



## CHAPTER 8

# Forward Bloc and INA

### Syllabus

#### Forward Bloc and INA

*Forward Bloc (objectives) and INA (name of the founder, objectives and contribution of Subhas Chandra Bose).*

Subhas Chandra Bose was born on January 23, 1897, at Cuttack in Odisha. After completing his studies in India he went to England and passed the Indian Civil Service Examination. But he resigned from the Civil Service because he did not want to work under the British Crown. He said, "I do not think that one could be loyal to the British Raj and yet serve India honestly, heart and soul."

Bose entered active politics at the age of twenty-four and became a Swarajist, because he did not agree with Gandhian thought. Bose was a man of action. He believed in agitation and resorted to assertive methods for the attainment of Swaraj.

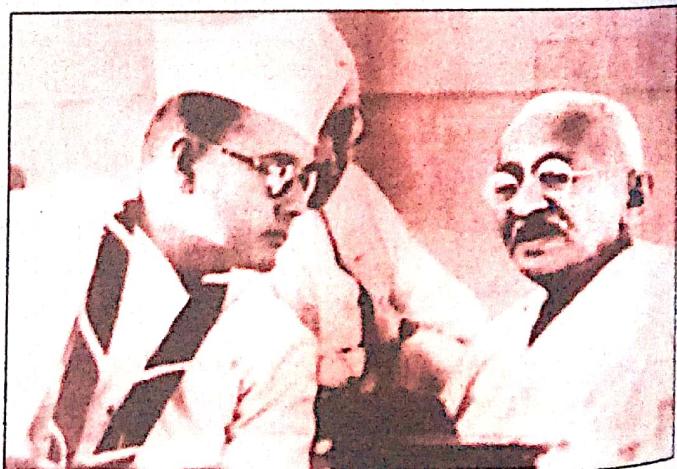
#### Bose and The Congress

Bose was attracted by the Non-Cooperation Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi and became an active worker of the freedom movement. He criticised Gandhiji when he withdrew the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1922. Bose also participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930. At the Haripura (Gujarat) session of the Congress in 1938, Bose was unanimously elected as the President of the Congress. He laid stress on national planning, unity and organisation of masses for

the national struggle. The All-India National Planning Committee was formally inaugurated by Bose at Mumbai in December 1938.

#### Rift with Gandhiji

- (i) Subhas Chandra Bose favoured the policy of large-scale industrialisation. On the other hand, Gandhiji favoured the idea of small scale industries to make the villages self-sufficient.
- (ii) Bose favoured using tact while dealing with his opponents. He could not appreciate the openness with which Gandhiji spoke putting forward his demands at the time of the Second Session of the Round Table Conference in London.
- (iii) The Tripuri Session of the Congress in 1939 saw the widening of the gulf between the two wings of the Congress Party. The left wing led by Bose wanted the Congress to help the people of the Princely States



■ Subhas Chandra Bose with Gandhiji

in their struggle for freedom, whereas Gandhiji criticised their demand.

(iv) As Britain started facing difficulties in Europe because of the German threat, Gandhiji wanted to adopt a compromising attitude towards the British and he was opposed to any national struggle during the War. Bose wanted to take advantage of the difficulties faced by the British.

### Rift in the Congress

At the Tripuri (Madhya Pradesh) session of the Congress in 1939, Gandhiji tried to dissuade Subhas Chandra Bose from standing for re-election as President of the Congress for a second term. Bose, however, decided to contest and Gandhiji's choice fell upon Pattabhi Sitaramayya for the presidential candidate. He put his full weight in his nominee's favour during the contest. Bose won by a majority of votes. Gandhiji declared that the defeat of Bose's rival was his (Gandhiji's) own defeat. As a consequence, 13 members of the Congress Working Committee resigned.

Then a request was made to the President to nominate a Working Committee according to the wishes of Gandhiji. Majority of the delegates who had supported Bose reconfirmed their confidence in the leadership of Gandhiji. This created a deadlock between Bose and Gandhiji. The Gandhi wing began to oppose the President to make it impossible for him to function. Bose resigned from the presidentship of the Congress on April 29, 1939.

