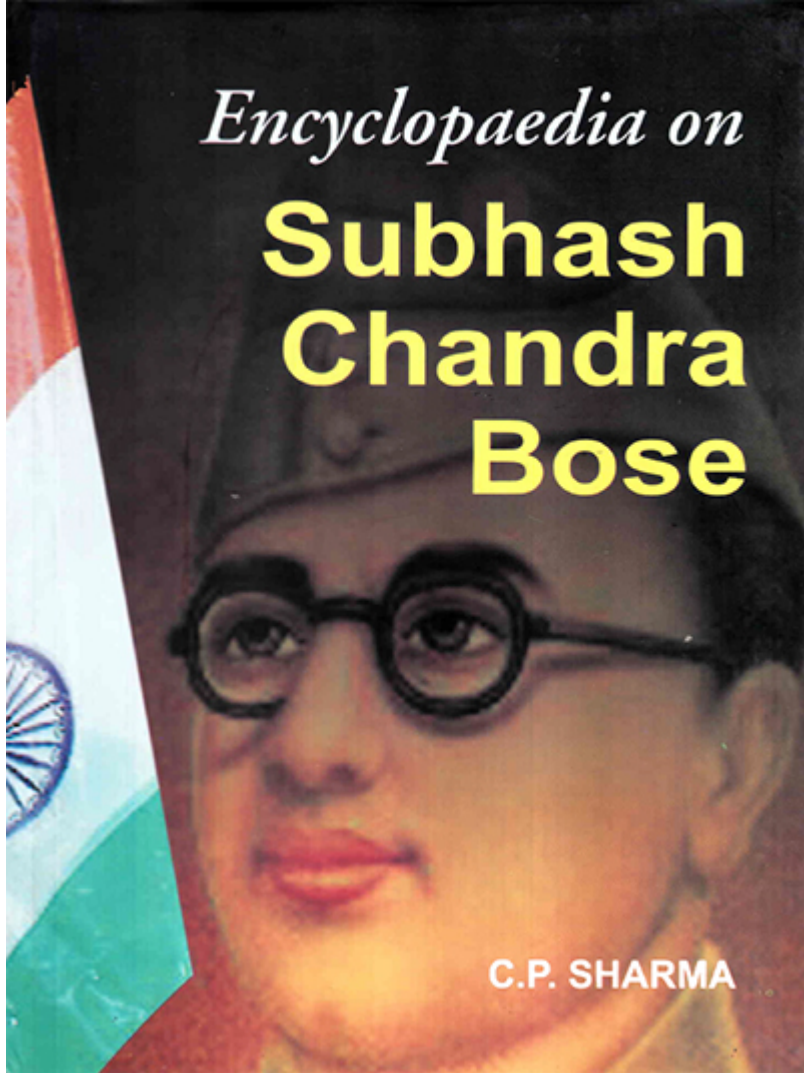


*Encyclopaedia on*

**Subhash  
Chandra  
Bose**

C.P. SHARMA



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**Volume 1**

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**ANMOL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.**  
**NEW DELHI - 110 002 (INDIA)**

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**H.O.:** 4374/4B, Ansari Road, Daryaganj,

New Delhi-110 002 (India)

Ph.: 23278000, 23261597

**B.O.:** No. 1015, Ist Main Road, BSK IIIrd Stage

IIIrd Phase, IIIrd Block,

Bangalore - 560 085 (India)

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*Encyclopaedia on Subhash Chandra Bose*

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First Edition, 2008

ISBN 978-81-261-3683-4(Set)

PRINTED IN INDIA

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Printed at Mehra Offset Press, Delhi.

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# Preface

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Subhash Chandra Bose, popularly known as Netaji was an outstanding leader of the Indian National Movement. The life of Subhash reads like a thrilling saga of most dramatic events. Subhash was truly the greatest hero of India's struggle for freedom. Subhash Chandra Bose was born on 23 January, 1897 at Cuttack in Orissa. Subhash was almost hypnotized by Swami Vivekananda's teachings "seek your salvation in the welfare of humanity." He had found his ideal to which he could devote his whole being. He graduated from the Calcutta University and qualified for the Indian Civil Service. This led to mental conflicts as to whether or not he should join the coveted heaven born service. At last he resigned his attractive career to serve the cause of India's freedom. Subhash Chandra Bose had joined the non-cooperation movement and since then had been a promising dynamic young man of the Congress organization. Yet he nurtured revolutionary ideas and was never really-fully happy with Gandhiji's philosophy and technique of political agitations. He was convinced that India could not achieve independence without foreign assistance.

INA was the last major attempt made by Subhash Chandra Bose on a foreign soil in a bid to Free India from British Yoke. He could not adjust himself with the Congress High Command and formed a new party known as the forward bloc. In 1941 he was under strict surveillance of the government at his own

house at Calcutta. From there he suddenly slipped away from India and through north-east frontier and Afghanistan reached Germany. There he launched himself on a new course of political career. The book is a tribute to one of the most outstanding freedom fighter of india. The book draws on the life of Bose and Indian National Army. This work will be useful for student and researcher.

— *Dr. C. P. Sharma*

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

Subhash Chandra Bose, generally known as Netaji (lit. “Respected Leader”), was one of the most prominent and highly respected leaders of the Indian Independence Movement against the British Raj.

Bose was elected president of the Indian National Congress for two consecutive terms but resigned from the post following ideological conflicts with Mahatma Gandhi. Bose believed that Mahatma Gandhi’s tactics of nonviolence would never be sufficient to secure India’s independence, and advocated violent resistance. He established a separate political party, the All India Forward Bloc and continued to call for the full and immediate independence of India from British rule. He was imprisoned by the British authorities eleven times.

His stance did not change with the outbreak of the second world war, which he saw as an opportunity to take advantage of British weakness. At the outset of the war, he fled India and travelled to the Soviet Union, Germany and Japan seeking an alliance with the aim of attacking the British in India. With Japanese assistance he reorganised and later led the Indian National Army, formed from Indian prisoners-of-war and plantation workers from Malaya, Singapore and other parts of Southeast Asia, against British forces. With Japanese monetary, political, diplomatic and military assistance, he

formed the Azad Hind Government in exile, regrouped and led the Indian National Army to battle against the allies in Imphal & Burma during the World War II.

