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### THE RISE AND FALL OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY

The virtual disintegration of Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army (INA) in the general Japanese retreat from Burma marks the latest failure in Japan's attempt to exploit Indian nationalism in her war against the Allies in Southeast Asia. In the last few months large-scale surrenders, revealing a radical decline in morale, have rapidly reduced INA ranks. Remaining troops have presumably retreated with the Japanese into the Shan mountains towards Thailand. Bose, the INA Commander in Chief, reportedly has fled to Bangkok, from where he is allegedly reorienting his propaganda to longer range objectives.

The INA was established as the military arm of the Indian Independence Leagues which the invading Japanese had organized throughout Southeast Asia in 1942. Bose's troops, operating in conjunction with a Japanese drive into India, were intended to engage in military infiltration, espionage, and anti-British propaganda urging the Indians to work for a Japanese victory in the interests of their own future independence. Japanese anti-British propaganda, with its slogan of "Asia for the Asiatics," and the policy of singling out the Indian communities for especially favorable treatment undoubtedly carried a certain appeal to Indians in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, ever since the Russo-Japanese war of 1904, Japan has enjoyed increasing prestige as the one Asiatic nation able to establish herself as an independent equal of the Western powers. In the early years of the Pacific War, Japan's position in Asia was stronger than ever, and Great Britain's defeat in India may have seemed a matter of months. Expediency appeared to many Indians to require cooperation with the Japanese.

In Burma the Indian Independence League had been concerned largely with protecting the Indian minority from Burmese hostility until Bose arrived in 1943 to assume its leadership and to organize the "Indian National Army." In early 1944 Burma became the headquarters of the whole movement when the INA First Division was moved up from Malaya to aid the Japanese in the Manipur campaign. Bose, an energetic and persuasive speaker, was probably most popular with those Indians who had some previous contact with political agitation or who came from his own province of Bengal. There Bose had won his largest following as one of the most turbulent and conspicuous of the nationalist leaders in India. In 1938 he served as President of the All-India Congress but, when re-elected in 1939, was virtually forced to resign after a clash with Gandhi and Nehru, who both distrusted his extremism. Subsequently Bose organized his followers into the left-wing "Forward Bloc," which functioned as an opposition party to the Congress. Already at that time Nehru recorded his fear that Bose was turning fascist. In 1941 after an-

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other arrest, Bose escaped from India and was next heard from broadcasting for the Axis from Berlin.

In Bose the Japanese found an excellent potential puppet. He had frequently been imprisoned by the British in India, and his hatred for Great Britain was violent. He had long argued that there was no hope in the policy of compromise with the British which Gandhi was following, and that Indian independence could be achieved only by force. Until June 1943 the Japanese used another man named Bose, Rash Behari Bose, to spread the idea of winning Indian freedom with Japanese aid. Rash Behari had fled to Japan after having directed terrorist activities in the Punjab during the last war. In 1931 he organized the first Indian Independence League in Japan, which announced as its objective "the attainment of independence of India by all possible means." Until Subhas Chandra Bose arrived in Japan from Germany, the elder Bose was recognized leader of the network of Indian Independence Leagues throughout Southeast Asia. When in June 1943 the younger Bose took over completely, Rash Behari apparently retired to Japan, and has since died.

Burma succeeded Malaya as the suitable headquarters for the Japanese-sponsored Indian Independence movement not only because it was to be the staging area for the military attack on India but also because after Malaya it provided the largest Indian population outside of India upon which to draw for membership. At the time of the Japanese invasion over a half-million Indians remained in Burma. By far the greater part of them belonged to the laboring class, but a large number of Indian merchants also had heavy financial stakes in the country, accumulated through money-lending and rice-selling. Although many of these merchants fled to India in 1942, some left representatives to protect their interests and provided Bose's movement with a source of funds. The Japanese, contrary to Burmese desires, allowed the Indian community to retain control over all Indian-held property in Burma.

Indians in Burma have long been conscious of being a minority and are jealous of their status as a separate political group. The Burmese are openly hostile toward the Indians, considering them a menace to Burma's national and economic life. As early as 1922, Indians had formed a separate electorate which, under British auspices, was incorporated into the present constitution in the face of Burman opposition. Most of the educated Indians in Burma sympathized with the aims of the Indian National Congress, and although the imported laborers who formed the bulk of the Indian population were politically inactive before the war, Indian National Congress propaganda may have influenced them to a certain extent before they left India.

During early 1942 the Japanese conducted a campaign to persuade Indian prisoners of war in Hongkong, Shanghai, and Singapore that they should fight along with the Japanese for the "liberation" of India. In June the Japanese sponsored a conference in Bangkok at which the INA was formally launched, and by November the Japanese claimed that the

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strength of the force was 16,000 troops. Disagreement between its first leader and Rash Behari Bose ended in the temporary disbandment of the INA. In June 1943 Subhas Chandra Bose arrived from Germany and, besides taking over the Indian Independence Leagues and the new INA as commander in chief, became President, Premier, Foreign Secretary, and Defense Minister of the "Provisional Government of Free India." His extensive propaganda and recruiting campaign for the INA was at first conducted among Indian prisoners of war, of which about 70,000 were in Japanese hands, and among Indian rubber plantation labor in Malaya. In February 1944 Bose moved INA headquarters to Rangoon, and continued his recruiting from there.

