

THE INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY—MOTIVES, PROBLEMS AND SIGNIFICANCE *

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ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE Indian National Army (I.N.A.)—indeed, an unprecedented event in the history of the Indian army—was the massive transfer of loyalty in which forty thousand¹ out of fifty-five thousand² Indian men and officers who surrendered to the Japanese on the fall of Singapore in 1942 repudiated their allegiance to the British Crown. The local Japanese military authorities in Southeast Asia had taken up just before the Pacific War a scheme for winning over the Indian soldiers stationed in the region. The plan was to re-employ them in auxiliary war duties during the Malayan campaign and encourage them to organize a legion. The representatives of the Indians including the P.O.W.s who met at the Singapore, Tokyo and Bangkok Conferences in the first half of 1942 favoured in principle the proposal to raise an army for achieving “complete independence of India.” The Japanese agreed in 1942 to arm only sixteen thousand Indian P.O.W.s which formed the nucleus of the I.N.A.³ Later, with the implementation of a “scheme for a total mobilization” of the resources of the Indian community in the Japanese occupied areas, the strength of the army increased. It was estimated to be forty-five thousand in 1945.⁴ Along with the Japanese forces the army campaigned without

* This paper is based on a larger study on the Indian National Army which was the author's successful Ph.D. dissertation (1965) at Indian School of International Studies, New Delhi. In the preparation of the paper I have received encouragement and valuable suggestions from Professor Harry J. Benda of Yale University and Professor Grant K. Goodman of Kansas University. I am grateful of them.

¹ A copy of the speech delivered by Mohan Singh in Indian Parliament on 18 February 1964 explaining the I.N.A. personnel's claim for arrear dues from the Government of India, All-India I.N.A. Relief and Enquiry Committee (A.I.I.N.A.-R.E.C.) Delhi. Toye corroborated the figure. He wrote: “By the end of August 1942 forty thousand Prisoners of War had signed the pledge to join the Indian National Army under Mohan Singh”. Hugh Toye, *The Springing Tiger* (London, 1959), p. 9.

² A.E. Percival, *The War in Malaya* (London, 1949), p. 276. See also the list issued on 21 February 1942 by the Imperial General Headquarters mentioning the relative strength of the British, Australian and the Indian troops taken prisoners by the Japanese army on the surrender of Singapore, which was reproduced in a publication of the Indian Independence League. Indian Independence League, *Britain Surrenders* (Bangkok, 1943), p. 2.

³ Prosecution witness Lt. D.C. Nag in the first I.N.A. court martial. Motiram, ed., *Two Historic Trials in Red Fort* (Delhi, 1946), p. 22; Major-General A.C. Chatterjee, *India's Struggle for Freedom* (Calcutta, 1947), p. 35.

⁴ Photostat copy of the personal and secret memorandum of the Commander-in-chief of the Indian army, Gen. Sir Claude Auchinleck, on the effects of the

success during 1944-5 on the Indo-Burma borders and disintegrated with the end of the World War II.

This paper takes up for discussion only three aspects of the I.N.A. It includes a study of the motives of those Indian officers who joined the I.N.A. as it sheds some light on the nature of their participation in the Greater East Asia scheme of Japan. While Japan's relations with other nationalities in Southeast Asia during the occupation are fairly known now, her policy towards the Indian community in the region and more particularly, the problems which followed from that policy have hardly drawn any scholarly attention. This forms the second part of the paper. The impact of the I.N.A. courts martial in India at the end of the war on the Indian officers in the Indian armed forces is discussed in the last part of the paper.

I. MOTIVES

The behaviour of the Indian officers who joined the I.N.A. was of crucial importance for more than one reason. They were sizeable in strength—according to one information four hundred in all⁵—and included many with good service-records. As such, their behavior could not be explained away as an instance of lack of discipline. Moreover, it had deeper implications for the ordinary ranks. As a matter of tradition in the Indian army, the focus of loyalty of an average and illiterate sepoy was his immediate higher officer on whom he depended for his welfare, advancement and future prospects. Thus, the decision of the officers to join the I.N.A. or remain out of it, was bound to influence the attitude of the larger section of the Indian P.O.W. towards the proposal for raising a liberation army. A study of the considerations which shaped the decision of the officer corps is, therefore, important.

In the years following the war, I.N.A.'s motives were reviewed mainly by two groups of officers, the British and the former I.N.A. Because of their indirect involvement with the event, the views they expressed were more or less one-sided. For the British, it was most annoying to find a large number of Indian officers, who had been taught to stand firm by their commission, joining the enemy during the war. Their attitude towards the I.N.A. was shaped by their hostility derived from the battle field.⁶ The accounts of the former I.N.A. officers, on the other

first I.N.A. court martial, circulated among the senior British officers of the Indian army. Photostat copy obtained by the writer from Sir Claude. Hereinafter referred to as Auchinleck's memorandum.

⁵ Discussion with Gen. Mohan Singh at New Delhi in February 1962.

⁶ The Commander-in-chief described in detail the attitude of the British officers in his letter to the Viceroy. See Gen. Auchinleck to Viceroy, 26 November 1945, John Connel, *Auchinleck: A Biography of Field Marchall Sir Claude Auchinleck* (London, 1959), p. 806; also Lieut. Gen. Sir Francis Tucker, *While Memory Serves* (London, 1950), pp. 51-72.

hand, put undue emphasis on patriotism. Mention must be made in this connection of the Government of India's attempt at the end of the war to categorize the I.N.A. officers as Black, Blackest, Grey and White.⁷ Purely administrative in its origin as well as purpose, this categorization ran across the various commissions of the Indian officers, as the Government sought to sort out a few officers against whom certain charges could be proved and punish them in order to uphold the discipline of the army.⁸ This attempt, however, did not intend to find out the reaction of various commissions, mainly, the King's Commissioned Officer (K.C.O.), Indian Commissioned Officer (I.C.O.) and the Viceroy's Commissioned Officer (V.C.O.).

A commission-wise study of the motive of the Indian officers appears to be more relevant because the response of each of these groups to the proposal for raising the I.N.A. had its own distinct pattern. It also indicated the different degrees of Western impact on them and the variety of responses. The fact that the I.N.A. officers brought under trial by the Indian army command after the World War II were the I.C.O. and the V.C.O., and they included no K.C.O., lends support to this approach.

This approach, too, has its own problems. It requires the individual account from a large number of officers who joined the I.N.A. to permit generalization and the means to verify it. Moreover, individual decision-making being a complex psychology process, an element of uncertainty possibly always remains in any such generalization. The writings of the former I.N.A. officers apart, it was the evidence and proceedings of the I.N.A. courts martial which presented for the first time the individual account from a large number of Indian officers explaining their own reasons for joining the I.N.A. In the first I.N.A. trial alone, for example, the Defence Counsel interviewed and obtained individual testimony from 120 officers. The Prosecution produced before the court twenty-four officers and sepoy.⁹ These accounts came from officers holding various commissions and were, therefore, fairly representative in nature. Although it is difficult to be sure as to what extent some of these accounts are worthy of credence, they often stood modified on cross-examination.

An analysis of the motives of the I.N.A. officers, drawn carefully to represent various sections, illustrate the effects of discrimination on

⁷ For the text of the communique to the press in which the Government outlined their I.N.A. policy see *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, 1946-8 (London), p. 7821.

⁸ Philip Mason's foreword in *Toye*, *op cit.*, pp. VIII-IX. Mason was an Additional Secretary to the War Department of the Government of India at the end of the war.

⁹ See Defense Counsel's reply to the Judge Advocate in the first I.N.A. Court martial. Motiram, ed., *op cit.*, p. 4.

the colonial forces. The attitude assumed by the Indian officers in 1942 is to be analysed in the context of their conditions in the Indian army before the surrender of Singapore. Prior to the war, strong grievances were felt by the Indian officers on account of slow Indianization, differential treatment with regard to pay and allowances and racial discrimination. In October 1939 there were only 396 Indian officers in the combatant section of the Indian army. The proportion of the British and Indian officers was 10:1.1. In January 1941 there were 596 Indian officers in the combatant section but the ratio became more uneven. It was 12:1. Although the vast expansion of the Indian army in the years following 1941 led to the commissioning of a larger number of Indian officers (the strength of the Indian officers was eight thousand, and the ratio was 4.1:1, in 1945), those who surrendered at Singapore in 1942 did not work in such a favorable situation.¹⁰ Moreover, prior to the Pacific War an ordinary sepoy used to receive as his pay twenty-five rupees while a British soldier used to get three times more every month. An Indian lieutenant used to get a monthly salary of three hundred and fifty rupees only, while British lieutenants were drawing nearly double that amount.¹¹ Indian officers came across instances of racial discrimination in India and abroad where they served.¹² These grievances, later eloquently expressed by the Indian officers themselves at the time of the I.N.A. courts martial, created among them a sense of alienation from their commission. When the military disaster at Singapore put their loyalty to a severe test, the abstract bonds of commission proved too weak in many cases.

