

Chapter V

THE BRITISH REACTION

From the very inception, Subhas Chandra Bose proved himself as the most dangerous man to the British Raj in India. While the British rulers in India was bargaining with the Congress sometimes for Dominion Status, sometimes for Federal Scheme, sometimes for separate electorate and so, they could not bargain with Subhas Chandra Bose who from the beginning of his participation in the struggle for India's freedom, was determined to expel the British from India and attain India's complete independence. Therefore he was marked by the British Raj in India as more dangerous than the others. Hence the British reacted seriously and undertook all possible means to subdue and suppress his active and militant resistance.

The anti-Bose British reaction may be discussed under two phases – the Pre-I.N.A. phase and the I.N.A. phase. In the Pre-I.N.A. phase, the British adopted various means to subdue his uncompromising militant revolution of which imprisonment on allegation of terrorism, worsening of his relation with the Congress by means of divide and rule tactics and by false propaganda against him, and restrictions on his foreign voyage on terrorist allegation were the main

“An implacable foe of British Rule in India”, as it was confessed by the British Government in a confidential intelligence report. Really speaking, his militant policies against the British Raj were the reasons behind his imprisonments. In the same confidential report, the British Government again stated

“In 1921 (he) took prominent part in arranging a hartal on the Prince of Wales's arrival in Calcutta.

Helped to organize a revolutionary party designed to supersede the non-cooperation campaign by a campaign of violence, and in 1921-2 was imprisoned for six months for managing an unlawful association.

In 1924 he was arrested and interned as State Prisoner for participating in a general conspiracy for the commission of revolutionary crimes.

Was imprisoned for 12 months early 1930 for leading an unlawful demonstration, and while in jail was elected Mayor of Calcutta.

On his release resumed his activities and finally was given again interned as a State Prisoner early in 1932".²

In the twenty years' political life of Subhas Chandra Bose, he was imprisoned eleven times in 1921, 1924, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1936 and 1940 by the British Raj in India. He was imprisoned and kept in jail for nine years in total and most of the allegations against him were terrorist allegations, although he was never a terrorist. It was purely on apprehension of the British. "There is also at least a suspicion that he has been at the back of certain plans to smuggle arms into India".³

The British left no stone unturned to put restrictions on his activities not only in India but also abroad. In a letter from the British Legation, Vienna to Captain T.J. Kendrick, Passport Control, Vienna on April 20, 1934, R.H. Hadow wrote, "Academical Association of Vienna is in the hands of Subhas Chandra Bose, former Mayor of Calcutta and as you must know – one of the most anti-British Indian living today. Bose was, you will remember, in Vienna last year or the year before, apparently for the purpose of transferring the headquarters of the Federation of Indian Students abroad from London to Vienna. The object of his transfer is obvious, and it is particularly desirable that his activities should be checked as far as possible".⁴

Joseph Addison from British Legation, Prague wrote a letter to O.G. Sargent, Foreign Office, S.W.I. on May 15, 1934:

“Bose was in Prague on 4th May (and may be still there). On that day he attended a ceremony of inauguration of a Club for the promotion of cultural and commercial relations between Czechoslovakia and British India.

Francis, the Vice Consul, was there by accident and informs that, although Bose was careful to say nothing directly inimical yet the purport of his speech was that India, in her struggle for freedom, was in the same position as Czechoslovakia had formerly been under “her Austrian oppressors”.

The British reacted on the speech of Subhas Chandra Bose in the same letter:

“It would, of course, be beneath our dignity to take any notice of such nonsense, on an occasion which is in itself ridiculous”.

Bose’s activities were thundering the British Raj. Therefore, they were always vigilant on his activities.

In a departmental note on the case against Subhas Chandra Bose prepared on March, 1936, it was confirmed by the British Raj that “he is a terrorist and head of one of the main terrorist parties and that he is an advocate of violent revolution. It would be detrimental to public safety to allow him liberty to preach such items and to organize people to carry them out”.