Several factors aided Bose in his work. At that time British prestige was at its lowest ebb. Enlistment afforded escape from POW camps, where conditions were bad, and a possible opportunity for Indians to return to their homes and families. Bose's propaganda spoke of "the sacred soil of the motherland" and of raising the flag of Free India in every city, town, and village in India. Many Indians doubtless sincerely believed that by joining the INA they would participate in achieving real Indian independence. Furthermore, they were told that they would be welcomed by the British Indian Army, which would refuse to fight them, and that all India would rise to welcome them. Thus the general morale of the INA troops before their first engagement in Arakan was fairly high, and Japanese propaganda was able to aim at the British-Indian Army, urging desertion and telling of comrades-in-arms training outside of India to liberate their native country.

In the military engagements that followed, INA regiments were intended primarily to confuse British-Indian troops in the combat areas by shouting orders in Urdu or English, to encourage deserters, and to take full charge of all British-Indian prisoners in order to persuade them to change loyalties and join the INA cause. They were also used in forward reconnaissance and as screens for Japanese troops. Often regarded with suspicion by the Japanese, INA forces were almost never employed as regular fighting units, and were assigned inferior equipment.

The first encounter between British-Indian and INA troops, a surprise engagement, took place a few miles north of Buthidaung in Arakan. INA units were successful through trickery and civilian disguise in overpowering British-Indian sentries and enabling the Japanese to capture a divisional headquarters. In the next encounter, however, an INA Sikh, who had been encouraged to leave cover shouting slogans and invitations to desert, was riddled with British-Indian bullets.

Optimism aroused among the puppet Indians by initial military successes quickly disappeared. The ineffectiveness of the INA was clearly demonstrated at the time of the farthest Japanese advance into India in the spring of 1944. Japanese expectations had obviously been high and the British themselves had been uncertain how much confusion Bose's Indians could cause. But actual encounters proved that British-Indian troops would fight the enemy whether he was Indian or Japanese.

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Three INA regiments, their morale evidently high, crossed the Chindwin in March 1944 for the Manipur campaign and the much-heralded "March on Delhi." Indians trained as occupation officers for the "Indian Provisional Government" actually arrived in Tamu (on the frontier below Imphal) but were soon forced to retreat. Although the Japanese penetrated into India almost as far as Imphal, by June they were pushed back into Burma. INA troops withdrew in very poor condition. Disease swept their ranks, they were inadequately supplied, and their morale fell sharply. Japanese officers in charge of INA intelligence operations in Manipur complained that while Japanese were being killed, INA men were no longer willing to die "for the cause of India's freedom."

Japanese failure in the Manipur campaign seriously impaired the strength of Bose's "Provisional Government" and dashed the Japanese hope for widespread local revolts against the British resulting from an invasion of Indian soil. Despite military reverses, however, Bose continued his propaganda. When the Gandhi-Jinnah meeting in the summer of 1944 was first scheduled, Bose urged Indians not to believe that a settlement between the Congress and the Muslim League could lead to independence. The failure of Gandhi and Jinnah to break the Indian political deadlock by a reconciliation between nationalist elements and compromise with the British restored some hopefulness to the Japanese-sponsored "Free India" movement, and in the fall of 1944 Bose talked of engaging the INA with Japanese aid in a new campaign to win Indian independence by force.

In November 1944, in line with renewed Japanese emphasis on the Greater East Asia program, Bose visited Tokyo to establish closer relations between his "Provisional Government of India" and Japan. An exchange of diplomatic representatives was arranged in the hope of increasing collaboration and improving occasionally strained relations. In the past, members of the INA and even Bose himself had had difficulties with Japanese military men in the field. Another troublesome problem had been the Burman puppet government's desire to liquidate all Indian claims to property in Burma. Also there had been conflict between Bose and the Japanese concerning propaganda directives beamed to India. With his own diplomatic representative in Tokyo, Bose may have hoped to have his India policies more effectively presented. At the same time, Tokyo's warm and impressive welcome of Bose indicated that the Japanese still considered his role important to their war effort.

Although in the 1944-45 winter operations in Burma, isolated INA units belonging to the fresh and untried second division are said to have fought with determination, the INA as a whole continued to be an ineffective device for Japanese exploitation of anti-British sentiment in India. INA strength in March 1945 was estimated to have declined to about 35,000. Since February, when at Bose's request the INA was given a defensive position on the Irrawaddy, its troops, in units varying in strength from 200 to 3000, have surrendered on a large scale.

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