Justifying the disloyalty to the British, a publication issued in 1943 by the Directorate of the Military Bureau of the I.N.A. mentioned these grievances in some details. It pointed out that in the Indian army the Indian officers had been given

differential treatment in the matters of their pay, allowances, clothing, rations, accommodations, service conditions, social privileges, etc., not only in India but in every theatre of war to which they had the misfortune to be posted. It is a standing disgrace that such invidious distinctions have always been kept up between the arrogant Britishers and the Indians from time immemorial, in all walks of life, more particularly so in the Indian army. In addition, the British officer gets various unofficial privileges such as, choice of stations, choice of

¹⁰ For the details regarding the Indian officer corps see Sri Nandan Prasad, *Expansion of the Armed Forces and Defence Organization, 1939-45*. Bisheswar Prasad, ed., *Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War, India and Pakistan*; Combined Inter-Services Historical Section, 1956, p. 182.

¹¹ Statement of Capt. H. M. Arshad to the I.N.A. Defence Counsel, I.N.A. Defence Papers, A.I.I.N.A.R.E.C.; Shah Nawaz Khan, *My Memories of I.N.A. and its Netaji* (Delhi, 1946), p. 21.

¹² For instances of racial discrimination in the Indian army before the war see Humphrey Evans, *Thimayya of India: A Soldier's Life* (New York, 1960), pp. 88, 111.

job, etc. Whatever the British officer does or does not is correct, as he is always like Caesar's wife above criticism and his defect is his recommendation because he is British.¹³

The adverse effect of these grievances on the loyalty of Indian officers was acknowledged at the end of the war by the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian army. He pointed out that

the early stages of Indianization from its inception to the beginning of the late war were badly mismanaged by the British Government of India, and this prepared the ground for disloyalty when the opportunity came. There is little doubt that Indianization was at its inception looked on as a political expedient which was bound to fail militarily. There is no doubt also that many senior British officers believed and even hoped that it would fail. The policy of segregation of Indian officers into separate units, the differential treatment in respect to pay and terms of service as compared with the British officer, and the prejudice and lack of manners of some—by no means all—British officers and their wives, all went to produce a very deep and bitter feeling of racial discrimination in the minds of the most intelligent and progressive of the Indian officers, who were naturally nationalists, keen to see India standing on her own legs and not to be ruled from Whitehall forever.¹⁴

The adverse effect of these grievances on the loyalty of the different sections of Indian officers was not uniform. The officers who held King's Commission (the K.C.O.) usually came from well-to-do families. They had their education in British public schools and later in the British Military Academy at Sandhurst and were close to the British and their way of living.¹⁵ Although they felt somewhat sore about the practice of racial discrimination against them, hardly any one of them turned anti-British on that account. It is interesting to note that among the K.C.O.s, called up for evidence by the Prosecution and the Defence at the I.N.A. courts martial, only one, Lt. Col. Gill, mentioned an instance of colour-bar in an officers' club in Malaya, but none complained against slow Indianization, difference in pay and allowances.¹⁶ This also explained their attitude towards the formation of the I.N.A. in 1942. For them any co-operation with the Japanese was as much a difficult job as it was for a British officer. Of about half-a-dozen K.C.O. who surrendered at Singapore¹⁷ none whole-heartedly supported the I.N.A. Some of them expressed themselves as non-volunteers at the outset and kept out of the I.N.A.¹⁸ Others, who threw their lot with the I.N.A. did so with more

¹³ Indian Independence League Headquarters, *British Army of Occupation in India* (Singapore, 1943), p. 4.

¹⁴ Auchinleck's memorandum, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Toker, *op. cit.*, p. 64; also Evans, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-108.

¹⁶ Statement of Lt. Col. N. S. Gill to the Defence Counsel, first I.N.A. court martial, I.N.A. Defence Papers, A.I.I.N.A.R.E.C.

¹⁷ These officers included Lt. Col. N. S. Gill, Lt. Col. J. R. Bhonsle, Major M. S. Dhillon, Major N. S. Bhagat, Capt. K. P. Dhargalkar and Capt. H. Budhwar.

¹⁸ Capt. Dhargalkar and Capt. Budhwar did not join the I.N.A. in 1942. Evidence by Capt. Dhargalkar for the Prosecution in the first I.N.A. trial, see Motiram, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 47-8. Major Bhagat also did not join the I.N.A. in

than one motive. One of them went over to the Indian army in 1942¹⁹ and two others were later removed from the I.N.A. on charges of secret connection with the British.²⁰ Although the charge against one of the latter group, Col. Gill, was not proved, his personal influence over Mohan Singh and the go-slow policy regarding the I.N.A. undoubtedly arrested the growth of the army.²¹ He later associated himself with the group of officers who were opposed to the formation of the I.N.A. Only one K.C.O., Col. Bhonsle, was in the I.N.A. in 1945. He joined the army only in 1943 and since then his role was useful for ceremonial purposes.

The adverse effect of the pre-war grievances was more acutely felt on the loyalty of the I.C.O. and other junior officers. Educated in India and commissioned from the Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun, the I.C.O. had little contact with the British outside their academy. They belonged to the generation of officers who showed some awareness of the national movement which was in full swing in the country.²² It was natural for these officers to react most sharply to the existing grievances in the army. This was further indicated by the fact that later, during the I.N.A. officers' trials, some of the bitterest criticisms of the pre-war British policy of slow Indianization, differential treatment to the Indians with regard to pay and allowances came from the I.C.O. "Discriminatory treatment between the Indians and British soldiers by the champions of equality and liberty in the world was in evidence everywhere in the Indian Army", wrote Mohan Singh.²³ Statements of the I.C.O. with similar grievances can be multiplied.²⁴ Service in Malaya added new bitterness. Many Indian Officers in their statements to the

1942 as he "did not trust the Japanese at all." Later, he joined the I.N.A. but was discharged from the command of the second I.N.A. division in 1944 "for insubordination and disloyalty." Major Bhagat's statement to the Defence Counsel of the first I.N.A. court martial, I.N.A. Defence Papers, A.I.I.N.A.R.E.C.

¹⁹ This referred to Major M. S. Dhillon. See Chatterjee, *op. cit.*, p. 15; also notes received by the I.N.A. History Committee from Col. N.S. Gill. Hereinafter referred to as Gill's notes to the I.N.A.H.C.

²⁰ This referred to Col. Gill who was taken into custody by the Japanese military police in December 1942. See Gill's notes to the I.N.A.H.C. It has been already mentioned that Major Bhagat was removed from his position in 1944.

²¹ *Ibid.* This was corroborated by Capt. S. M. Hussain who was a Staff officer attached to the Indian P.O.W.s Headquarters headed by Col. Gill in 1942. See Capt S. M. Hussain's statement to the Defence Counsel of the first I.N.A. court martial, I.N.A. Defence Papers, A.I.I.N.A.R.E.C.

²² This was suggested by the occasional contacts the Indian officers established with the nationalist leaders before the war to seek their direction in their own duty. See Evans, *op. cit.*, pp. 116 ff.

²³ Mohan Singh's statement before the Defence Counsel of the first I.N.A. court martial, I.N.A. Defence Papers, A.I.I.N.A.R.E.C.

²⁴ The statement of Shah Nawaz Khan before the first I.N.A. court martial. Motiram, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 110; statements of Capt. H.M. Arshad, Capt. S. M Hussain, Capt. Eshar Qadir and Capt. Rodrigues to the Defence Counsel of the first I.N.A. court martial; Statement of Col. Burhanuddin before his court martial A.I.I.N.A.R.E.C., *The I.N.A. Speaks* (Delhi, 1946), p 56 Hereinafter referred to as *The I.N.A. Speaks*.

I.N.A. Defence Counsel later narrated the instances when they were victims of colour-bar in the trains and clubs of Malaya before the outbreak of the war.²⁵ As the war started, they had to work against the heaviest odds — without air-support, modern military equipment like tanks, anti-tank guns, etc.²⁶ which gave birth to a general feeling among them that in defending Malaya they had been given too exacting a task.²⁷ There were complaints of discriminatory treatment against the Indian officers at that trying time and instances of lack of fighting spirit among some British officers.²⁸ The unhappy position in which the Indian and British officers were placed before and during the war in Malaya was illustrated by the “incidents” which succeeded in snapping all relations between them. Such incidents took place in the Hyderabad Regiment and the Punjab Regiment.²⁹ These incidents might not have assumed much importance, but coming as they did on the eve of Singapore, they foreshadowed the events to come. It was, however, the fall of Singapore which indicated to the junior Indian officers, as the Commander-in-chief of the Indian army later correctly assessed, “the end of all things, and certainly of the British *Raj* to whom the Army has been used for many years of war and peace to look to as its universal provider and protector. . . .”³⁰ The separate hand-over of the Indian men and officers to the Japanese at Farrar Park which followed the surrender of Singapore, held out no hopes for the former that the British could protect them much longer and past experience left little goodwill to sustain an attitude of wait and see.