His political views and the alliances he made with Nazi and other militarist regimes opposed to the British Empire have been the cause of arguments among historians and politicians, with some accusing him of Fascist sympathies and of Quislingist actions, while most others in India largely sympathetic towards his inculcation of realpolitik as a manifesto that guided his social and political choices. He is believed to have died on 18 August 1945 in a plane crash over Taiwan. However, contradictory evidence exists regarding his death in the accident.

## *Early Life*

Subhash Chandra Bose was born in 1897 to an affluent Bengali family in Cuttack, Orissa in India. His father, Janakinath Bose, was a public prosecutor who believed in orthodox nationalism, and later became a member of the Bengal Legislative Council. Bose was educated at Ravenshaw Collegiate School, Cuttack, Scottish Church College, Calcutta and Fitzwilliam College at Cambridge University. In 1920, Bose took the Indian Civil Services entrance examination and was placed fourth with highest marks in English. However, he resigned from the prestigious Indian Civil Service in April 1921 despite his high ranking in the merit list, and went on to become an active member of India's independence movement. He joined the Indian National Congress, and was particularly active in its youth wing.

Still, Bose's ideals did not match those of Mahatma Gandhi's single belief in nonviolence. He therefore returned to Calcutta to work under Chittaranjan Das, the Bengali freedom fighter and co-founder (with Motilal Nehru) of the Swaraj Party.

In 1921, Bose organised a boycott of the celebrations to mark the visit of the Prince of Wales to India, which led to his imprisonment. In April 1924, Bose was elected to the post of Chief Executive Officer of the newly constituted Calcutta Corporation. In October that year, Bose was arrested on suspicion of terrorism. At first, he was kept in Alipore Jail and later he was exiled to Mandalay in Burma (where earlier Bal Gangadhar Tilak had spent 6 years in prison). On January 23, 1930, Bose was once again arrested for leading an "independence procession", protesting against British rule in India. After his release from jail on September 25, he was elected as the Mayor of the City of Calcutta.

Over a span of 20 years, Bose was incarcerated eleven times by the British, either in India or in Rangoon. During the mid 1930s he was exiled by the British from India to Europe, where he championed India's cause and aspiration for self-rule before gatherings and conferences.

After his father's death, the British authorities allowed him to land at Calcutta's airport only for the religious rites, which would be followed by his swift departure. He travelled extensively in India and in Europe before stating his political opposition to Gandhi. During his stay in Europe from 1933 to 1936, he met several European leaders and thinkers. He came to believe that India could achieve political freedom only if it had political, military and diplomatic support from outside, and that an independent nation necessitated the creation of a

national army to secure its sovereignty. Subhash Chandra Bose married Emilie Schenkl, an Austrian born national, who was his secretary, in 1937. According to Schenkl, she and Bose were secretly married in Bad Gastein on 26 December 1937. They had one daughter, Anita, born in 1942. Bose wrote many letters to Schenkl during the period 1934-1942, of which many have been published in the book *Letters to Emilie Schenkl*, edited by Sisir Kumar Bose and Sugata Bose.

Bose became the president of the Haripura Indian National Congress in 1938, against Gandhi's wishes. Gandhi commented "Pattavi's defeat is my own defeat. Anyway, Subhash Bose is not an enemy of the country". Gandhi's continued opposition led to the latter's resignation from the Working Committee, and the possibility that the rest of the CWC would resign. In the face of this gesture of no-confidence, Bose himself resigned, and was left with no alternative but to form an independent party, the All India Forward Bloc. Bose also initiated the concept of the *National Planning Committee* in 1938.

## Actions during the Second World War

Bose advocated the approach that the political instability of wartime Britain should be taken advantage of—rather than simply wait for the British to grant independence after the end of the war (which was the view of Gandhi, Nehru and a section of the Congress leadership at the time). In this, he was influenced by the examples of Italian statesmen Giuseppe Garibaldi and Giuseppe Mazzini.

His correspondence reveals that despite his clear dislike ..for British subjugation, he was deeply impressed by their

methodical and systematic approach and their steadfastly disciplinarian outlook towards life. In England, he exchanged ideas on the future of India with British Labour Party leaders and political thinkers like Lord Halifax, George Lansbury, Clement Attlee, Arthur Greenwood, Harold Laski, J.B.S. Haldane, Ivor Jennings, G.D.H. Cole, Gilbert Murray and Sir Stafford Cripps. He came to believe that a free India needed Socialist authoritarianism, on the lines of Turkey's Kemal Ataturk, for at least two decades. Bose was refused permission by the British authorities to meet Mr. Ataturk at Ankara for political reasons. It should be noted that during his sojourn in England, only the Labour Party and Liberal politicians agreed to meet with Bose when he tried to schedule appointments. Conservative Party officials refused to meet Bose or show him the slightest courtesy due to the fact that he was a politician coming from a colony, but it may also be recalled that in the 1930s leading figures in the Conservative Party had opposed even Dominion status for India. It may also be observed here that it was during the regime of the Labour Party (1945-1951), with Attlee as the Prime Minister, that India gained independence.

## The Escape

On the outbreak of war, Bose advocated a campaign of mass civil disobedience to protest against Viceroy Lord Linlithgow's decision to declare war on India's behalf without consulting the Congress leadership. Having failed to persuade Gandhi of the necessity of this, Bose organised mass protests in Calcutta calling for the 'Holwell Monument' commemorating the Black Hole of Calcutta, which then stood at the corner of Dalhousie

Square, to be removed. A reasonable measure of the contrast between Gandhi and Bose is captured in a saying attributable to him: "If people slap you once, slap them twice". He was thrown in jail by the British, but was released following a seven-day hunger strike. Bose's house in Calcutta was kept under surveillance by the CBI, but their vigilance left a good deal to be desired. With two court cases pending, he felt the British would not let him leave the country before the end of the war. This set the scene for Bose's escape to Germany, via Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. Bose had never been to Afghanistan, and could not speak the local tribal language (Pashto).

