

FORWARD BLOC AND THE INA

Subhas Chandra Bose

Subhas Chandra Bose was born on 23 January 1897 in a Bengali family. After his early education, he joined Presidency College, Kolkata, and later went to England for higher studies. He passed the Civil Services Examination in 1920 but resigned to participate in the Indian National Movement. Bose was an assertive nationalist who believed in aggressive action for independence. Although he was not a strong supporter of Gandhian ideology, he actively participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Differences with Gandhi

- Bose was elected as the President of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1938 and re-elected in 1939, despite Gandhi's support for Pattabhi Sitaramayya.
- His ideological differences with Gandhi led to his resignation in April 1939. Key reasons included:
 - Bose's belief in socialism and radical ideas, in contrast to Gandhi's peaceful Satyagraha approach.
 - His view that India needed foreign assistance to gain independence, seeing the Britain-Germany war as an opportunity.
- These differences led him to leave Congress and form the Forward Bloc in May 1939.

Aims and Objectives of the Forward Bloc

- Though initially working within Congress, Bose was later disqualified from Congress Committees for three years.
- The Forward Bloc aimed to liberate India with the support of workers, peasants, and youth.
- Post-independence, the party aimed to establish a socialist society by:
 - Abolishing the zamindari system.
 - Making the right to work a fundamental right.
 - Providing economic and medical benefits to workers.
 - Introducing a new monetary and credit system.

Arrest and Escape of Bose

- Bose was arrested for his radical ideas and anti-government activities.
- He went on a hunger strike in prison and was released but placed under house arrest in Kolkata.

- In January 1941, he escaped in disguise, reaching Russia via Afghanistan, then flew to Berlin in March 1941, where he met Adolf Hitler and set up a Free India Centre.
- In Southeast Asia, the Japanese occupied British territories, leading to the formation of the Indian Independence League under Rash Behari Bose to mobilize Indian soldiers.

Formation of the Indian National Army (INA)

- The Tokyo Conference was held to strengthen the Indian Independence League and form the INA.
- The Bangkok Conference (15-23 June 1942) established the INA on 1 September 1942, with Captain Mohan Singh as Commander-in-Chief.
- The conference invited Bose to lead the movement, and he took charge of the INA in June 1943.
- The INA included Indian soldiers captured by the Japanese in Myanmar, Malaya, and Singapore.
- Bose's famous slogans included "Give me blood, and I will give you freedom" and "Delhi Chalo."
- The INA formed a women's wing, named after Rani Lakshmi Bai, led by Dr. Lakshmi Swaminathan.
- Bose founded the Provisional Government of Free India in Singapore on 21 October 1943, recognized by nine nations, including Japan and Germany.
- Japan handed over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to this government.

Objectives of the INA

- Fight the British army with modern weapons.
- Organize Indians abroad for an armed revolution against the British.
- Establish a Provisional Government of Free India.
- Mobilize manpower and resources for war against the British.
- The INA's motto was "Unity, Faith, and Sacrifice."

INA Victories and Retreats

- The INA, alongside the Japanese army, captured Mowdok near Chittagong, Kohima, and advanced toward Imphal.
- However, Japan withdrew due to its confrontation with American forces in the Pacific and the onset of heavy rainfall.

- The INA retreated to Burma and held it for a year before the British recaptured it in May 1945.
- The defeat of Japan in WWII marked the INA's downfall.
- Bose was killed in an aeroplane crash while flying to Tokyo.

Significance of the INA's Struggle

- The INA gave the British a tough fight, capturing key military posts such as Klang Klang, Ukhral, and Kohima.
- Though unsuccessful in liberating India, the INA inspired revolts in the Indian Navy, Army, and Air Force in Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, and Karachi.
- These uprisings weakened British rule, contributing to India's independence movement.
- The sacrifices of INA soldiers awakened political consciousness in Indians, leading the British to realize their rule in India was unsustainable.