Nawaz heaped most of the blame on the Japanese for the Japanese - I.N.A. defeat. With a clear conscience he said that the Japanese did not give full aid and assistance to the Azad Hind Fauz during their assault on Imphal.

When the Japanese officers ordered the Japanese-I.N.A. troops to retreat, Subhas Chandra Bose resisted the order and said that he wanted his men to stay and fight to the last. Shah Nawaz explained that Netaji was completely confident of the I.N.A.'s victory. Subhas Chandra was determined that even if the Axis powers laid down their arms, the I.N.A. must continue its struggle until the last British quit the shores of India.

But at the end, on the pressure of the Japanese Government, Subhas Chandra accepted the order of retreat. Then he returned from Rangoon to Tokyo. During his stay in Tokyo, he constantly sought an interview with the Russian Ambassador to Japan. But Soviet Russia did not give Subhas Chandra any positive response. Then he returned to Burma near the end of 1944.

Meanwhile, the picture of the world war was changed. The Allied powers had got victory over Germany. Hitler committed suicide and Germany had surrendered on May 8, 1945. Japan was also under bomb attack. In spite of that, Subhas Chandra Bose was anxious enough to revive the offensive campaign against the British across the border of Burma. But he also understood by June, 1945 that the Japanese could offer him no further help. On the other hand, the Japanese were trying to conclude the war. They made an offer of surrender to the Allied force on August 10, 1945. Such an act of subordination by the Japanese to the Allies made Subhas Chandra's relations with the Japanese weak.

Though the first campaign became failure, Subhas Chandra Bose started the second campaign against the British in India through Burma. The second campaign also ultimately failed due to depression of the I.N.A. soldiers and officers on the one hand and the British-Indian army's continuous hit on the Japanese-I.N.A. campaign. In May, 1945, the I.N.A. surrendered in Rangoon. Major-General Loganathan was left to preside over the I.N.A. surrender in Rangoon. Subhas Chandra Bose and most of the important leaders of the I.N.A. did not surrender to the British Indian army, but managed to escape from Burma.

Netaji sought assistance again from the Soviet Union. Since the Soviet Union had already become a partner of the Allies, it became difficult for him to get easy way to the Soviet Union. He was still in Malaya and on August 16, 1945, he flew to Bangkok and next day on August, 17, 1945 to Saigon. Here there was a gathering which included Colonel Habibur Rahman, Colonel Pritam Singh, Colonel Gulzara Singh, Major Abid Hasan, Debnath Das, S.A. Ayer, some civilians and T. Negishe, Bose's long time Japanese translator.

They flew from Saigon to Tourane on August 17, 1945 at 5.00 am and from Tourane to Taipei on August 18, 1945 at 5.00 am. They landed in Taipei and the same day they would leave Taipei by 2.00 pm. About 2.30 pm the plane with a heavy load took off from Taipei and just as they left the ground barely thirty metres up and near the

edge of the airfield, there was a loud noise. With an enormous crash the plane hit the ground and the aeroplane broke into two large parts. Subhas Chandra Bose was also supposed to be in that aeroplane, but it was not sure. What was certain was that Netaji was not seen in action after the crash. His disappearance is still a mystery, because some of his followers and thousands of admirers in India and abroad are not ready to believe that he died in that crash.

The aircrash might have ended or not ended his life, but it surely ended the long and uncompromising struggle of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose for India's freedom against the British Raj in India.

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