Bose escaped from under British surveillance at his house in Calcutta. On January 19, 1941, accompanied by his nephew Sisir K. Bose, Bose gave his watchers the slip and journeyed to Peshawar. With the assistance of the Abwehr, he made his way to Peshawar where he was met at Peshawar Cantonment station by Akbar Shah, Mohammed Shah and Bhagat Ram Talwar. Bose was taken to the home of Abad Khan, a trusted friend of Akbar Shah's. On 26 January 1941, Bose began his journey to reach Russia through India's North West frontier with Afghanistan. For this reason, he enlisted the help of Mian Akbar Shah, then a Forward Bloc leader in the North West Frontier Province, . Shah had been out of India *en route* to the Soviet Union, and suggested a novel disguise for Bose to assume. Since Bose could not speak one word of Pashto, it would make him an easy target of Pashto speakers working for the British. For this reason, Shah suggested that Bose act deaf and dumb, and let his beard grow to mimic those of the tribesmen.

Supporters of the Aga Khan helped him across the border into Afghanistan where he was met by an Abwehr unit posing

as a party of road construction engineers from the Organization Todt who then aided his passage across Afghanistan via Kabul to the border with Soviet Russia. Once in Russia the NKVD transported Bose to Moscow where he hoped that Russia's traditional enmity to British rule in India would result in support for his plans for a popular rising in India. However, Bose found the Soviets' response disappointing and was rapidly passed over to the German Ambassador in Moscow, Count von der Schulenburg. He had Bose flown on to Berlin in a special courier aircraft at the beginning of April where he was to receive a more favourable hearing from Joachim von Ribbentrop and the Foreign Ministry officials at the Wilhelmstrasse.

## Assassination Attempts

In 1941, when the British learned that Bose had sought the support of the Axis Powers, they ordered their agents to intercept and assassinate Bose before he reached Germany. A recently declassified intelligence document refers to a top-secret instruction to the Special Operations Executive (SOE) of British intelligence to murder Bose. In fact, the plan to liquidate Bose has few parallels, and appears to be a last desperate measure against a man who had thrown the British Empire into a panic.

## In Germany

Having escaped incarceration at home by assuming the guise of a Pashtun insurance agent ("Ziauddin") to reach

Afghanistan, Bose travelled to Moscow on the passport of an Italian nobleman "Count Orlando Mazzotta". From Moscow, he reached Rome, and from there he travelled to Germany, where he instituted the Special Bureau for India under Adam von Trott zu Solz, broadcasting on the German-sponsored Azad Hind Radio. He founded the *Free India Centre* in Berlin, and created the Indian Legion (consisting of some 4500 soldiers) out of Indian prisoners of war who had previously fought for the British in North Africa prior to their capture by Axis forces. The Indian Legion was attached to the Wehrmacht, and later transferred to the Waffen SS; its members swore their allegiance to both Hitler and Bose to secure India's independence. He was also, however, prepared to envisage an invasion of India via the U.S.S.R. by Nazi troops, spearheaded by the Azad Hind Legion; many have questioned his judgment here, as it seems unlikely that the Germans could have been easily persuaded to leave after such an invasion, which might also have resulted in an Axis victory in the War.

The lack of interest shown by Hitler in the cause of Indian independence eventually caused Bose to become disillusioned with Hitler and he decided to leave Nazi Germany in 1943. Bose had been living together with his wife Schenkl in Berlin from 1941 until 1943, when he left for southeast Asia. He travelled by the German submarine *U-180* around the Cape of Good Hope to Imperial Japan (via Japanese submarine *1-29*). Thereafter the Japanese helped him raise his army in Singapore. This was the only civilian transfer across two submarines of two different navies in World War II.

**South-East Asia**

## *Indian National Army*

The Indian National Army (INA) was originally founded by Capt. Mohan Singh in Singapore in September 1942 with Japan's Indian POWs in the Far East. This was along the concept of-and with support of-what was then known as the Indian Independence League, headed by expatriate nationalist leader Rash Behari Bose. The first INA was however disbanded in December 1942 after disagreements between the Hikari Kikan and Mohan Singh, who came to believe that the Japanese High Command was using the INA as a mere pawn and Propaganda tool. Mohan Singh was taken into custody and the troops returned to the Prisoner-of-War camp. However, the idea of a liberation army was revived with the arrival of Subhash Chandra Bose in the Far East in 1943. In July, at a meeting in Singapore, Rash Behari Bose handed over control of the organisation to Subhash Chandra Bose. Bose was able to reorganise the fledgling army and organise massive support among the expatriate Indian population in southeast Asia, who lent their support by both enlisting in the Indian National Army, as well as financially in response Bose's calls for sacrifice for the national cause. At its height it consisted of some 85,000 regular troops, including a separate women's unit, the Rani of Jhansi Regiment (named after Rani Lakshmi Bai), which is seen as a first of its kind in Asia.

Even when faced with military reverses, Bose was able to maintain support for the Azad Hind movement. Spoken as a part of a motivational speech for the Indian National Army at a rally of Indians in Burma on July 4, 1944, Bose's most famous quote was "Give me blood, and I shall give you freedom!". In this, he urged the people of India to join him in his fight

against the British Raj. Spoken in Hindi, Bose's words are highly evocative. The troops of the INA were under the aegis of a provisional government, the Azad Hind Government, which came to produce its own currency, court and civil code, and was recognised by nine Axis states—Germany, Japan, Italy, the Independent State of Croatia, Wang Jingwei's Government in Nanjing, Thailand, a provisional government of Burma, Manchukuo and Japanese-controlled Philippines. Recent researches have shown that the USSR too had recognised the "Provisional Government of Free India". Of those countries, five were authorities established under Axis occupation. This government participated as a delegate or observer in the so-called Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

The INA's first commitment was in the Japanese thrust towards Eastern Indian frontiers of Manipur. INA's special forces, the Bahadur Group, were extensively involved in operations behind enemy lines both during the diversionary attacks in Arakan, as well as the Japanese thrust towards Imphal and Kohima, along with the Burmese National Army led by Ba Maw and Aung San. A year after the islands were taken by the Japanese, the Provisional Government and the INA were established in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands with Lt. Col. A.D Loganathan appointed its Governor General. The islands were renamed *Shaheed* (Martyr) and *Swaraj* (Selfrule). However, the Japanese Navy remained in essential control of the island's administration. During Bose's only visit to the islands in late in 1943, when he was carefully screened from the local population by the Japanese authorities, who at that time were torturing the leader of the Indian Independence League on the Islands, Dr. Diwan Singh (who later died of his injuries, in the Cellular Jail). The islanders made several

attempts to alert Bose to their plight, but apparently without success. Enraged with the lack of administrative control, Lt. Col Loganathan later relinquished his authority to return to the Government's head quarters in Rangoon.