All these held out possibilities that the I.C.O. would adopt an attitude more favourable for the plan of raising the I.N.A. in comparison to that of the K.C.O. But a number of most pressing factors such as the general bewilderment, the practical difficulties which followed the surrender, and uncertainty about Japanese intentions led most of them to attach various connotations to their co-operation with the Japanese. In explaining the conduct of the I.N.A. officers, undue importance has

²⁵ Statements of Capt. Mahboob Ahmed, Capt. S. M. Hussain, Capt. Arshad, Capt. Rodrigues, Capt. Bhagat, Lt. M. Riaz Khan to the Defence Counsel of the first I.N.A. trial, I.N.A. Defence Papers, A.I.I.N.A.R.E.C.; Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

²⁶ Percival, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

²⁷ Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-5; Statements of Major Rawat, Lt. Riaz Khan, Capt. Arshad and Capt. Rodrigues to the Defence Counsel of the first I.N.A. trial, I.N.A. Defence Papers.

²⁸ Shah Nawaz Khan's statement before the first I.N.A. trial, Motiram, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 104; Major Rawat's statement to the Defence Counsel, I.N.A. Defence Papers; the statement of Major Fateh Khan before his trial, *The I.N.A. Speaks*, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

²⁹ For details see Capt. S. M. Hussain's statement to the Defence Counsel, I.N.A. Defence Papers; Evans, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-72; statement of Lt. G. S. Dhillon's statement before the first trial, Motiram, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 117.

³⁰ Auchinleck's memorandum, *op. cit.*

been placed on personal opportunism.³¹ What emerges from the testimonies of all witnesses for the Prosecution and the Defence of I.N.A. courts martial and eschewed the attention of observers, was the deep fear and suspicion in the Japanese, universally shared by them. It was this fear of the Japanese intentions which created, from the psychological point of view, a great difficulty for most of the officers to accept the I.N.A. sponsored by the former. Security of subordinate men and officers, that of the civilian population in East Asia or India, or even the desire for rendering the I.N.A. an ineffective instrument,—all these considerations sprang from the same fear. Such consideration, more than the purely patriotic objective of liberation of India proved more decisive for the overwhelming majority of officers. Similarly, those branded as “opportunists” displayed merely one type, simple and pure, of reaction of that fear. It is interesting to note that of the witnesses called up for the Prosecution and the Defence in I.N.A. courts martial only two junior officers (V.C.O.) were said to have joined the I.N.A. to escape fatigue duties of the Japanese army³² and three others (V.C.O.) barring the honourable exception of Mohan Singh claimed to have been moved by the urge of their motherland’s liberation only.³³

A large number of the I.C.O. and the V.C.O. who joined the I.N.A. in 1942 had *mixed motives*. The prevailing suspicion in the intentions of the Japanese led many officers to view the proposal of raising the I.N.A. in 1942 as a measure of defence against the misconduct of their ally. There were *some* who were moved only by such limited patriotic consideration as the security of their own men and that of the civilian Indian population in East Asia.³⁴ There were others, *more numerous*

³¹ Mason’s foreword, Toye, *op. cit.*, p. VI. S. P. Cohen speaks of “rich monetary rewards” expected by the officers for themselves and their families too for their act. Stephen P. Cohen, “Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army”, *Pacific Affairs* (Canada) Vol. XXXVI (Winter 1963-4), p. 413. It is not clear from whom, according to Cohen, they expected it. Minutes of the meetings of the Council of Action following the Bangkok Conference, in which the proposal for raising the I.N.A. was accepted, recorded that funds to pay pocket money to the I.N.A. volunteers at a minimum rate were made available by Rash Behari Bose from what he claimed to be his own savings. See the minutes of the meetings of the Council of Action from 24 June to 9 July 1942 at Bangkok, Indian Independence League Papers, National Archives of India, New Delhi. One might doubt Rash Behari’s claim. It is also doubtful if the funds were adequate to meet I.N.A.’s needs in 1942. The Japanese, however, made it clear to Subhas Bose that they would be responsible for paying only the former P.O.W.’s in the I.N.A., who formed only one third of its strength in 1944-5. See Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

³² Evidence of the Prosecution witnesses Havildars Sucha Singh and Mohammad Sarwar in the first I.N.A. trial. Motiram, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 60, 64.

³³ Subedar Singhara Singh’s statement before his court martial, *The I.N.A. Speaks*, p. 70; evidence of Subedar-Major Baboo Ram and Lance Naik Mohinder Singh for the Prosecution in the first I.N.A. trial, Motiram, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 55, 76.

³⁴ Major Rawat in his testimony to the Defence Counsel in the first I.N.A. trial said that he joined the I.N.A. and persuaded the 15000 men of the Garwali Regiment to do so because the Japanese appeared to them “so mysterious that we could not know their intentions and this created all sorts of doubt in our mind

than the previous group, who visualised the I.N.A. as an instrument which would be useful not only for their country's freedom but also for protecting India from the excesses of a Japanese invasion which appeared to them imminent. Those among them who were more alert about the vulnerability of India in 1942 found the I.N.A. chiefly useful for the latter purpose.³⁵ In this group, there were some others who viewed the I.N.A. in the same light but did not ignore its usefulness in ensuring the security of the Indian P.O.W. and civilian population in East Asia.³⁶

There was yet another group of officers, mostly the I.C.O., who shared the strong suspicion of all other Indian officers in the Japanese intentions. They were also not lacking in patriotism. But they had a great deal of doubts in Mohan Singh's ability to deal effectively with the Japanese if they would double-cross the Indians which appeared to them very probable. Shah Nawaz Khan who had earlier served in the same regiment with Mohan Singh made no secret of this doubts in his statement before the I.N.A. court martial. He said: "With all due regard to Capt. Mohan Singh's sincerity and leadership which he displayed later—I had known him well for the last 10 years—he had always been an efficient, but *very* average officer. . . . I was fully convinced, knowing Mohan Singh so well that politically, at any rate, he

. . . . All my people preferred to be in the I.N.A. than to fall into the hands of the Japanese. We were experiencing quite clearly that it was on account of that movement that the Japanese treatment began to be better towards Indians. The immediate thing that we had in mind was that we shall be able to protect the Indian civilian population from the Japanese atrocities." See I.N.A. Defence Papers.

³⁵ Capt. P. K. Saghal's statement in the first I.N.A. trial represented the views of these officers. In spite of his desire to see his "motherland free from all foreign domination" he kept out of the I.N.A. in 1942 because he was "skeptical of the intention of the Japanese." He stated the circumstances which later compelled him "to revise earlier decision to keep out of the Indian National Army. . . . the Japanese forces met with the most astounding successes in every theatre of the war, and an attack on India appeared to be imminent The last Indian drafts that had arrived to reinforce Singapore consisted only of raw recruits and gave one a fair indication of the type of men available for the defence of India. Officers who came to Singapore shortly before its surrender told us that there was no modern equipment available for the army in India The information we had about the state of defence in India was by no means encouraging and the most optimist amongst us could not be sure of the ability of the British to stop the Japanese advance the question that began to agitate the mind of us, who had so far stayed away from that Army was whether it was not our duty to join that army for securing the freedom of our country—not so much from the British who could hold her no longer but from the Japanese who were bent upon invading India." See Motiram, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 113-4; see also the statements of Lt. G. S. Dhillon before the first I.N.A. trial, *ibid.*, pp. 118-9; statements of Capt. Jaswant Singh, Major Puran Singh before their courts martial. *The I.N.A. Speaks*, pp. 132-4; Chatterji, *op. cit.*, pp. 350-1.

³⁶ Col. Burhanuddin's statement before his court martial illustrated the motives of these officers. He said: "Thinking on these lines I came to the conclusion that the only way I could serve my country effectively was to join and help in organizing a strong I.N.A. . . . It was therefore not only a question of liberating India, but of immediately protecting Indian lives and property in the Far East and if need be later in India." *The I.N.A. Speaks*, p. 59; also the statement of Major Fateh Khan before his court martial, *ibid.*, p. 95.

would not be able to cope with the Japanese political intrigues and we would be exploited by them for their own ends.”³⁷ This group of officers, about sixty in strength, was initially opposed to the idea of raising the I.N.A. at all and came closer to Lt. Col. N. S. Gill who was resisting the formation of the I.N.A. from within.³⁸ Thus a resistance unit came into existence in the I.N.A. Some events took place in the middle of 1942 which clearly manifested this resistance. Gill came back from the Tokyo Conference with his suspicion of the Japanese intentions strengthened. Reinforced by the support of the I.C.O.s he challenged an order of the Japanese army to abolish the P.O.W. Headquarters which had been set up after the fall of Singapore.³⁹ Shah Nawaz Kahn also mentioned that he did not only dislike Mohan Singh’s proposal that the army should take part in the Bangkok Conference (June 1942) but he openly disapproved of the method by which Mohan Singh wanted the Indian P.O.W.s to be represented in that conference.⁴⁰

In analysing the motive of the I.N.A. officers one can hardly underestimate the influence of Subhas Chandra Bose’s personality. Before he took over, the vast majority of the officers viewed the outcome of their associations with the I.N.A. with a sense of suspicion and futility. Shortly after his arrival in East Asia, the army expanded rapidly and it took the field. Whatever might be the outcome of the military campaign in which it took part, there is enough evidence to believe that he succeeded to a large measure in binding his officer corps in a spirit of real revolutionary partnership.