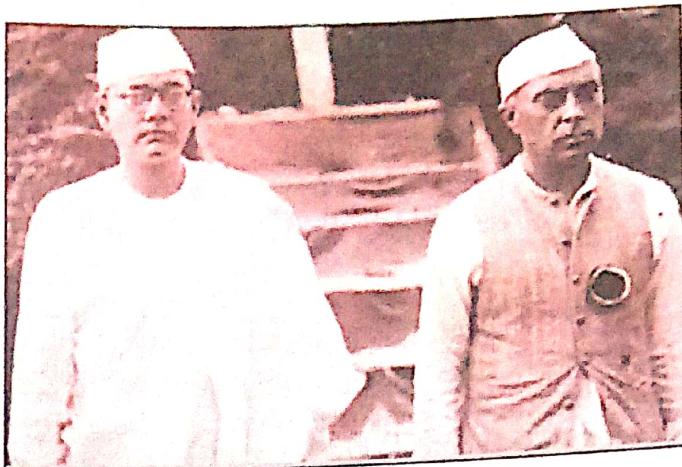
### FORWARD BLOC

Bose felt the urgent need for an organised left-wing party in the Congress. After resigning from the Presidentship of the Congress in 1939, he laid the foundation of a new party within the Congress, to bring the entire left wing under one banner. This party, known as *Forward Bloc*, was formed on May 3, 1939.

### Objectives of the Forward Bloc

Forward Bloc's immediate objective was liberation of India with the support of workers, peasants, youth and other organisations.

After attaining independence, Forward Bloc



■ Subhas Chandra Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru

would work for the establishment of a Socialist State through

- (i) reorganisation of agriculture and industry on socialist lines;
- (ii) abolition of the Zamindari system; and
- (iii) introduction of a new monetary and credit system.

### Netaji's Arrest and Escape

In July 1940, Bose was arrested under the Defence of India Rules. He went on a hunger strike. As his health was declining rapidly, the Government released him. Thereafter he was kept under house arrest in Kolkata. But in January 1941, eluding police vigilance, he escaped from his house.

Travelling through Peshawar and Russia, he reached Berlin. The Indian community in Germany welcomed him as their leader—Netaji; and greeted him with 'Jai Hind'. He frequently urged his countrymen on the radio to rise in arms against the British. He also founded *Free India* centres in Rome and Paris.

### Events in South-East Asia

The outbreak of the War in South-East Asia in 1941 caused a great stir among the Indians in those regions. Indians, living in territories captured by Japan, organised themselves into associations with the objective of contributing to the liberation of India and serving the interests of the overseas Indians during the critical period. Out of these associations was born the idea of an *Indian Independence League*. A definite shape was given to this idea by Rashbehari Bose, who lived in Singapore after escaping from India.

## INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY (INA)

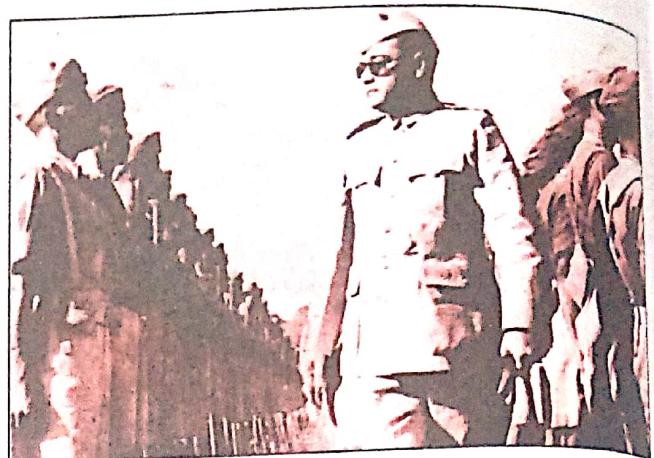
**Founder of the INA:** The idea of the Indian National Army (INA) was conceived in Malaya by Mohan Singh, an Indian officer in the British Indian Army. He decided not to join the retreating British army and instead went to the Japanese for help. The Japanese had, till then, only encouraged civilian Indians to join anti-British organisations, but had no concept of forming a military wing consisting of Indians.