On the Indian mainland, an Indian Tricolour, modelled after that of the Indian National Congress, was raised for the first time in the town in Moirang, in Manipur, in northeastern India. The towns of Kohima and Imphal were placed under siege by divisions of the Japanese, Burmese and the *Gandhi* and *Nehru* Brigades of I.N.A. during the attempted invasion of India, also known as Operation U-GO. However, Commonwealth forces held both positions and then counter-attacked, in the process inflicting serious losses on the besieging forces, which were then forced to retreat back into Burma.

Bose had hoped that large numbers of soldiers would desert from the Indian Army when they would discover that INA soldiers were attacking British India from the outside. However, this did not materialise on a sufficient scale. Instead, as the war situation worsened for the Japanese, troops began to desert from the INA. At the same time Japanese funding for the army diminished, and Bose was forced to raise taxes on the Indian populations of Malaysia and Singapore, sometimes extracting money by force. When the Japanese were defeated at the battles of Kohima and Imphal, the Provisional Government's aim of establishing a base in mainland India was lost forever. The INA was forced to pull back, along with the retreating Japanese army, and fought in key battles against the British Indian Army in its Burma campaign, notable in Meiktila, Mandalay, Pegu, Nyangyu and Mount Popa. However, with the fall of Rangoon, Bose's government ceased

be an effective political entity. A large proportion of the INA troops surrendered under Lt. Col Loganathan when Rangoon fell. The remaining troops retreated with Bose towards Malaya or made for Thailand. Japan's surrender at the end of the war also led to the eventual surrender of the Indian National Army, when the troops of the British Indian Army were repatriated to India and some tried for treason...

His other famous quote was, "Delhi chalo", meaning "On to Delhi!". This was the call he used to give the INA armies to motivate them. "Jai Hind", or, "Glory to India!" was another slogan used by him and later adopted by the Government of India and the Indian Armed Forces.

## *Disappearance and Alleged Death*

Officially, Bose died in a plane crash over Taiwan, while flying to Tokyo on 18 August 1945. However, his body was never recovered, and many theories have been put forward concerning his possible survival. One such claim is that Bose actually died in Siberia, while in Soviet captivity. Several committees have been set up by the Government of India to probe into this matter.

In May 1956, a four-man Indian team (known as the Shah Nawaz Committee) visited Japan to probe the circumstances of Bose's alleged death. The Indian government did not then request assistance from the government of Taiwan in the matter, citing their lack of diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

However, the Inquiry Commission under Justice Mukherjee, which investigated the Bose disappearance mystery in the period 1999-2005, did approach the Taiwanese

government and obtained information from the Taiwan Government that no plane carrying Bose had ever crashed in Taipei. The Mukherjee Commission also received a report originating from the US State Department, supporting the claim of the Taiwan Government that no such air crash took place during that time frame.

The Mukherjee Commission submitted its report to the Indian Government on November 8, 2005. The report was tabled in Parliament on May 17, 2006. The probe said in its report that Bose did not die in the plane crash and the ashes at Renkoji temple are not his. However, the Indian Government rejected the findings of the Commission.

## *Political Views*

Bose's earlier correspondence (prior to 1939) also reflects his deep disapproval of the racist practices of, and annulment of democratic institutions in Nazi Germany. He also, however, expressed admiration for the authoritarian methods (though not the racial ideologies) which he saw in Italy and Germany during the 1930s, and thought they could be used in building an independent India.

Bose had clearly expressed his belief that democracy was the best option for India. The pro-Bose thinkers believe that his authoritarian control of the Azad Hind was based on political pragmatism and a post-colonial recovery doctrine rather than any anti-democratic belief. However, during the war (and possibly as early as the 1930s) Bose seems to have decided that no democratic system could be adequate to overcome India's poverty and social inequalities, and he wrote that an

authoritarian state, similar to that of Soviet Russia (which he had also seen and admired) would be needed for the process of national rebuilding. Accordingly some suggest that Bose's alliance with the Axis during the war was based on more than just pragmatism, and that Bose may have been a Fascist, though not a Nazi; alternatively, others consider he might have been using populist methods of mobilization common to many postcolonial leaders.

After the Independence of India, Subhash Chandra Bose did not get much importance, as the Gandhi-influenced Congress Party came to rule.

## CHAPTER 2

# Subhash Chandra Bose and India's Struggle for Independence

When one thinks of the Indian independence movement in the 1930s and early 1940s, two figures most readily come to mind: Mahatma Gandhi, the immensely popular and “saintly” frail pacifist, and his highly respected, Fabian Socialist acolyte, Jawaharlal Nehru. Less familiar to Westerners is Subhash Chandra Bose, a man of comparable stature who admired Gandhi but despaired at his aims and methods, and who became a bitter rival of Nehru. Bose played a very active and prominent role in India’s political life during most of the 1930s. For example, he was twice (1938 and 1939) elected President of the Indian National Congress, the country’s most important political force for freedom from the *Raj*, or British rule.

While his memory is still held in high esteem in India, in the West Bose is much less revered, largely because of his wartime collaboration with the Axis powers. Both before and during the Second World War, Bose worked tirelessly to secure German and Japanese support in freeing his beloved homeland of foreign rule. During the final two years of the war, Bose—

with considerable Japanese backing—led the forces of the Indian National Army into battle against the British.

## Ideology of Fusion

As early as 1930—in his inaugural speech as mayor of Calcutta—the fervent young Bose first expressed his support for a fusion of socialism and fascism:

*"... I would say we have here in this policy and programme a synthesis of what modern Europe calls Socialism and Fascism. We have here the justice, the equality, the love, which is the basis of Socialism, and combined with that we have the efficiency and the discipline of Fascism as it stands in Europe today."*

In years that followed, the brilliant, eclectic Bengali would occasionally modify this radical doctrine, but would never abandon it entirely. For example, in late 1944—almost a decade-and-a-half later—in a speech to students at Tokyo University, he asserted that India must have a political system “of an authoritarian character... To repeat once again, our philosophy should be a synthesis between National Socialism and Communism.”