That Bose’s personality acquired a tremendous appeal for many Indian P.O.W.s is acknowledged on all hands. Describing his arrival in East Asia as an event of “some importance” an official despatch of the India Command referred to him as a colourful seditionist with a powerful personality who could easily influence others with his own enthusiasm.⁴¹ Testimonies of several I.N.A. officers including some of

³⁷ Shah Nawaz Khan’s statement before the first I.N.A. trial, Motiram, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 105. Emphasis original. Another I.C.O., Mahboob Ahmed corroborated this view. Discussion with Mahboob Ahmed at Kuala Lumpur in August 1963.

³⁸ N. S. Gill’s statement to the Defence Counsel of the first I.N.A. trial, I.N.A. Defence Papers.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

⁴¹ *Despatch of Gen. Auchinleck on the Operation in the Indo-Burma Theatre based on India (21 June–15 November 1943)* Combined Inter-Services Historical Section, Regd. File No. 601/7553/H, Government of India and Pakistan, Ministry of Defence, Government of India.

At the end of the war the Commander-in-chief of the Indian army came to have an access to the views of a substantial number of I.N.A. men and officers. In spite of his strong reservation about Bose’s war-time activities his estimate of Bose’s character is noteworthy. He referred to the I.N.A. officers and wrote: “I am in no doubt myself that a great number of them, especially the leaders, believed that Subhas Chandra Bose was a genuine patriot and that they themselves were right to follow his lead. There is no doubt at all from the mass of evidence

those who later appeared as witnesses for the Prosecution as well as the Defence are in full agreement in bearing out the impact of Bose's leadership on the I.N.A. One aspect of it can be studied with reference to the officer corps who had associated themselves with the I.N.A. in 1942 but could not accept it wholeheartedly for one reason or another. Few of them had known and none had met him earlier. Many, however, acknowledged the effect of their first meeting with Bose on themselves to be decisive and instant.⁴² What led many of them thus, to dramatise the impact of Bose's leadership was possibly the relief generated by the widely-shared belief that his leadership was dependable. This was substantially corroborated by a Prosecution witness to the first I.N.A. court martial. He said: "... Subhas Chandra Bose arrived in July 1943. After that everybody thought that they had got a leader who could guide them on proper lines without being subordinated to the Japanese".⁴³ It was this confidence of the officers corps in Bose which ensured for the latter a commanding position in the army and made him the focal point of their loyalty.

Bose's ability to win over the confidence of the hesitant officers could be attributed to the great measure of success he achieved in dispelling their deep-rooted suspicion in the Japanese. No doubt, he had to work within a set pattern of objective conditions as his predecessor did, over which he had hardly any control; his success with the I.N.A. lies in charting out *its own* course. He spun with forceful arguments a broad scheme, a blue-print for India's liberation, which boldly pleaded for the acceptance of Japanese help without being apologetical about it, carefully balanced Japanese help with another scheme of total mobilization of the Indian resources in East Asia and left room for a patriotic role for his army in spite of its heavy dependence on the Japanese in

we have that Subhas Chandra Bose acquired a tremendous influence over them and that his personality had been an exceedingly strong one." See Connell, *op. cit.*, p. 803.

⁴² One officer after a brief interview with Bose recorded his impression. He said to have never met a leader so "well informed" as Bose. The latter "already knows the small place-names on the map, the climate and different conditions in the jungles, the details of the plans and methods adopted by the Japs to outwit the British Army." But what impressed the officer most was "the technical knowledge about modern warfare and modern armies which Subhas Babu showed." The entry in the officer's diary concluded: "He is a real leader of the people." V. K. Jhaveri and S. S. Batlivala, ed., *Jai Hind: The Diary of a Rebel Daughter of India* (Bombay, 1945), p. 39. The statement of Capt. Shah Nawaz Khan was also interesting. He joined the I.N.A. in 1942 with a large number of officers to offer as much resistance to the growth of the army as possible from within. He later said: "when Netaji arrived in Singapore, I watched him very keenly; I had never seen or met him before, and did not know very much about his activities in India. I heard a number of his public speeches, which had a profound effect on me. It will not be wrong to say that I was hypnotised by his speeches. He placed a true picture of India before us and for the first time in my life I saw India, through the eyes of an Indian." Statement of Shah Nawaz Khan in the first I.N.A. court martial, Motiram, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁴³ Evidence of Lt. D. C. Nag, *ibid.*, p. 41.

many respects. This certainly made it easier for the hesitant and patriotic elements in the officer corps to identify themselves totally with the I.N.A.

Undoubtedly, when Bose took over, the army having no high morale or discipline was in a bad shape. The tremendous popularity that Bose earned so quickly among his officer corps on his arrival in East Asia was partially due to his success in tackling with reasonable satisfaction some fundamental issues which were to determine the progress of the revolution. The relationship of the military leadership with the civilian leaders, which was never happy in the initial part of the movement, was straightened and since then no problem arose regarding the civil-military relations. He succeeded in settling some outstanding operational issues, some of which had wrecked the army in 1942. He vastly improved the amenities of the army and its facilities for training and recruitment, and secured the approval of the Japanese to his plans for the expansion of the army and its active role in the future military campaign against India. All these went a long way towards restoring the officers' confidence. That Bose took over the leadership of the army after securing the promise of support from the Japanese for the satisfactory solution of these issues, and not before that, was a pointer. Moreover, a careful reader of Bose's speeches can hardly ignore his uncommon persuasive power. His speeches reveal authority, singleness of mind, personal enthusiasm and straight deductions from the study of international politics.⁴⁴ Such attributes could not but move a soldier's mind.⁴⁵

II. PROBLEMS

The I.N.A. faced a number of problems. These included such institutional question as setting up a sound decision-making body and such operational issues as the expansion of the army, deficiency in arms and ammunitions, and an arrangement under which Japanese assistance would be available. Of these, the attitude of the Government of Japan was important as the satisfactory solution of some of these problems had a great deal to do with it. In this part of the paper, therefore, the policy of the Government of Japan towards the I.N.A. for a short

⁴⁴ On one occasion Bose told his officers: "For the present I can offer you nothing except hunger, thirst, suffering, forced march and death. But if you follow me in life as well as in death . . . I will lead you on to the road to victory and freedom. It does not matter who among us shall live to see India free. It is enough that India shall be free and we shall give our all to make her free." There was surely something new in it which the men and officers of the I.N.A. had never felt before. Bose's address to the I.N.A. on 5 July 1943, Government of India, *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose* (New Delhi, 1962), p. 184.

⁴⁵ For a detailed study of the influence of Bose's leadership, see K. K. Ghosh, "Subhas Chandra Bose and I.N.A. Leadership," in B. R. Chatterji, *Southeast Asia in Transition* (Meerut, 1965), pp. 163-76.

period of one year—1942 which was crucial in I.N.A. history—would be mentioned in briefest outlines and the problems it created, reviewed.

The Imperial General Headquarters (I.G.H.Q.) attempted to win over the nationalists of some Southeast Asian countries before their forces overran those countries. The I.G.H.Q.'s parallel efforts to enlist the help of the Indians in Southeast Asia and their encouragement to the proposal for raising the I.N.A., therefore, provoked suspicion that in doing all this Japan had a plan to invade India too. There is, however, little evidence for any intentions on her part to undertake any major plan of invasion of India at any time during the war. The published accounts of Japan's diplomatic moves to come to terms with Germany on the eve of the Pacific War which made it necessary for her to spell out the countries to be included in the Greater East Asia, lend no support to it.⁴⁶ Nor do the various plans which were formulated in advance by the Governmental agencies of Japan for the administrative and economic organization of her empire.⁴⁷ The battle order issued by the I.G.H.Q. on 15 November 1941 instructing their forces to start hostilities on 8 December permitted them to occupy in the west only "a part of Burma".⁴⁸ The chief objectives of her military operations in the northwest of Burma in early 1942 was to isolate China by cutting off "the transportation route between U.S.A. and Britain," i.e., the air ferry route between the Allied base in India and the American base in China. An attempt should be made through propaganda means to prevent the Indians from "co-operating with Britain".⁴⁹ Later, in August 1942, a plan with limited aggressive intentions to take "important areas in Northeast Assam and Chittagong" was issued by the I.G.H.Q., but it could not be implemented anyway.⁵⁰ Read with another document embodying an understanding reached seven weeks earlier between the Japanese army and the navy for co-operating mutually to perfect the defense of the occupied areas, this plan seemed to aim at destroying the Allied air-bases in the vicinity of north-

⁴⁶ A. Toynbee and V. M. Toynbee, ed., *The Initial Triumph of the Axis* (London, 1958), p. 592; also R. J. C. Butow, *Tojo and the Coming of the War* (New Jersey, 1961), p. 162.

⁴⁷ M. A. Aziz, *Japan's Colonialism and Indonesia* (The Hague, 1955), p. 83; also An outline of the Government of the Territories to be occupied in operations in the vital Southern Areas: Imperial Headquarters Army Branch, 25 November 1941, Combined Inter-Services Historical Section, India and Pakistan, Registered File No. 601/7775/4, *Translation of the Japanese Documents*, Ministry of Defence, Government of India. (Hereinafter C.I.S.H.S. File).

