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Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army

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Why is in news? How Bose's INA helped India win independence — but not on the battlefield

Subhas Chandra Bose was born on January 23, 1897.

His Indian National Army (INA), also called the **Azad Hind Fauj (literally Free Indian Army)**, faced the British on the battlefield during World War II.

While militarily unsuccessful, the INA played a crucial role in India's struggle for independence.

Indian National Army:

The Indian National Army was an armed force **formed by Indian collaborators and Imperial Japan** on 1 September 1942 in Southeast Asia during World War II.

Its aim was to **secure Indian independence from British rule**. It fought alongside Japanese soldiers in the latter's campaign in the Southeast Asian theatre of WWII.

Azad Hind Fauj or the India National Army (INA) was first **established by Mohan Singh** in 1942.

It was **revived by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose** on October 21, 1943, during the Second World War to secure India's complete independence from British Raj. Under Bose, the INA is called **second INA**.

Hence, every year on **21 October, the anniversary of the formation of Azad Hind Government** is celebrated across the country.

On this day, India's first independent provisional government named Azad Hind Government was announced.

There was also an **all-women regiment** named after **Rani of Jhanshi, Lakshmibai**.

Under Bose's leadership, the INA drew ex-prisoners and thousands of civilian volunteers from the Indian expatriate population in Malaya (present-day Malaysia) and Burma.

On October 21, 1943, Subhash Bose formed the **Provisional Government for Free India at Singapore** with H.C. Chatterjee (Finance portfolio), M.A. Aiyar (Broadcasting), Lakshmi Swaminathan (Women Department), etc.

This provisional government declared war on Britain and the United States, and was recognised by the Axis powers.

Recruits were trained and funds collected for the INA.

The famous slogan—"Give me blood, I will give you freedom" was given in Malaya.

The INA headquarters was shifted to **Rangoon** (in Burma) in January 1944, and the army recruits were to march from there with the war cry "**Chalo Delhi**".

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On July 6, 1944, **Subhas Bose addressed Mahatma Gandhi as ‘Father of Nation’**—from the Azad Hind Radio (the first person to call Gandhi, ‘Father of Nation’). He asked for Gandhi’s blessings for “**India’s last war of independence**”.

The INA was structured into three brigades - **Gandhi, Azad and Nehru**. At its peak strength, the INA had **around 60,000 troops**.

Motivated civilian volunteers from the Indian Independence League were also attached to the INA formations. The soldiers took an oath of loyalty to both Netaji and the national cause.

The INA had its **own currency, postage stamps and symbols portraying a vision of a liberated India**.

Subhas Chandra Bose, through the first national army, **introduced the Indian tricolour as the national flag** and Tagore's song '**Jan Gan Man Adhinayak**' as the national anthem.

The INA flag with the **springing tiger symbol** and the motto '**Ittefaq, Etemad, Qurbani**' inspired nationalist sentiment.

He also established '**Jai Hind**' as the national greeting, cultivating unity among all Indians regardless of caste and creed.

But the INA failed to capture Impal. The British forces suppress the INA. On **August 15, 1945** the **surrender of Japan** in the Second World War took place and with this the INA also.

On August 18, 1945, reportedly, Subhash Bose **died mysteriously in an air-crash** at Taipei (Taiwan).

After World War II ended in 1945 with the defeat of the Axis powers, the British conducted a **series of court-martial proceedings** known as the INA trials or Red Fort trials between November 1945 and May 1946.

INA trails:

The Indian National Army trials (also known as the **INA trials and the Red Fort trials**) was the British Indian trial by court-martial of a number of officers of the Indian National Army (INA) between **November 1945 and May 1946**, on various charges of treason, torture, murder and abetment to murder, during the Second World War.

The number of INA troops captured by Commonwealth forces by the end of the Burma Campaign made it necessary to take a selective policy to charge those accused of the worst allegations.

The first of these was the joint trial of **Shah Nawaz Khan, Prem Sahgal and Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon**.

They were charged of “**Waging War against the King Emperor**” as well as **Murder and abetment of Murder**.

The decision was made to hold a public trial, as opposed to the earlier trials, and given the political importance and significance of the trials, the decision was made to hold these at the Red Fort.

Impact of INA Trials on Nationalist Sentiments:

The INA **shook the foundations** of the British Empire in India. It demonstrated the **possibility of a united armed resistance movement** transcending religious and ethnic divides in the cause of freedom.

The Red Fort trials introduced many Indians to the INA's role in the fight for independence, generating sympathy for the INA nationwide.

Demonstrations in solidarity with the captured troops began to emerge in different parts of India.

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The **Congress recognised the widespread support for INA soldiers** as an opportunity to rekindle enthusiasm for independence.

The **INA Defense Committee** presented a robust defence, arguing that the actions of the INA troops were within the legal framework of the Indian National Army Act, exempting them from the Indian Penal Code and the Indian Army Act.

In 1946, public pressure led to the release of the soldiers, spurring nationalist sentiments.

The experience and stories of sacrifice also **impacted the Royal Indian Navy mutiny in 1946**, which further weakened British control.

Despite compelling arguments by the defence, the **three INA members were found guilty of waging war** but were not sentenced to death. Instead, they were dismissed from service and sentenced to transportation for life, which was later remitted.

Upon their release, the three officers were hailed as heroes, and **Congress wholeheartedly supported** their celebration.

In response to the explosive situation arising from the INA trial and the growing nationalist sentiments, the British government expedited the idea of transferring power to India.

To decide the modalities of this transfer, the **Cabinet Mission was dispatched**, marking a crucial step toward India's eventual independence.

The INA showed the **possibility of armed resistance against colonial rule**. This inspired many later anti-colonial struggles in Asia and Africa.

Royal Indian Naval Mutiny:

The Royal Indian Navy (RIN) mutiny of **1946**, significantly contributed to the anti-colonial struggle in India.

The **World War II's impact on Indian soldiers** led to the RIN's expansion, including recruits from diverse backgrounds.

Serving abroad exposed them to democratic principles, prompting questions about India's colonial status and realising their capabilities.

Post-war challenges like demobilisation, unemployment, and British racism led to minor mutinies and labour movements.

Memories of the **'Quit India' movement and INA trials** fuelled nationalist sentiments and anti-colonial attitudes.

The mutiny began at **HMIS Talwar in Bombay on February 18, 1946**, when 1,500 ratings demanded better conditions. It spread to other locations, gaining public support and evolving into a call for freedom from British rule.

Ultimately, on February 23, 1946, all ships surrendered, leaving a lasting legacy in India's struggle for independence. The RIN mutiny, alongside other movements, weakened British rule in India.

Conclusion:

The Indian National Army, led by Subhas Chandra Bose, played a critical role in the Indian freedom struggle. It heightened national consciousness, posed a challenge to British imperialism, and motivated many Indians to fight for independence. The INA's legacy lives on as a symbol of resistance and determination in the pursuit of a free

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India.

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