In the wake of the crushing defeat in 1945 of Hitler and Mussolini, “fascism” has arguably been the most despised of all political ideologies. Postwar western society recognizes no fascist heroics, and even considers “fascist” traits—particularly the authoritarian, charismatic, personal style of leadership, and the positive evaluation of violence and the willingness to use it for political purposes—to be decidedly unpalatable. In India, though, Bose is regarded as a national hero, in spite of his repeated praise (as will be shown) for autocratic leadership and

authoritarian government, and admiration for the European fascist regimes with which he allied himself.

Like the leaders he admired in Italy and Germany, Bose was (and still is) popularly known as *Netaji*, or “revered leader.” “His name,” explains Mihir Bose (no relation), one of Subhas’ many biographers, “is given [in India] to parks, roads, buildings, sports stadiums, artificial lakes; his statues stand in place of those of discarded British heroes and his photograph adorns thousands of calendars and millions of *pan* (betelnut) shops.” It is always the same portrait, continues the writer: Bose in his Indian National Army uniform, “exhorting his countrymen forward to one last glorious struggle.”

No less a figure than Gandhi paid tribute to Bose’s remarkable courage and devotion. Six months after his death in an airplane crash on August 18, 1945, Gandhi declared: “The hypnotism of the Indian National Army has cast its spell upon us. Netaji’s name is one to conjure with. His patriotism is second to none... His bravery shines through all his actions. He aimed high and failed. But who has not failed.” On another occasion Gandhi eulogized: “Netaji will remain immortal for all time to come for his service to India.”

Many of Bose’s admirers have been inclined to downplay or even ignore the fascist elements in his ideology, and even to pretend they never existed. For example, the text of Bose’s inaugural speech as mayor of Calcutta, cited above, was reprinted in a laudatory 1970 “Netaji Birthday Supplement” of the *Calcutta Municipal Gazette*, but with all references to fascism, including his support for a synthesis of fascism and socialism, carefully deleted. Several admiring biographers have found it easier to ignore the fascist elements in his ideology than to explain them. Their subjective accounts do not even

inform the reader that Bose spoke positively about some features of fascism, or else, in an attempt to remove from their hero any possible taint, they qualify his remarks in ways that he himself did not. 'Fascist'?

During his lifetime, Bose was frequently denounced as a fascist or even a Nazi, particularly in the wake of the radical, revolutionary (as opposed to reformist) views he expressed in radio addresses broadcast to India from National Socialist Germany and, later, from quasi-fascist Japan. For example, *The Statesman*, a highly influential Calcutta periodical, charged in November 1941: "Mr. Bose's views are those of the Nazis, and he makes no secret of it," while the BBC, Britain's worldwide radio voice, frequently accused him of "Fascism" and "Nazism."

Additionally, historians and writers who do not admire Bose readily point up his "fascist" views. A.M. Nair, a historian who has written favourably of Indian revolutionary Rash Behari Bose (who had sought Japan's help during and after the First World War), found nothing to praise about Subhash Chandra Bose. After all, wrote Nair, he was clearly a fascist.

## Recognized Leadership

Bose, a patriot of almost fanatical zeal, first joined the Indian national movement in 1921, working under C.R. Das, whom he idolized. He was jailed for six months in 1921-1922 because of his political activities. Immediately upon his release, the 25-year-old Bose organized (and presided over) the All-Bengal Young Men's Conference. As a result of his remarkable leadership abilities and ambition, he advanced quickly through nationalist ranks. He was soon elected General

Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee (BPCC). In 1924, at the age of 27, Bose was elected the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, which effectively put him in charge of the second-largest city in the British empire. As a result of his close ties with nationalist terrorists, in late 1924 he was detained by British authorities and held, without trial, for three years in prison. In 1928, the 31-year-old Bose was elected president of the BPCC, and, at the Calcutta meeting of the Congress party held that December, he came to national prominence by pressing (unsuccessfully) for the adoption by his provincial committee of an independence resolution.

By 1930 Bose had formulated the broad strategy that he believed India must follow to throw off the yoke of British imperialism and assume its rightful place as a leader in Asia. During his years in Mandalay prison and another short term of imprisonment in Alipore jail in 1930, he read many works on political theory, including Francesco Nitti's *Bolshevism, Fascism and Democracy* and Ivanoe Bonomi's *From Socialism to Fascism*. It is clear that these works on fascism influenced him, and caused an immediate modification of his long-held socialist views: as noted above, in his inaugural speech as mayor of Calcutta, given a day after his release from Alipore jail, he revealed his support for a seemingly contradictory ideological synthesis of socialism and fascism.

Until his death 15 years later, Bose would continue publicly to praise certain aspects of fascism and express his hope for a synthesis of that ideology and socialism. His detailed comments on the matter in his book *The Indian Struggle: 1920-1934*, which was first published in 1935, accurately represent the views he held throughout most of his career. As such, the

most important of them, along with Bose's own actions, will be analyzed here in some detail.

## Program Outlined

Contending that the Indian National Congress was somewhat "out of date," and suffered from a lack of unity and strong leadership, Bose predicted in *The Indian Struggle* that out of a "Left-Wing revolt there will ultimately emerge a new full-fledged party with a clear ideology, programme and plan of action." The programme and plan of action of this new party would, wrote Bose, follow this basic outline:

1. The party will stand for the interests of the masses, that is, of the peasants, workers, etc., and not for the vested interests, that is, the landlords, capitalists and moneylending classes.
2. It will stand for the complete political and economic liberation of the Indian people.
3. It will stand for a Federal Government for India as the ultimate goal, but will believe in a strong Central Government with dictatorial powers for some years to come, in order to put India on her feet.
4. It will believe in a sound system of state-planning for the reorganization of the agricultural and industrial life of the country.
5. It will seek to build up a new social structure on the basis of the village communities of the past, that were ruled by the village "Panch" and will

strive to break down the existing social barriers like caste.

6. It will seek to establish a new monetary and credit system in the light of the theories and the experiments that have been and are current in the modern world.
7. It will seek to abolish landlordism and introduce a uniform land-tenure system for the whole of India.
8. It will not stand for a democracy in the Mid-Victorian sense of the term, but will believe in government by a strong party bound together by military discipline, as the only means of holding India together and preventing a chaos, when Indians are free and are thrown entirely on their own resources.
9. It will not restrict itself to a campaign inside India but will resort to international propaganda also, in order to strengthen India's case for liberty, and will attempt to utilize the existing international organizations.
10. It will endeavour to unite all the radical organizations under a national executive so that whenever any action is taken, there will be simultaneous activity on many fronts.