⁴⁸ Orders relating to the occupation of the vital Southern Areas, C.I.S.H.S. File No. 601/7775/4.

⁴⁹ English translation of the decision taken in the liaison conference of the Japanese Cabinet and the I.G.H.Q. on 10 January 1942, Decision of the Tojo Ministry from December 1941 to March 1942, War History Office, Government of Japan. Photostat copy of the document obtained from the War History office.

⁵⁰ From Gen. Sugiyama, Chief of General Staff to G.O.C. Southern Army, Count Terauchi, 22 August 1942, C.I.S.H.S. File No: 601/7775/4, *op. cit.*

ern Burma in order to ensure her security.⁵¹ There were indications that so far as India was concerned, what Japan intended to do in 1942, was little more than embarrassing the British power in India.⁵² Such an attitude, surely made hardly any room for a real fighting force.

On the eve of the Pacific War the I.G.H.Q., however, was eager to enlist the help of the Indian nationalists in Southeast Asia in their plan to undermine the British Power in Malaya and Burma by alienating the loyalty of the large number of Indian soldiers stationed in the region.⁵³ Documentary evidence suggests that the highest Japanese authorities wished to organize the Indian nationalist in East Asia for this purpose but they had no plan of raising an army for India's liberation.⁵⁴ The intelligence agency, which was assigned the task of winning over the Indians, skillfully used for its own purpose the assurance of all-out Japanese help to the Indians in the achievement of their country's independence. This explained the fact that during the greater part of 1942 the Japanese liaison agency under Col. Iwakuro received no special direction regarding the I.N.A. either from I.G.H.Q. or the Southern Army. It was virtually given a free hand in handling the Indian P.O.W.⁵⁵ As Singapore had fallen and there was no plan for a campaign against India, the liaison agency could think of no better jobs for the Indian P.O.W.s than working for the defence and reconstruction of Singapore and other places under their occupation. This explained their reluctance in 1942 to go even halfway to meet the Indian demands for making the I.N.A. a strong fighting force or accepting their control over the Indian P.O.W.s.

Soon after the fall of Singapore, Mohan Singh had to agree with 25 Army proposals for requisitioning the service of Indian anti-aircraft gunners, guards and labour parties.⁵⁶ Although for all these Mohan Singh could turn his finger towards the non-volunteers, these were the earliest indications that his authority over the Indian P.O.W.s was far from complete. Mohan Singh was all along claiming complete control over the Indian P.O.W.s.⁵⁷ It was one of the conditions he originally

⁵¹ See Army-Navy Agreement on the Defence of Southern Areas, 29 June 1942, C.I.S.H.S. File No. 601/7775/4, *op. cit.*

⁵² The heavy bombing of the Indian ports by the Japanese air force in 1942 was inspired by the intentions of not only crippling them but also to discredit the British Government in the eyes of the Indians and thus block the chances of success of the mission led by Sir Stafford Cripps to India to enlist the support of the Indian leaders for the cause of the Allied war efforts.

⁵³ Discussion with Gen. I. Fujiwara in October 1963 at Maibashi in Japan. Fujiwara who was a Major and a Staff Officer attached to the I.G.H.Q. on the eve of the Pacific War, was chosen for the task.

⁵⁴ The decision taken at the liaison conference of the Japanese Cabinet and the I.G.H.Q. on 10 January 1942 did not reveal any such intention. The decision has been already mentioned.

⁵⁵ Discussion with Major-Gen. Iwakuro in Tokyo in October 1963.

⁵⁶ Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 44-6.

⁵⁷ See the proceedings of the Tokyo Conference in March 1942, K. S. Gianî, *Indian Independence Movement in East Asia* (Lahore, 1947), p. 49; also the resolutions of the Bangkok Conference in June 1942, A.I.I.N.A.R.E.C.

placed to the Japanese liaison agency, *Fujiwara Kikan*, and the 25 Army Headquarters for his co-operation.⁵⁸ There is no evidence, however, to show that Mohan Singh received any firm assurance from the 25 Army Headquarters but the formal proclamation of his authority over the Indian P.O.W.s by the chief of the liaison agency at the Farrar Park meeting in February 1942 raised high hopes in Mohan Singh. It was curious that an officer of comparatively lower rank was chosen to hand over fifty-five thousand Indian P.O.W.'s to Mohan Singh in spite of the presence of high-ranking officers of the 25 Army in Singapore. It also seems intriguing that Fujiwara who 'won over' fifty-five thousand Indian P.O.W.s should have received a transfer from the liaison organization soon after the meeting at Farrar Park—at the peak of his success in handling P.O.W.s. It is difficult to believe that Fujiwara could act on his own, without the approval of the 25 Army, in handing over the Indian P.O.W.s to Mohan Singh. Col. Iwakuro who succeeded Fujiwara as the chief of the liaison agency considered that the hand-over of the Indian troops at the Farrar Park meeting was nothing but a gesture of the 25 Army to win over the Indian P.O.W.s.⁵⁹ It was for him, as he later said, to take over the control of the surplus I.N.A. volunteers and non-volunteers.⁶⁰ This he did in October 1942.⁶¹

Mohan Singh's reaction was bound to be sharp. This measure removed the larger section of the Indian P.O.W.s from his control, and with it, all possibilities of raising a strong army. Soon after raising the first division of the I.N.A. in September 1942, he was asking for the Japanese consent to raise the second division.⁶² He had agreed to the proposal of the liaison agency to move a part of the first I.N.A. division to Burma with the hopes that it would help him secure the Japanese consent to raise new units.⁶³ Now that there were no chances for it, Mohan Singh declined to carry out the decision of troops movement and the matter was referred to the civilian leaders. With it, the chain of important decision regarding the I.N.A. taken individually by Mohan Singh to meet the demands of the Japanese army came to an end.⁶⁴ So also, did Mohan Singh's co-operation with the Japanese. What was equally important, the change in Mohan Singh's attitude made the proposal of troops movement an open issue between the Japanese and the Council of Action of the Indian Independence League.

⁵⁸ Discussion with Gen. Fujiwara in October 1963 in Maibashi in Japan.

⁵⁹ Discussion with Major. Gen. Iwakuro in Tokyo in October 1963.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

⁶² Typescript copy of the statement issued by Mohan Singh in August 1945 before surrendering himself to the Allied Forces in Sumatra, I.N.A.H.C. File.

⁶³ Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

⁶⁴ This referred to Mohan Singh's decisions to lend the Japanese army the Indian guards, anti-aircraft gunners, labour parties and to raise the I.N.A. before the League was recognized.

A genuine understanding between the important section of the civilian Indian leaders and the Japanese, never grew due to certain reasons. On the eve of the Pacific War only two prominent leaders, Pritam Singh in Thailand and Rash Behari Bose in Japan, were in touch with the Japanese and willing to make use of Japan's help in their plan for liberating India. This pro-Japanese leadership, weakened by the death of the former soon after the surrender of Singapore was handicapped by its inability to inspire confidence in other Indian leaders.⁶⁵ Some leaders of the Indian community in Thailand, Malaya and Singapore who were actually left in the field to mobilize the Indian community in 1942 were unwilling to go against the wishes of the Indian National Congress. They were cautious in accepting any military assistance from Japan and too reluctant to associate themselves with any Japanese plan of invasion of India.⁶⁶ They were hardly aware of the actual position of the I.G.H.Q. on the latter question.

Moreover, the Indian leaders' western education and past association with the constitutional movements in their countries psychologically conditioned them to view the movement as a democratic and constitutional struggle for freedom. They hardly felt it safe to explore any revolutionary means, as Japan appeared to them an undependable ally. Although the work of organizing their community was favoured for more than one reason, on more important questions at the Singapore Conference, they first looked for guidance from India.⁶⁷ When that was not forthcoming they requested the Japanese Government to make an authoritative declaration clarifying their attitude towards certain points affecting India and fulfill certain conditions to make Japanese help acceptable to them.⁶⁸

In these efforts, the Indian leaders were supported by the anti-Japanese group in the I.N.A. headed by Col. Gill. During the five months between June and November 1942, the Council of Action made several attempts to secure from the Japanese Government such a declaration. But in 1942 a tripartite Axis declaration on India's independence was out

⁶⁵ This is based on my discussions with N. Raghavan at New Delhi in April 1964 and with N. G. Gill in June 1963 at Bangkok. See also S. C. Goho's typescript note to the I.N.A.H.C., and an unpublished English translation of K. P. K. Menon, *Kazhincha Kalam* (Calicut, 1957), pp. 269-73. All of them were opposed to the selection of Rash Behari Bose as the leader of the Indian independence movement in East Asia.

⁶⁶ See the proceedings of the Tokyo Conference, Giani, *op. cit.*, 49 ff. and the resolutions of the Bangkok Conference, A.I.I.N.A.R.E.C.

⁶⁷ Proceedings of the Singapore Conference in March 1942. See Giani *op. cit.*, 36-7. A proposal was made in this conference to send an Indian representative from East Asia to India to ascertain the opinions of the Indian leaders on these questions, but in view of the difficulty created by the war the proposal was dropped.