Indian Prisoners of War (POW's) were handed over by the Japanese to Mohan Singh who inducted them into the INA. The fall of Singapore was crucial, for this brought 45,000 Indian POW's into Mohan Singh's sphere of influence. By the end of 1942, forty thousand men expressed their willingness to join the INA. It was made clear at meetings of leaders of the Indian community and of Indian Army officers that the INA would go into action only on the invitation of the Indian National Congress and the people of India.

### The Tokyo Conference

It was mainly due to Rashbehari Bose's efforts that a conference was held at Tokyo from 28th to 30th March, 1942. Indian officers, both military and civil, proceeded to Tokyo to meet the Japanese High Command. At the Conference the following decisions were taken:

- (i) to expand and strengthen the Indian Independence League,
- (ii) to form under the overall command of the League an Indian National Army (INA), i.e. an army for Indian liberation, and



■ Subhas Chandra Bose inspecting a unit of INA

- (iii) to hold a conference at Bangkok to consolidate these decisions.

### The Bangkok Conference

The Bangkok Conference was held from June 15 to June 23, 1942. More than 150 delegates from Malaya, Singapore, Burma, Thailand, Hong Kong, Manila and Java were present at the Conference. It passed many resolutions, such as:

- (i) Invitation to Subhas Chandra Bose to come from Europe to lead this movement.
- (ii) Formation of a Council of Action to control and guide the whole movement.
- (iii) Election of Rashbehari Bose as the President of the Council.
- (iv) Appointment of Mohan Singh as the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian National Army.

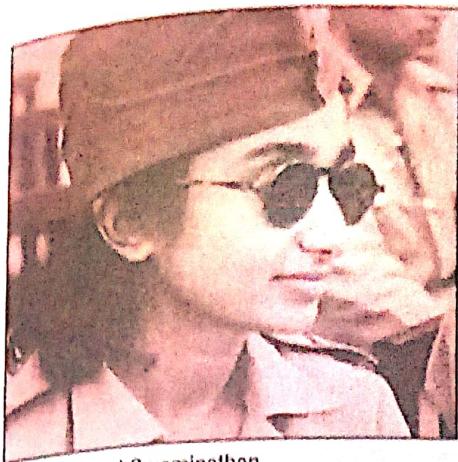
### Contribution of Subhas Chandra Bose

As we studied earlier in this chapter, Subhas Chandra Bose was instrumental in the formation of the Forward Bloc. After evading the British Indian authorities Bose led the freedom struggle outside the country. The active phase of the INA began when Subhas Chandra Bose arrived at Singapore in July 1943 by German and Japanese submarines. Two days later he officially took charge of the Indian Independence League. Bose was greeted as Netaji—the Great Leader.

In August 1943, he took the charge of the Indian National Army and became its Supreme Commander. After setting up the INA headquarters in Yangon and in Singapore he began to reorganise the INA. Recruits were made from civilians. A women's regiment called the



■ Mohan Singh: Founder of the INA



■ Dr. Laxmi Swaminathan

Rani Jhansi Regiment was led by Dr. Laxmi Swaminathan. Recruitment and training camps were opened in large numbers to cope with the rush of volunteers offering themselves for the INA.

### Objectives of the INA

The main objectives of the INA were the following:

- (i) To organise an armed revolution and to fight the British army with modern arms.
- (ii) Since it was not possible for the Indians to organise an armed revolution from their homeland, this task must be assigned to the Indians living abroad, particularly to Indians living in East Asia.
- (iii) To organise a provisional government of Free India in order to mobilise all the forces effectively.
- (iv) Total mobilisation of Indian man-power and money for a total war.