*Synthesis*

Bose went on to note that Nehru had said in 1933: "I dislike Fascism intensely and indeed I do not think it is anything more than a crude and brutal effort of the present capitalist order to preserve itself at any cost." There is no middle road between Fascism and Communism, said Nehru, so one "had to choose between the two and I choose the Communist ideal."

To this Bose responded:

*"The view expressed here is, according to the writer, fundamentally wrong... One is inclined to hold that the next phase in world-history will produce a synthesis between Communism and Fascism. And will it be a surprise if that synthesis is produced in India... In spite of the antithesis between Communism and Fascism, there are certain traits in common. Both Communism and Fascism believe in the supremacy of the State over the individual. Both denounce parliamentary democracy. Both believe in party rule. Both believe in the dictatorship of the party and in the ruthless suppression of all dissenting minorities. Both believe in a planned industrial reorganization of the country. These common traits will form the basis of the new synthesis. That synthesis is called by the writer "Samyavada"—an Indian word, which means literally "the doctrine of synthesis or equality." It will be India's task to work out this synthesis."*

Before taking a closer look at these remarkable words, four points need to be made. First, Bose's fascist model was almost certainly Mussolini's Italy, not Hitler's Germany. In 1934 Bose made the first of several visits to Fascist Italy and found both the regime and its leader very agreeable. On that occasion he had a cordial (first) meeting with Mussolini—"a man who really counts in the politics of modern Europe." After *The Indian Struggle* appeared in print in 1935, Bose made a special stop in Rome personally to present a copy to the *Duce*.

Second, the book was completed a full year before the commencement of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia (Abyssinia), in October 1935. While Bose would, by the time he completed his book, have known about such violent incidents as “The Night of the Long Knives” — the SS killing of dozens of SA men on June 30, 1934—he had no real reason to consider the European fascist regimes unusually violent, murderous or bellicose. “I should like to point out that when I was writing the book,” he later explained,

“Fascism had not started on its imperialistic expedition, and it appeared to me merely an aggressive form of nationalism. .. What I really meant was that we in India wanted our national freedom, and having won it, we wanted to move in the direction of Socialism. This is what I meant when I referred to a “synthesis between Communism and Fascism.” Perhaps the expression I used was not a happy one.”

Third, despite Bose’s claim to represent the political left, and that a party supporting a fusion of fascism and socialism would be ushered in by a “Left-Wing revolt,” the ideology he expounded might more appropriately be regarded as right wing. Bose’s ideology was radical and contained socialist elements—such as the desire to abolish the traditional class structure and create a society of equal opportunity, and the claim to represent the peasants and workers. To that extent it can be considered left wing. It is worth noting that Hitler’s “right wing” political movement—the National Socialist German Workers’ Party—shared many of Bose’s “socialist” goals. Nehru, a committed socialist, challenged Bose’s characterization of himself and his followers as left wing: “It seems to me that many of the so-called Leftists are more Right than the so-called Rightists. Strong language and a capacity to

attack the old Congress leadership is not a test of Leftism in politics.”

Lastly, it should be noted that Bose was willing to tone down his more radical political beliefs on those occasions when he considered it advantageous or necessary to do so. For example, in his February 1938 inaugural speech as President of the Indian National Congress, Bose—probably in a sincere attempt to placate the Gandhian faction—made statements that appear to represent almost an about face from the political views he had expounded in *The Indian Struggle*. In a future independent India, he said,

“the party itself will have a democratic basis, unlike, for instance, the Nazi party which is based on the “leader principle.” The existence of more than one party and the democratic basis of the Congress party will prevent the future Indian State becoming a totalitarian one. Further, the democratic basis of the party will ensure that leaders are not thrust upon the people from above, but are elected from below.”

It is possible that these statements reflect a temporary change of mind, but it is more likely that they reflect Bose’s efforts during this period to gain further political respectability, to prove that he was more than just a radical and revolutionary Bengali. By doing so he apparently hoped to win wider acceptance of the policies he wanted to implement in his year as Congress President: policies which were not especially radical or revolutionary. According to Nirad Chaudhuri, his former personal secretary, Bose tried very hard during this period to seek agreement with the Gandhian faction over the direction the Congress party should move, and even “showed something like tender filial piety towards Gandhi,” of whom he

had been very critical in *The Indian Struggle*. It is against this political background that Bose's statements to the Congress party meeting in February 1938 should be seen.

A year later he successfully recontested the presidential election, but two months afterwards was forced to resign because of his inability to resolve his differences with Gandhi and the Gandhian faction. Probably believing that his earlier suspicions of democracy had been proven correct, and feeling that there was now no use in trying to win the favour or approval of more conservative elements in the Congress party, Bose once again proclaimed his belief in the efficacy of authoritarian government and a synthesis of fascism and socialism. Many similar examples can be cited to show how Bose outwardly (but probably not inwardly) modified his views to suit changing political contexts.

## A Life for India

Throughout his political career, India's liberation from British rule remained Bose's foremost political goal; indeed, it was a lifelong obsession. As he explained in his most important work, *The Indian Struggle*, the political party he envisioned "will stand for the complete political and economic liberation of the Indian people." Speaking of Bose a few days after his death in August 1945, Jawaharlal Nehru said:

"In the struggle for the cause of India's independence he has given his life and has escaped all those troubles which brave soldiers like him have to face in the end. He was not only brave but had deep love for freedom. He believed, rightly or wrongly, that whatever he did was for the independence of India... Although I personally did not agree with him in many

respects, and he left us and formed the Forward Bloc, nobody can doubt his sincerity. He struggled throughout his life for the independence of India, in his own way.”

Along with his abiding love for his country, Bose held an equally passionate hatred of the imperial power that ruled it: Great Britain. In a radio address broadcast from Berlin on March 1, 1943, he exclaimed that Britain’s demise was near, and predicted that it would be “ India’s privilege to end that Satanic empire.” The fundamental principle of his foreign policy, Bose declared in a May 1945 speech in Bangkok, is that “ Britain’s enemy is India’s friend.” Although these two speeches are from his final years, they express views he had held since before his April 1921 resignation from the Indian Civil Service. It was this principle of making friends with Britain’s enemies in the hope that they would assist him in liberating India that brought him in 1941 to Germany and then, in 1943, to Japan.