⁶⁸ Proceedings of the Tokyo Conference, Giani, *op. cit.*, 49 ff. and the resolutions of the Bangkok Conference, A.I.I.N.A.R.E.C.

of the question as Hitler's repeated disapproval of it is now known.⁶⁹ A unilateral declaration by Japan was to wait till a forward policy towards India could be taken up by the I.G.H.Q.⁷⁰ This made Iwakuro's position a very difficult one. Although he kept his Government informed of the demands of the Indians, it was doubtful if his reluctance to forward their memoranda to Tokyo substantially altered the situation. But the Indian leaders had little knowledge of it in 1942 and in the absence of the desired declaration their initial suspicion of the Japanese intentions was confirmed and strengthened. When the question of transportation of troops was taken up by the Council of Action Mohan Singh had the support of two more members of the Council in bringing about an impasse by resigning with them from it and prevent that body from waiting for some more time for the Japanese declaration.⁷¹

Thus, Japan's policy towards Mohan Singh backfired. The Japanese liaison agency had helped Mohan Singh during 1941-42 build up an independent army command in his relations with the civilian leaders and the Indian Independence League. It dealt with the civilian Indian leaders separately. During the Malayan campaign Japan agreed to Mohan Singh's demand to keep the army matters free from the League's control.⁷² The League was too weak to exert its control over the military leader. The liaison agency did nothing to put into effect the League's claim of exclusive control over the army, nor opposed the army leader in introducing a pledge of personal loyalty to himself among his subordinates. In fact, on the questions of requisitioning the service of the Indian labour parties, anti-aircraft gunners, guards and formally raising the I.N.A. prior to the declaration of Japan, the Japanese liaison agency dealt with Mohan Singh directly. In none of these matters, did the latter seek the approval of the League. On the last one, he acted against the known wishes of the civilian leaders.⁷³ There were two important outcomes of the liaison agency's two-pronged policy. It helped little in the emergence of a unified leadership among the Indians. When the civilian and military leaders were later confronted with the Japanese on certain important issues, they could not maintain unity among themselves. The authority which the Japanese built up for their own convenience around Mohan Singh from December 1941 became a source of considerable uneasiness for them towards the end of 1942 when the military leader defied their wishes and broke away from the League

⁶⁹ See Malcolm Muggeridge, ed., *Ciano's Diary 1939-43* (London, 1950), p. 157.

⁷⁰ This was later revealed by Col. Iwakuro in the joint meeting of the Council of Action and the *Iwakuro Kikam* on 1 December 1942. See Giani, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-2.

⁷¹ See the minutes of the meetings of the Council of Action on 4 and 5, December 1942, Giani, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-9.

⁷² Discussion with Gen. Fujiwara at Maibashi in Tokyo in October 1963.

⁷³ Discussion with N. Raghavan in New Delhi in April 1964.

with the army.⁷⁴ The Japanese liaison agency's policy toward the Indians took a somersault, and soon it had to stand by the League and the civilian leaders in an effort to pull down the independent command which it created around Mohan Singh.⁷⁵

III. SIGNIFICANCE

Certain fond beliefs of the Indian army authorities received some rude shocks during the Second World War. The British had marked out certain Indian nationalities as "martial races". The mighty British Indian army was almost exclusively drawn from these races and their trust in the loyalty of these elements remained more or less intact. World War II, by pouring into the army the educated and technically equipped recruits on an unprecedented scale, greatly modified the importance of the martial races. The events related to the I.N.A. revolt, however, proved more disconcerting for those who believed that loyalty of some of these races to the *Raj* was 'traditional' and therefore to be taken for granted. The I.N.A., indeed, highlighted certain contradictions in the pre-war British policy towards the Indian army. To appease the nationalist demand in the early decades of this century the British adopted a policy of gradual Indianization of the army. Though pursued by the army authorities with definite reservations before the war,⁷⁶ the policy was responsible for increasing each year the strength of the Indian officers. The testimonies of the I.N.A. officers indicated that a sense of grievance originated among these officers over their pay, allowance and promotion. The British seemed to have taken little notice of this unwelcome outcome of their policy. However assured they might have felt about the loyalty of the colonial forces, the discriminatory treatment meted out to the latter created a loophole which undermined the loyalty of many when it was put to test during a severe military crisis. The desperate measure of throwing away their loyalty by many Indian P.O.W.s underlined this basic truths. If such grievances existed in the colonial forces, a third power might feel tempted to exploit them in its own interest. Here was a lesson for the colonial powers.

The I.N.A. had a more tangible contribution to the cause of the Indian nationalists and this could be found in the aftermath of its officers' trials in India during 1945-6. Although it was doubtful if the I.N.A. leaders foresaw such developments earlier, the trials created a widespread revolutionary anti-British sentiment in India. A consensus

⁷⁴ From Mohan Singh to Rash Behari Bose, 13 December 1942, Indian Independence League Papers.

⁷⁵ See the minutes of the meeting on 7 December 1942 attended by Col. Iwakuro, the President of the Council of Action and N. Raghavan, Sopan (Pseud.), *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: His Life and Work* (Bombay, 1946), pp. 206-10.

⁷⁶ Auchinleck's memorandum, *op. cit.*

of opinion arose among almost all the political parties in India which condemned the Government's policy of trying certain I.N.A. officers by court martial. These parties (apart from the C.P.I. which did not approve of the I.N.A.), in spite of their divergent political views, found some reasons to support the I.N.A. In assuming a major responsibility in the defence of the I.N.A. officers without regard to their religious beliefs, the Indian National Congress sought to vindicate its own secular character which had been seriously challenged by the claim of the Muslim League at the Simla Conference (May-June 1945) to be the only representative of the Muslim interest in the country. The Muslim League, first reticent on the Government's I.N.A. policy, soon went against it for in any other position its main rival, Congress alone would be in the field to make political capital out of the I.N.A.'s popularity throughout the country. The Socialist leaders, some of whom had gone underground during the war to organize anti-British activities felt no qualms of conscience in either approving of the violent means adopted by the I.N.A. or its exploitation for the country's freedom the difficulties of the ruling power. The Hindu Mahasabha and the Akali Dal resisted the trial in order to protect their own communal interest involved in it.

All these parties together created a solid anti-British front on the question of the I.N.A. court martial. The nationalist press and the eleven thousand I.N.A. soldiers who had been released by the army authorities after preliminary interrogation before the trials commenced, carried far and wide the tales of the I.N.A.'s heroism, independence and sacrifice for the country's freedom and helped create a violent anti-British mood among the people which quickly transcended all communal barriers. Twice during the trials it caused serious explosion of anti-British riots in the cities of India and on both occasions it left the Government little choice but to modify its announced I.N.A. policy. The riots embarrassed the government since a resort to violence against the established authorities in the country by the two principal communities in a body was an eventuality which the British would have never liked. What was more significant, the revolutionary impact of the I.N.A. trial succeeded for the first time in many years in removing the traditional barrier between the Indian officers in the British Indian army and the main current of Indian nationalism.

The war left the Indian officers alert and sensitive. The grievances of the pre-war officers found quick response among those who were recruited during the war. It was the latter group which constituted the vast majority of the Indian officer corps in 1945 (7604 out of 8000)⁷⁷ and was politically conscious. Many of them encountered the I.N.A. in the battlefield, and came in closer contact with its officers and the

⁷⁷ Srinandan Prasad, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

workers of the Indian Independence League at the end of the war. There seems to be little doubt about the propaganda among the Indian forces by the nationalist elements (and photographs of the I.N.A. and the speeches of its Supreme Commander were reprinted in bulk for secret circulation), although it may be difficult to know how extensive the campaign was. It is interesting to note that when requested by the writer of this paper to comment on the reports of the nationalist propaganda among the Indian armed forces in Southeast Asia, the war-time Commander-in-chief of the Indian army could not "recall any reports of fraternization" but he admitted that "it is obvious that many of the ex-I.N.A. soldiers must have met relatives and friends in the 14th Army" (the British force which received the I.N.A.'s surrender in Burma and other Southeast Asian countries).⁷⁸ That was what actually happened, according to the sources on the spot.⁷⁹ The I.N.A. in its defeat had retained something of its military excellence which impressed the advance units of the 14th army.⁸⁰ Concerning the over-all impact of these contacts a British officer observed: "In the eleven months which had... elapsed since the first contacts of the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force with the mass of the I.N.A. in Rangoon, there had been widespread fraternization... Its result was political consciousness which the Indian Servicemen had never before possessed."⁸¹ This new consciousness led them to react more sharply not only to the existing grievances in the Service but to the pressing political issues of the post-war years.

At the end of the war, the loyalty of the Indian officers was subjected to a great strain. The post-war plan of the Government for swift and substantial reduction of the armed forces⁸² created a sense of tremendous insecurity in them. Moreover, the Indian army was viewed by some nationalists as an instrument of British imperialism and in the hey-day of the I.N.A.'s popularity the Indian officers surely came under the popular stricture.⁸³ In the light of the newly acquired political consciousness, these developments were bound to have some reactions in their mind.