### Provisional Government of Free India

The INA was a revolutionary army. Its motto was 'unity, faith, sacrifice'. It was unique in its own way and unlike many other armies engaged in the global war. It was an army organised on foreign soil, hundreds of kilometres away from its motherland. It was dependent on foreign powers for planes, tanks, artillery, rifles, ammunition and even lorries for the transport of soldiers to the front. It depended upon the patriotic fervour of its nationals scattered over East Asia, from Myanmar to Japan, for men, money, clothing, food and other civilian supplies. However, its greatest asset was the spirit of self-sacrifice of the men who enthusiastically volunteered to lay down their lives.

Subhas Chandra Bose set up the Provisional Government of Free India on October 21, 1943 in Singapore. The Provisional Government then declared war on Britain and the United States. The Provisional Government was recognised by the Axis powers and their satellites including Japan, Germany, Italy, Burma (Myanmar) and Thailand. The major task of the Provisional Government was to launch and conduct the struggle that will bring about the expulsion of the British and their allies from the Indian soil. Another important task assigned to the Provisional government was to establish a permanent national government of Azad Hind.

In 1944, Subhas Chandra Bose shifted the headquarters of the Provisional Government to Rangoon. The shifting of the headquarters was of momentous importance to the movement. This was because only the border separated India from Myanmar; the eastern gates of India were within the reach of Subhas Chandra Bose and his liberation army.

The Provisional Government acquired its first stretch of territory in India when Japan handed over Andaman and Nicobar Islands to it on November 6, 1943. Bose renamed them *Shaheed* and *Swaraj Islands*, respectively.

Subhas Chandra Bose gave the call to his soldiers, '*Give me blood and I shall give you freedom*'. His battle-cries were: '*Delhi Chalo*' (March to Delhi) and '*Jai Hind*' (Victory to India).

### Achievements of the INA and Netaji

The INA made preparations to launch its fight for the liberation of India and went into action in February 1944. INA captured Mowdok, an outpost situated south-east of Chittagong,



■ Subhas Chandra Bose in Rangoon

Bangladesh and advanced up to the frontier of India. They captured the strong military post of Klang Klang, Malaysia. The INA gave a tough fight to the British forces in the Assam hills and succeeded in capturing Ukhrul and Kohima. They raised the Tricolour Flag for the first time on the liberated Indian soil on March 19, 1944.

### Fate of the INA and Netaji

The INA's victories were short-lived. They were three kilometres from Imphal when the Japanese forces had to withdraw from the Indo-Burma border because of their entanglement with the Americans in the Pacific Ocean. At the same time the rainy season set in. Rangoon was recaptured by the British. INA soldiers were disarmed and made prisoners of war. The surrender of Japan in the Second World War on August 15, 1945 sealed the fate of the INA also.

Netaji left Rangoon for Bangkok. Thereafter he flew to Tokyo. While on his way to Tokyo he is said to have received fatal injuries in a plane crash. The Japanese official version was that Netaji died on August 18, 1945.

### Impact of the INA

The Revolt of 1942 and the INA had revealed the heroism of the Indians. With the end of the Second World War and release of the national

leaders from jail, the people began to look forward to another, perhaps the final struggle for freedom.

The INA inspired uprisings in the armed forces of the country. The Indian Naval rating in Mumbai rose in revolt in February 1946. Similar uprisings took place at Kolkata, Chennai and Karachi. These naval revolts shook the foundation of the British Empire.

The new struggle took the form of a massive movement against the trial of the soldiers and officers of the INA. The Government decided to put on trial in the Red Fort at Delhi, officers of the INA—Shah Nawaz Khan, Gurdial Singh Dhillon and Prem Sehgal—who had earlier been officers in the British Indian Army. The people welcomed them as national heroes. Demonstrations demanding their release were held all over the country. The British Government was at that time in no position to ignore Indian opinion. Even though the court-martial held the INA prisoners guilty, the Government had to set them free.

The INA set an inspiring example of patriotism. The heroic deeds and sacrifices of the soldiers of INA led to political consciousness among the Indian forces. The British now realised that they could not rely on the Indian forces to continue their rule in India.

## CHAPTER AT A GLANCE ➤➤➤

Subhas Chandra Bose was born on January 23, 1897 at Cuttack in Odisha. He went to England and passed the Indian Civil Service Examination. He was unanimously elected President at the Haripura session of the Congress in 1938 and was re-elected for the second term at the Tripuri Congress session in 1939, defeating Pattabhi Sitaramayya, who had the backing of Mahatma Gandhi.