## Violence or Non-Violence?

Bose envisaged that “the complete political and economic liberation of the Indian people” would inevitably require the use of force. Just before resigning from the Indian Civil Service, he discussed with Dilip Kumar Roy, his closest friend, the subject of anti-British terrorism. “I admit it is regrettable,” he said, “even ugly if you will, though it also has a terrible beauty of its own. But maybe that beauty does not unveil her face except for her devotees.”

Violence was not new to Bose, even at that early stage of his career. In 1916 he had been expelled from Presidency College in Calcutta for his part in the violent assault on Professor

Edward Oaten, who had allegedly insulted Indian students. Moreover, although he occasionally claimed to “detest” violence, and criticized isolated acts of terrorism (which he considered ineffective and counterproductive), he was never really committed to Gandhi’s policy of nonviolence. He regarded the Gandhi-supported civil disobedience campaign as an effective means of paralyzing the administration, but regarded it as inadequate unless accompanied by a movement aimed at total revolution and prepared, if necessary, to use violence.

## *Militarism*

Related to Bose’s willingness to use violence to gain political objective was his belief—expressed in *The Indian Struggle*, for example—that a government by a strong party should be “bound together by military discipline.” Indeed Bose was infatuated with military discipline, and later commented that his basic training in the University Unit of the India Defence Force (for which he volunteered in 1917, while a student at Scottish Church College in Calcutta) “gave me something which I needed or which I lacked. The feeling of strength and of self-confidence grew still further.”

Bose was able to give much grander expression to his “militarism” when, in 1930, he volunteered to form a guard of honour during the ceremonial functions at the Calcutta session of the Congress party. Such guards of honour were not uncommon, but the one Bose formed and commanded was unlike anything previously seen. More than 2,000 volunteers were given military training and organized into battalions. About half wore uniforms, with specially designed steel-chain

epaulettes for the officers. Bose, in full dress uniform (peaked cap, standing collar, ornamental breast cords, and jodhpurs) even carried a Field Marshal's baton when he reviewed his "troops." Photographs taken at the conference show him looking entirely out of place in a sea of *khadi* (traditional Indian clothing). Gandhi and several other champions of Nonviolence (*Ahimsa*) were uncomfortable with this display.

## The Indian National Army

A high point in Bose's "military career" came in July 1943 in Singapore. At a mass meeting there on July 4, Rash Behari Bose (no relation) handed over to him the leadership of the Indian Independence League. The next day, Subhash Bose reviewed for the first time the soldiers of the Indian National Army (INA), which then comprised 13,000 men. In his address to the troops, which is a good example of his speaking style, he cited George Washington and Giuseppe Garibaldi as examples of men who led armies that won independence for their respective countries. Bose went on:

"Soldiers of India's army of liberation!...

"Every Indian must feel proud that this Army—his own Army—has been organized entirely under Indian leadership and that, when the historic moment arrives, under Indian leadership it will go to battle...

"Comrades! You have voluntarily accepted a mission that is the noblest that the human mind can conceive of. For the fulfilment of such a mission, no sacrifice is too great, not even the sacrifice of one's life...

“...Today is the proudest day of my life. For an enslaved people, there can be no greater pride, no higher honour, than to be the first soldier in the army of liberation. But this honour carries with it a corresponding responsibility, and I am deeply conscious of it. I assure you that I shall be with you in darkness and in sunshine, in sorrow and in joy, in suffering and in victory. For the present, I can offer you nothing except hunger, thirst, privation, forced marches and death. But if you follow me in life and in death, as I am confident you will, I shall lead you to victory and freedom. It does not matter who among us will live to see India free. It is enough that India shall be free, and that we shall give our all to make her free.

“May God now bless our Army and grant us victory in the coming fight!”

This “Free India Army” (*“Azad Hind Fauj”*) would not only “emancipate India from the British yoke,” he told the soldiers, but would, under his command, become the standing national army of the liberated nation.

## *Choreography for Impact*

As his staging at the 1930 Calcutta session of the Congress party suggest, Bose understood early on the importance of political choreography and the aesthetics of mass meetings. After his visits to Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany, he was even more mindful of the importance for any successful broad-based political movement of mass meetings, marches, visual symbols, and ceremonial or liturgical rituals. For example, at the 51st session of the Congress party at Haripura in 1938, Bose made sure that his entrance as the new Congress

President would be spectacular. Escorted by 51 girls in saffron saris (the number corresponding with the number of the Congress session), he was seated in an ancient chariot drawn by 51 white bullocks, and taken on a two hour procession through 51 specially-constructed gates, accompanied by 51 brass bands. Political choreography of this type—although not to this extreme degree—was very evident at all mass rallies (which sometimes attracted crowds numbering as many as 200,000) of the Forward Bloc party that Bose formed in 1939. Carefully chosen symbols, slogans and songs, coupled with a flood of written propaganda, were used in an unsuccessful attempt to make the Forward Bloc into a mass party.

Even during the last years of the war, when he was in southeast Asia heading the Provisional Government of Free India and the INA, he continued to choreograph carefully all of his rallies, meetings and ceremonies, in order to maximize their impact. He also realized that his own role in this choreography was central. Even in the hottest tropical weather, for instance, he wore an imposing military uniform, including forage cap, khaki tunic and jodhpurs, and shiny, knee-length black boots. Moreover, whenever he travelled “he demanded all the rights and privileges of a head of state. On his road travels in Malaya, for example, he insisted on a full ceremonial escort; Japanese military jeeps mounted with sub-machine guns, a fleet of cars, and motorcycle outriders.” Historian Mihir Bose argues persuasively that such carefully planned actions were manifestations not of megalomania, but rather of Subhash Bose’s effort to create a sense of unity transcending class, caste and origin among the large and diverse populations of Indians in Southeast Asia, to increase their political awareness, to arouse and inspire both them and his INA

troops, and to show the world that he regarded himself as a political leader of substance and importance.

This naturally raises the question of Bose's leadership style. In the passage from *The Indian Struggle* quoted above at length, he expressed his belief in what he called "the dictatorship of the party" (the party being the governing body of a free India), but he did not specify the precise nature of the party's leadership, or whether it, too, would be dictatorial. Most importantly, he did not state whether he saw himself as the party leader, or comment directly on what role he intended for himself in a free India. Nonetheless, clues about these details can be gleaned from other sections of *The Indian Struggle* and from the speeches and statements Bose made at various times throughout his career.