⁷⁸ Sir Claude Auchinleck's reply to the writer's questionnaire.

⁷⁹ Discussions with U. C. Sharma and Pandit Raghunath Sharma at Bangkok in July 1963. The former was the General Secretary of the Bangkok branch of the Indian Independence League and the latter was for some time its Chairman.

⁸⁰ See Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

⁸¹ Toye, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

⁸² The plan aimed at demobilizing by April 1947 in all 1,553,167 men from the three Services. Snandan Prasad, *op. cit.*, pp. 209-11.

⁸³ This was illustrated by many contemporary incidents, one of which is mentioned here. The leader of the European group in the Central Assembly of India supported the Government's attitude towards the I.N.A. prisoners and said: "Do you think it would have been a good thing or a bad thing if the whole of the Indian Army had followed the example of the I.N.A. and joined the Japanese?" Immediately there were cries of "They never joined the Japanese" and "we would have admired the Indian Army if they joined the I.N.A." *Hindu*, 12 February 1946, p. 4. See also Brigadier Rajendra Singh, *Far East in Ferment* (Delhi, 1961), p. 28.

Were they on the right side in the tussle between the nationalists and the ruling power? Should they want to clear themselves of the popular suspicion, the issue of the I.N.A. officers' trial, on which the nationalists—by and large—and the ruling power were sharply divided, offered them an opportunity.

As the first I.N.A. trial commenced on 5 November (1945), the pro-I.N.A. sentiment of the Indian officers and their dislike for the Government's I.N.A. policy began to find expression in many ways. The Royal Indian Air Force (R.I.A.F.) stationed at Calcutta came out openly against the trial. During the first court martial they sent their subscription "for the defence of brave and patriotic sons of India forming the I.N.A." In a message to the Bengal Congress Committee the R.I.A.F. not only praised "the noble ideal" of the I.N.A. but described its violent methods and alliance with Britain's enemy power during the war as "commendable and inspiring." The R.I.A.F. recorded their "strongest protest against the autocratic action of the Government of India and, in effect, that of the British Government in trying these brightest jewels of India."⁸⁴

It will not be wrong to assume that the highest authorities of the armed forces were alert about the nationalists' glorification of the I.N.A. and its probable effect on the morale of the Indian officers. On 1 January 1946 the Commander-in-chief issued a confidential note to all the commanding officers of the Royal Indian Navy, Indian Air Force and Indian Army. He referred to the political agitation in the country over the trial, deplored the attempts made in the nationalist press to draw the Indian men and officers into it and cautioned the commanding officers that the "months ahead . . . will inevitably be a period of strain and upheaval."⁸⁵ He suggested some concrete measures to be taken in the armed forces to encounter the nationalists' propaganda.⁸⁶

In spite of these precautionary measures many secret decisions of the army authorities regarding the I.N.A. officers were divulged to the public during 1945-6. The officer commanding the Eastern Command, Lt. Gen. Toker, mentioned one such incident in his command which was "the beginning of many exposures of secret military information" about the I.N.A.⁸⁷ These exposures clearly suggested where the sympathy of some responsible Indian officers in the army headquarters lay.

⁸⁴ *Hindustan Standard*, 11 November 1945, p. 5.

⁸⁵ Copy of the note from Gen. Auchinleck to all the Commanding Officers of the R.I.N., I.A., and the R.I.A.F. The I.N.A. files of the Janmabhoomi Press, Bombay.

⁸⁶ For the details of these measures see the copy of the Political Propaganda on behalf of the I.N.A.—possibility of counter measures, extract from G.H.Q.(1) A.G.'s Branch, Simla. The I.N.A. files of the Janmabhoomi Press, Bombay.

⁸⁷ Toker, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

“It was alarming for the future,” wrote Toker, “for the only person who could have got at them was some Indian officer employed on the staff.”⁸⁸

As all the required official records of the armed forces are not available, it is difficult to know the exact strength of the Indian officers who were opposed to the official I.N.A. policy. The account of Lt. Gen. Toker, however, suggested a grim picture. He wrote: “. . . the I.N.A. affairs was threatening to tumble down the whole edifice of the Indian army. . . .”⁸⁹ According to him, of the pre-war officers (in all 396 in 1939) the Sandhurst graduates due to their English education and close contacts with British way of living, “held precisely the same view as the British officers.” But they were not many in number.⁹⁰ The pre-war Indian commissioned officers who exceeded the Sandhurst graduates by 1939 formed together with the war-time recruits the overwhelming majority (over seven thousand and six hundred) of the Indian officer corps (eight thousand) in 1945. The contact this section had with the British outside their academy was little and these officers viewed the I.N.A. officers as “patriots” who deserved to be “treated leniently” by the British.⁹¹ Assuming that Toker’s analysis of the attitude of the various sections of the Indian officers towards the Government’s I.N.A. policy was correct, approximately seventy-six out of every eighty Indian officers were against the prosecution of the I.N.A. officers.

The above suggestion was placed by the writer to the war-time Commander-in-chief, Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck for his comment as well his opinion on the actual strength of the pro-I.N.A. section of the I.N.A. officers. In response, he sent a document—a memorandum circulated by him in 1946 among the senior British officers explaining his decision to commute the sentence passed by the first court martial on three officers—which, he wrote, “conclusively answers this question as far as I was concerned.”⁹² Some remarks on the readjustment of the Commander-in-chief’s attitude towards the I.N.A. officers after the trials commenced will serve as an introduction to the document. When he decided for “public” trial in 1945, he probably presumed that his firm action would not only be approved by the British officers but also by the loyal Indian officers in general. As the trials proceeded the Special Organization set up by him in the army headquarters gave him its findings

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁹⁰ Ever since the system of commissioning the Indian officers was introduced in the twenties, 8-10 seats were reserved every year for the Indians in the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst till 1928 when the number of seats was increased to 20.

Since 1932 when the Indian Military Academy was established at Dehra Dun as many as sixty cadets used to be trained up each year. Srinandan Prasad, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-6.

⁹¹ Toker, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-5.

⁹² From Gen. Auchinleck to the writer.

about the real feelings of the Indian officers on the trial issue. The Commander-in-chief was quick to recognize the new force; many senior British officers found it hard to do so. During the trial he reported to the Viceroy: "I do not think any senior British officer to-day knows what is the real feeling among the Indian ranks regarding the 'I.N.A.' . . . there is a growing feeling of sympathy for the 'I.N.A.' and an increasing tendency to disregard the brutalities committed by some of its members as well as the foreswearing by all of them of original allegiance."⁹³ Later, in his memorandum to the Senior British officers he wrote: "Except for a few recovered prisoners of war who have suffered much at the hands of fellow countrymen who joined the so-called 'I.N.A.' *the vast majority, almost without exception, however much they may like and respect the British, are glad and relieved because of the result of the trial . . . all are sure that any attempt to force the sentence would have led to chaos in the country at large and probably to mutiny and dissension in the army culminating in its dissolution . . .*"⁹⁴

Following the strike of the Royal Air Force, the Royal Indian Air Force (R.I.A.F.) went on strike.⁹⁵ It put forward various demands and expressed its sympathy for the I.N.A.⁹⁶ The consequences of the event could be disconcerting in the army but for the timely step-down in the face of pro-I.N.A. sentiment . . . the Indian officers by the Commander-in-chief who commuted the sentence passed by the first court martial on the three I.N.A. officers. But a dangerous explosion took place in the Royal Indian Navy (R.I.N.) in February 1946. The details of the mutiny and the different political versions of it can be found elsewhere.⁹⁷ Here its basic features will be mentioned very briefly and an attempt will be made to assess the role of the political factor in it.

The mutiny involved almost the entire navy. Seventy-eight ships of various descriptions stationed in Bombay, Karachi, Madras, Calcutta, Cochin, Vizagapatam, Mandapam and the Andamans as well as most of the naval shore establishments joined the mutiny. Only ten ships and two shore establishments remained unaffected.⁹⁸ The mutiny was short-lived—lasting for seven days in Calcutta, six days in Bombay, two days

⁹³ From Gen. Auchinleck to the Viceroy, 29 November 1945. Connell, *op. cit.*, p. 806.

⁹⁴ Auchinleck's memorandum.

⁹⁵ According to the press report 5,200 airmen took part in the strike. *Bombay Chronicle*, 19 February 1946, p. 5.

⁹⁶ Toker, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

⁹⁷ For the details of the events leading to the mutiny and the happenings connected with it see Government of India, *The Gazette of India, Extraordinary*, 21 January 1947 (Delhi); *Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1946-48*, p. 8745; N. N. Mitra, ed., *The Indian Annual Register: An Annual Digest of Public Affairs in India* (Calcutta) I (1946), p. 328. For a typical British officer's version of the incidents see Toker, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-5; for a communist version of the events see R. Palme Dutt, *India To-Day* (Bombay, 1949), pp. 536-42.