In the pre-I.N.A. phase, the British adopted another reactionary policy of promoting rift between the Congress and Subhas Chandra and also Gandhi and Subhas Chandra. The British levelled him as a rebel and this rebel image had been projected in order to worsen the relation of Subhas with Gandhi and the Congress rightists. “To him Gandhi was a senile”, according to a British official, as Subhas Chandra was convinced that “India’s liberation would not be achieved under the leadership of Gandhi Hence his plan of revolt against Gandhi”. One step further, the British referred to Bose’s activities in Sofia and his speech there in memory of

fallen revolutionaries as “He (Subhas) stated publicly that Gandhi will die soon, and that he is the one who will take his place”.⁸

Again, Subhas Chandra’s foreign voyages were also restricted by the British Government.

“If Bose comes to Europe and regain his vigour, he may, if he goes to Switzerland and Germany, get in touch with dangerous international revolutionaries and wave plots to be put into operation on his return to India”. It further states that “If he goes to England, Bose will be able to make valuable contacts in connection with young Bengalis studying over here, so many of whom get infected with communistic views and connected with active Communists doing their studies here”.⁹

In his passport issued on 13th February, 1933, his foreign voyage was restricted writing as ‘Endorsement in Red Ink : Not valid for entry into Germany or the United Kingdom’.¹⁰

In the I.N.A. phase, the British were actually concerned with the activities of Subhas Chandra Bose in South-East Asia and expressed their reactions in different ways. In a ‘Most Secret’ intelligence report ‘not to be reproduced and Quoted’ it was stated Subhas Chandra Bose arrived East Asia from Germany in May, 1943:

“In general, Bose’s arrival in Asia may be said to have greatly increased the tempo of subversive propaganda; and appears to have galvanised the I.I.L. into greater political activity Bose’s great drive and political acumen, his prestige in Indian revolutionary circles, his understanding of both Indian and English character, will be real value to the Japanese whose propaganda against India has hitherto lacked imagination Under Bose’s direction subversive activities and espionage in India will be greatly intensified”.¹¹

Regarding the I.N.A. trial, the British Government expressed their reaction that “The situation in respect of the Indian National Army is one which warrants

disquiet". "There has seldom been a matter", observed Home Department of the British Government, "which has attracted so much public interest, and it is safe to say, sympathy".¹² The British also feared that if the I.N.A. men suffered in any way the students and youths of the country would launch a struggle which would compel the British to quit India".¹³

REFERENCES

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2. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.
3. *Ibid.*, p.27.
4. A letter from R.H. Hadow, British Legation, Vienna. April 20th, 1934 to Captain T.J. Kendrick, Passport Control, Vienna.
5. A letter from Joseph Addison, British Legation, Prague, 15th May 1934 to O.G. Sargent, Esq., C.M.G., Foreign Office, S.W.1.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Quoted from Kar, Jasabanta, *Subhas Chandra Bose – The Man and His Mind*, Minerva Associates (Publications) Pvt. Ltd., India, 1988, p.31.
8. Enclosures in Sofia Despatch No.145 of June 10th, 1934, British Legation, Sofia, collected from Mookerjee, Nanda, *op. cit.*, p.42.
9. Excerpts from a note prepared on Subhas Chandra by M.J. Clauson on 15 December 1932 collected from Mookerjee, Nanda, *op. cit.*, p.27.
10. True copy of particulars incorporated in the Passport issued to Subhas Chandra Bose at Allahabad on 13 February, 1933.
11. A Most Secret Intelligence Report from M.I.2(a), 14 July 43, Ext. 173.
12. Secret Report of the Intelligence Bureau, Home Deptt., Govt. papers, N.A.I. New Delhi – Quoted from Kar, Jasobanta, *The New Horizon – Netaji's Concept of Leftism*, K.P. Bagchi & Company, Calcutta, 1978, p.77.
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