

Forward Bloc and the INA

Subhas Chandra Bose

Subhas Chandra Bose was born on 23 January 1897 in a Bengali family. After completing his early education, he joined Presidency College, Kolkata. He then went to England for higher studies. He passed the Civil Services Examination in 1920. He soon resigned from the Civil Services as he wanted to participate in the Indian National Movement.

He was an assertive nationalist who believed in taking aggressive steps to gain independence. He entered politics at the age of twenty four. Although he was not a great supporter of the Gandhian ideology, he actively participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement.



Subhas Chandra Bose

Differences with Gandhi

- Subhas Chandra Bose was elected as the President of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1938. He sought re-election to the Presidentship of the party in 1939.
- Gandhi was supporting Pattabhi Sitaramayya for the presidentship. However, because of the support given by radical elements within the party, Bose was re-elected as the President of the INC.
- His ideological differences with Gandhi continued and he resigned from the Presidentship of the party on April 1939. His differences with Gandhi was mainly due to the following reasons:
 - Subhas Chandra Bose was an ardent believer of socialism and radical ideas. Gandhi, on the other hand, believed in the policy of Satyagraha which included fighting for freedom in a peaceful and non-violent manner.
 - Bose believed that freedom could not be gained until and unless India takes the help of a foreign country. He looked upon the war between Britain and Germany as an opportunity which could enable India to achieve its independence. These revolutionary ideas were opposed vehemently by Gandhi and Nehru.
- It was due to these reasons that he left the Congress and formed a new party—the Forward Bloc—in May 1939.

Aims and Objectives of the Forward Bloc

- Bose formed the Forward Bloc and announced that the party would work within the Congress. However, the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution by which he was disqualified to be a member of any Congress Committee for three years.
- The immediate objective of the Forward Bloc was to liberate India with the help and support of the workers, peasants, youth and all the other radical organisations.
- It was laid down that after attaining independence, the party would work for establishing a socialist society in the country by adopting the following measures:
 - Abolishing the zamindari system
 - Making the right to work the fundamental right of citizens
 - Providing several medical and economic benefits to workers
 - Introducing a new monetary and credit system

Arrest of Subhas Chandra Bose

- Bose was arrested by the government because of his radical ideas and for propagating anti-government feelings among the masses.
- While being in prison, he went on a hunger strike. On the seventh day of his fast, the government released him and put him under house arrest at Kolkata.
- In January 1941, he managed to escape the house arrest by dressing in disguise. He crossed the Indian border and reached Russia via Afghanistan. He then flew from Moscow to Berlin in March 1941. There he met Adolf Hitler and expressed his desire to free India from the British rule.
- From Berlin, he ran propaganda against the British rule in India. A Free India Centre was set up in Berlin in November 1941. He also became the Editor-in-Chief of the English monthly *Azad Hind*.
- Bose also founded a Free India Centre in Rome.

In southeast Asia, during the Second World War, the Japanese troops had occupied the British colonies of Singapore, Malaya and Myanmar. As a result, a large number of Indians fell into their hands as prisoners of war. These soldiers wanted to free India from the British rule. Thus, the Indian Independence League was formed under the guidance of Rash Behari Bose. The main aim of the League was to mobilise the Indian soldiers and community for securing independence.

Formation of the Indian National Army

Many events led to the formation of the Indian National Army. These were

- Rash Behari Bose, an Indian revolutionary and an organiser of the Indian Independence League planned the **Tokyo Conference**. The aim of holding the Conference was to meet the military officers of Japan.
- The main programmes of the Conference were to expand and strengthen the Indian Independence League, to form an Indian National Army and to hold a Conference of the representatives of Indians at Bangkok in June 1942.



Rash Behari Bose

Bangkok Conference

- The Bangkok Conference held from 15 to 23 June 1942 was attended by more than 150 Indian delegates from Malaya, Singapore, Burma, Thailand, Hong Kong, Manila and Java.
- The Indian National Army or the Azad Hind Fauj was established on 1 September 1942 and Captain Mohan Singh was declared as its Commander-in-Chief.
- The delegates to the Conference invited Subhas Chandra Bose for leading the movement to free India from British rule.
- Bose accepted the invitation and reached Singapore in June 1943 and took over the leadership of the INA.
- The INA consisted of a large number of soldiers which were captured by the Japanese forces in Myanmar, Malaya and Singapore. Some of his famous battle cries were "Give me blood, and I will give you freedom" and "Delhi Chalo".
- A women wing of the INA was also set up. It was named after Rani Laxmi Bai. This wing was led by Dr. Laxmi Swaminathan.
- Subhas Chandra Bose also founded the Provisional Government of Free India at Singapore on 21 October 1943. This government was recognised by nine governments including Germany, Italy, Japan and Myanmar.
- The Provisional Government of Free India acquired its first territories when Japan handed over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to it.

Objectives of the INA

- To fight the British army with modern arms and weapons.
- To organise Indians living abroad and plan an armed revolution against the British Government.
- To organise the Provisional Government of Free India
- To mobilise manpower and money for war against the British
- The motto of the INA was 'Unity, faith and sacrifice'.

Victories of INA in Southeast Asia and Subsequent Retreats

- The INA along with the Japanese army over ran many territories in South Asia. It captured Mowdok, a place near Chittagong. It then captured Kohima and reached Imphal.
- However, when the INA was just near Imphal, the Japanese troops had to withdraw their forces from the border because of their confrontation with the Americans in the Pacific Ocean.
- The onset of heavy rainfall also prevented the INA from capturing Imphal.
- The INA withdrew to Burma and continued to hold it for almost a year. A year later in May 1945, Burma was recaptured by the British forces.
- The defeat of the Japanese forces in the Second World War also marked the defeat of the INA in India.
- Subhas Chandra Bose was killed in an aeroplane crash while flying to Tokyo.



Troops of the Indian National Army

Significance of the Struggles of INA

The INA gave tough fight to the British. It not only advanced up to the frontiers of India but also captured the strong military post of Klang Klang. It also captured Ukhral and Kohima.

Although the INA did not succeed in its mission to liberate India, its contribution to the Indian independence movement was immense. The INA inspired uprisings in the armed forces of the country. The Indian Naval ratings in Mumbai rose in revolt against the British. Similar uprisings took place at Kolkata, Chennai and Karachi. These uprisings shook the foundation of the British rule in India. The heroic deeds and sacrifices of the soldiers of the INA led to the awakening of political consciousness among the Indians. The British now realised that they cannot continue to rule India for long.