⁹⁸ *Gazette of India, op. cit.*, p. 117.

in Karachi and one day in Madras. In Bombay and Karachi there was an exchange of fire between the ratings and the military, but elsewhere the mutineers were non-violent. The real danger arising out of the mutiny was underlined by the warning of the naval authorities "to put down the mutiny even at the cost of the navy."⁹⁹ Strong naval reinforcements were swiftly despatched to meet the emergency.¹⁰⁰

There were various grievances among the Indian ratings at the end of the war. These grievances were serious enough to cause repeated unrest in the Service during the war. But that the mutiny differed from the earlier disorders by assuming for the first time a political complexion which none of the war-time mutinies had, was largely due to the I.N.A. trial and its aftermath.

The quarterly reports on the morale of the ratings of the R.I.N. since July 1945 suggested a change in the traditional apathetic attitude of the ratings towards the contemporary political issues. The report of the quarter ending in July mentioned no political influence at work among the ratings.¹⁰¹ Even at the end of September the attitude of the Indian ratings did not substantially change. They were "either indifferent to politics or interested in it in a healthy way."¹⁰² The first I.N.A. court martial and the subsequent political agitation in the country brought about a change in the attitude of the ratings. The report on their morale in December 1945 pointed out: "... ratings politically conscious; keenly aware of relative lack of amenities for themselves and their families compared to those provided in foreign navies;... some ratings influenced by I.N.A. propaganda and sympathetic to I.N.A."¹⁰³ An officer who visited the ratings and their officers in Bombay and Karachi during December 1945 and February 1946 confirmed the pro-I.N.A. feelings among the ratings.¹⁰⁴ The report prepared by another officer on his visit to Bombay naval establishments mentioned: "All ratings and officers sympathetic to independence movement in the country, Muslim ratings keenly interested in Pakistan; Hindu ratings pro-Congress; opinion about the I.N.A. divided but majority in favour of trials being abandoned."¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Vice-Admiral Godfrey's warning to the ratings. The Admiral deplored that a "state of open mutiny prevails" in Bombay. *Times of India (Bombay)*, 22 February 1946, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ The Press quoted a spokesman of the General Headquarters in Delhi to say that strong naval, military and air reinforcements were on their way to Bombay, Poona and Karachi. *Times of India*, 22 February 1946, p. 7. This was confirmed by the British Prime Minister Attlee in the House of Commons. *Parliamentary Debates*, 419 (1945-6) cols. 1310 and 1441.

¹⁰¹ *Gazette of India, op. cit.*, p. 133.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

The actual events of the mutiny left little doubt about its political complexion. The demands put forward by the ratings for immediate redress included the release of the I.N.A. prisoners and abandonment of their trials,¹⁰⁶ they renamed the navy as the Indian National Navy;¹⁰⁷ contacted the Socialist leaders;¹⁰⁸ burnt the foreign flags and flew the flag of the Congress and the Muslim League.¹⁰⁹

Soon after the mutiny, a Commission was appointed by the Government of India to enquire into its causes. The Commission pointed out various causes of discontent among the ratings. Some of the evidence which the Commission took into account, most notably that of Rear Admiral Rattray, maintained that "the causes of the mutiny are to be found in politics and political influence."¹¹⁰ The Commission was not in complete agreement with this view. It, however, held political influence as a "contributory cause of the mutiny."¹¹¹ It summarised the factors which "contributed to the spread of subversive propaganda among the ratings and gave the mutiny a political complexion." These, according to the Commission, were: 'majority of ratings politically conscious, ratings' contact with the I.N.A., the *Azad Hind* literature in Singapore, Malaya and Burma, free access to political meetings, inflammatory articles in the press, discussions of the I.N.A. trials, R.A.F. and R.I.A.F. 'strikes', Commander King incident which accentuated existing racial feeling, exploitation of the existing discontent and unrest in the Service by some individuals in the Service holding anti-British views."¹¹²

The British press in India and Britain was, however, more emphatic on the role of political influence on the mutiny. The *Times of India* editorially observed: "As a result of the extravagant glorification of the I.N.A. following the trials in Delhi, there was released throughout India a flood of comment which had inevitable sequel in mutinies and alarming outbreaks of civil violence in Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and elsewhere. . . ." ¹¹³ A similar view was expressed by the *Times*. It wrote: "In the case of the naval mutinies, the trouble seems to be in the main political. It was scarcely to be expected that, the ratings, in such a large centre of political activities as Bombay, would not become affected to some extent, by the prevailing racial tension. . . ." ¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁶ *Bombay Chronicle*, 20 and 21 February, p. 5; *Times of India*, 21 February 1946, p. 7.

¹⁰⁷ Mitra, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 285.

¹⁰⁸ For the role of the left-wing elements in the mutiny see Mitra, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 287; Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom* (Calcutta, 1959), p. 131 and Attlee in the House of Commons, H.O.C., *op. cit.*, col. 1442

¹⁰⁹ Mitra, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 285.

¹¹⁰ The two other witnesses, namely Ahmed Brohi and the Naval Officer of Bombay supported Admiral Rattray's view. *Gazette of India, op. cit.*, pp. 133-4.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 134.

¹¹³ *Times of India*, 20 February 1946, p. 6.

¹¹⁴ *Times* (London) 21 February 1946, p. 3.

In the tense atmosphere existing in the country as a result of the disturbances in the first half of February 1946 the naval mutiny had quick repercussions. Between 21 and 24 February there was furious mass rioting in Bombay following the strike called in support of the revolting ratings.¹¹⁵ There was similar rioting in Calcutta, Madura and Madras,¹¹⁶ and its repercussions were felt among the armed forces too. There were strikes by the Indian soldiers stationed at Jabbalpur on 27 February and the R.I.A.F. at Bombay and Madras between 22 and 25 February 1946.¹¹⁷ There were some important features of these disturbances. These were in sympathy of the I.N.A. and the naval mutiny. Moreover, the civil disturbances were anti-foreign in nature. The Government and the European properties were singled out for attack.¹¹⁸ In the places of their occurrence, these disturbances assumed serious proportions and had to be brought under control by reinforced police and military forces.¹¹⁹

The I.N.A. courts martial were significant for more than one reason. A large section of the Indian officer corps not only showed keen interest in the trials but supported the popular demand for the release of the I.N.A. officers. The trials therefore, initiated the Indian officers in nationalists' politics and drew them closer to the nationalist position. In this sense the trials helped "nationalize" the officer corps. The revolutionary aftermath of the trials threw an interesting side-light on the Congress policy. It was the support which the I.N.A. officers received from the Congress party that helped create a tremendous popularity for them in the country in the initial period after the war. But as the I.N.A. sentiments took a revolutionary turn, the Congress disassociated itself from the new force which was largely its own creation. This was evident as the Congress condemned the civilian unrest in February 1946 and withdrew its support from the mutiny of R.I.N. ratings.¹²⁰ The

¹¹⁵ The strike was called by the communists and the leftist elements in the Congress Party. But Congress officially disapproved of the strike. The mass demonstration in sympathy with the revolting ratings soon took to rioting. The communists mobilized six hundred thousand mill workers of the city who struck. The minimum casualty figures quoted by the Government were 187 killed and 1002 wounded. According to the non-Government sources 270 were killed and 1300 injured. The *Times of India* wrote from Bombay that the "mass rising" which was "in sympathy of the naval mutiny" was "unparalleled in the city's history." *Times of India*, 23 February 1946, p. 1; 25 February 1946; *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, 1946-8, pp. 4745, 8745; Mitra, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 313.

¹¹⁶ Mitra, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 310.

¹¹⁷ Press communique issued by E. S. Hyde, District Magistrate of Jabbalpur, *Ibid.*, p. 328, 318.

¹¹⁸ *Times of India*, 23 February 1946, p. 1; *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, 1946-8, p. 8745.

¹¹⁹ *Times of India*, 23 February 1946, p. 1.

¹²⁰ Sardar Patel condemned the mass demonstration in Bombay during the civil disorder as "unjustifiable." Nehru also deplored the mutiny. On 22 February 1946 Sardar strongly advised the ratings "to lay down arms and to go through the formality of surrender" Mitra, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 297. The President of the Indian National Congress, Azad communicated to the Bombay Provincial Congress as

“nationalization” of the Indian officer corps at a time when a large number of them were facing demobilization and the Indian Civil Service was tottering on its feet under the pressure of the difficult post-war situations and the absence of fresh recruits during the war,¹²¹ was an event of great consequence. It infused a new initiative in the post-war British policy towards India. During and immediately after the war, it was officially declared by the British Government that their withdrawal from India would await the prior settlement of the communal question. Faced with a new situation, British policy came to attach highest priority to the question of transfer of power in India and took immediate measure for this purpose. The swift despatch of the Cabinet Mission underlined the urgency.

well as Sardar Patel who was in Bombay that “the steps taken by the naval officers were wrong and they should go back to work.” He gave the same instruction to Mrs. Aruna Asaf Ali who tried to secure the support of the Congress for the ratings. Azad, *op. cit.*, p. 131. In March 1946 the Congress Working Committee stated in a resolution that the events related to the mutiny were “an obstacle in the way of Congress” Mitra, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 124, 314, 317.

¹²¹ H. O. C., vol. 416, cols. 1429-30; also Francis Williams, *A Prime Minister Remembers* (London, 1961), pp. 208-9.