**Forward Bloc:** (i) On account of his differences with Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Working Committee, he resigned the Presidentship of the Congress in April 1939 and founded the *Forward Bloc*. (ii) The *main objective* of the Forward Bloc was liberation of India with the support of workers, peasants, youth and other organisations; (iii) In 1941, Netaji arrived at Singapore to take charge of the INA.

**The Indian National Army:** The idea of *Indian National Army* (INA) was conceived and formed by Mohan Singh, who inducted Indian prisoners of war into the INA.

**Contribution of Netaji:** (i) He led the freedom struggle outside India as the Supreme Commander of the INA. He set up the Provisional Government of Free India in Singapore; (ii) He declared war on Britain and the USA and acquired its first stretch of territory in India when Japan handed over Andaman and Nicobar Islands; (iii) Subhas Chandra Bose gave the call to his soldiers, "Give me blood and I shall give you freedom". He gave the slogans '*Delhi Chalo*' and '*Jai Hind*'; (iv) The INA gave a tough fight to the British forces in the Assam hills and succeeded in capturing Ukhrul and Kohima. However, the surrender of Japan in the Second World War sealed the fate of the INA. The INA set an inspiring example of patriotism.

## **EXERCISES**

### Multiple-Choice Questions

I. Multiple choice  
Select the correct option.

## **II. Short Answer Questions**

1. Why did Subhas Chandra Bose resign from the Congress Presidentship?
  2. Why did Rashbehari Bose organise the Indian Independence League? Who was the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian National Army?
  3. Name the two slogans which became the war cry of the INA. Which islands were renamed as 'Shaheed' and 'Swaraj'?
  4. Why could not the Indian National Army capture Imphal?
  5. Mention two contributions of Subhas Chandra Bose to India's freedom struggle.
  6. How can you say that the INA was a unique army?

### **III. Structured Questions**

1. In 1939, Subhas Chandra Bose formed the Forward Bloc. In this context, answer the following questions:
    - (a) Why did Subhas Chandra Bose decide to form a new party?
    - (b) What were the aims and objectives of the new party formed by Subhas Chandra Bose?
    - (c) Mention two main objectives of the Provisional Government of Free India. Name any two countries that recognised the Provisional Government of India formed in Singapore in 1943.
  2. Read the excerpt given below and answer the questions that follow:

*"Friends, one year ago, when I made certain demands of you, I told you that if you give me 'total mobilization', I would give you a 'second front'. I have redeemed that pledge. The first phase of our campaign is over. Our victorious troops, fighting side by side with Nipponeese troops, have pushed back the enemy and are now fighting bravely on the sacred soil of our dear motherland. I had asked you for men, money and materials. I have got them in generous measure. Now I demand more of you."*

A long fight is still in front of us. We should have but one desire today – the desire to die so that India may live – the desire to face a martyr's death, so that the path to freedom may be paved with the martyr's blood.

Friends! My comrades in the War of Liberation! Today I demand of you one thing, above all. I demand of you blood. It is blood alone that can avenge the blood that the enemy has spilt. It is blood alone that can pay the price of freedom."

—Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

- (a) Whom is Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose addressing? Who are the 'victorious troops' referred to in the excerpt? Who were the 'Nipponeese'?
- (b) Which 'War of Liberation' is Bose talking about? From where did he start his campaign? Name the two areas of Indian territory his troops acquired.
- (c) What did he demand from his troops? Did the troops fulfil the mission of their leader?
3. Study the picture and answer the following questions:



- (a) Identify the person in the picture and name the army formed by him. How was this army formed and where?
- (b) What were the objectives of this army? Did it achieve its objectives?
- (c) Mention this army's contribution to India's freedom struggle.

#### IV. Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)

1. Do you think Subhas Chandra Bose set an inspiring example of patriotism? Give examples to support your answer.
2. The Indian National Army built by Subhas Chandra Bose was far ahead of its time. Discuss.