## *Determined Leadership*

Bose clearly admired strong, vigorous, military-type leaders, and in *The Indian Struggle* he listed several whom he particularly respected. These included Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin and even a former British governor of Bengal, Sir Stanley Jackson. Nowhere in this book is there any criticism of these individuals (three of them dictators) for having too much power, yet another man is chastised for this: Mahatma Gandhi. Bose admired Gandhi for many things, not least his ability to "exploit the mass psychology of the people, just as Lenin did the same thing in Russia, Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany." But he accused Gandhi of accepting too much power and responsibility, of becoming a "Dictator for the whole country" who issued "decrees" to the Congress. According to Bose, Gandhi was a brilliant and gifted man, but,

unlike Mussolini, Hitler and the others mentioned, a very ineffectual leader. Gandhi had failed to liberate India because of his frequent indecision and constant willingness to compromise with the Raj (something Bose said he would never do).

It is clear that Bose—who believed from his youth that he was destined for greatness—saw himself as a “strong” leader in the mold of those named above. “I ask those who have any doubts or suspicions in their minds to rely on me,” he told the Indian Independence League Conference in Singapore on July 4, 1943. He continued:

“I shall always be loyal to India alone. I will never deceive my motherland. I will live and die for India. .. The British could not bring me to submission by inflicting hardships on me. British statesmen could neither induce me nor deceive me. There is no one who can divert me from the right path.”

Bose was decisive, aggressive and ambitious, and even as a university student, these features of his personality attracted many devoted followers. Dilip Kumar Roy, his companion during his days as a student at Cambridge, referred to him as “strengthinspiring,” and the absolute leader of the Indian student population.

Bose’s militarism, ambition and leadership traits do not necessarily indicate (contrary to popular opinion) that he was a leader in the fascist mold. If they did, one would have to consider all personalities with similar traits—Winston Churchill, for example—as “fascist.” In this regard, it is worth noting that during his many years as head of various councils, committees and offices, and during 15-month tenure as President of the Indian National Congress (February 1938 to May 1939), Bose never acted in an undemocratic manner, nor

did he claim powers or responsibilities to which he was not constitutionally or customarily entitled. Neither did he attempt in any way to foster a cult of his own personality (as, it could be argued, Gandhi did).

However, after he assumed control of the INA in July-August 1943, Bose's leadership style underwent a transformation. First, he allowed a cult of his personality to flourish among the two million or so Indians living in southeast Asia. Prayers were regularly said on his behalf, and his birthday celebrations were—like Gandhi's in India—major festivals. He was invincible, according to one Indian myth from this period, and could not be harmed by bombs or bullets. An image of Bose that stressed his strength of character, military prowess, and willingness to sacrifice for a free India was intentionally promoted in propaganda broadcasts and printed material. With his approval, the title *Netaji* ("Revered Leader") was added to his name in all articles about him appearing in the newspapers of the Indian Independence League; even his staff officers were permitted to address him with this title. By the end of the war, few Indians in south Asia still referred to him by name; he was always respectfully called *Netaji*.

## Authoritarian Rule

Second, in contrast to his statement at the 1938 Haripura session of the Congress party (quoted above)—that leaders would be elected from below—Bose proclaimed, on October 21, 1943, the formation of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind ("Free India"). While retaining his post as Supreme Commander of the Indian National Army, he announced that he was naming himself Head of State, Prime Minister, and

Minister for War and Foreign Affairs. (The most important of these positions—Head of State—he anticipated retaining in a free India.) These appointments involved no democratic process or voting of any kind. Further, the authority he exercised in these posts was dictatorial and often very harsh. He demanded total obedience and loyalty from the Indians in south Asia, and any who opposed him, his army or government faced imprisonment, torture, or even execution.

Additionally, if wealthy Indians did not contribute sufficient funds to Bose's efforts, they risked confiscation of their property. Bose's threats were taken very seriously, and had the desired effect: funds did pour in. His INA troops were obliged to swear an oath of loyalty to both the Provisional Government and to him personally. He ordered the summary execution of all INA deserters, and also prepared (but was never able to implement) law codes for the entire population of India. These laws, which stipulated the death penalty for a range of offences, were to come into force when the INA, together with the Japanese Army, entered India to fight against the British.

With regard to his leadership style during this 1943-1945 period, in fairness to Bose it should be pointed out that the entire world was then engulfed in a horrendous war, and political and military leaders everywhere, on all sides, adapted extraordinarily authoritarian and repressive measures. Some of the measures and policies adapted by the wartime government of the United States, for instance, were as oppressive and as severe as any planned or implemented by Bose.

*A New India*

Bose clearly anticipated that the British would be driven out of India in an armed struggle (under his leadership), and that a social and political revolution would begin the moment the Indian people saw British rule under attack in India itself. This revolution, he believed, would bring an end to the old caste system and traditional social hierarchy, which would be replaced by an egalitarian, casteless and classless society based on socialist models. This process would require very careful guidance, with a firm hand, to prevent anarchy and chaos.

Bose had, in fact, held these beliefs since the early 1930s, as Mrs. Kitty Kurti, a close German friend of Bose, revealed in her anecdotal memoir. At a June 1933 meeting attended by Kurti, Bose explained that:

*“Besides a plan of action which will lead up to the conquest of power, we shall require a programme for the new state when it comes into existence in India. Nothing can be left to chance. The group of men and women who will assume the leadership of the fight with Great Britain will also have to take up the task of controlling, guiding and developing the new state and, through the state, the entire Indian people. If our leaders are not trained for postwar leadership also there is every possibility that after the conquest of power a period of chaos will set in and incidents similar to those for the French Revolution of the 18th century may be repeated in India.... The generals of the wartime period in India will have to carry through the whole programme of postwar reforms in order to justify to their countrymen the hopes and aspirations that they will have to rouse during the fight. The task of these leaders will not be over till a new generation of men and women are educated and trained after the establishment of the new state and this new generation are able to take complete charge of their country’s affairs.”*

This explains what Bose meant in *The Indian Struggle* when he wrote (as quoted above) of the need for a strong, single-party government, “bound together by military discipline” with “dictatorial powers for some years to come, in order to put India on her feet.” Only an very strong government, strict discipline, and dictatorial rule would, according to Bose, prevent the anticipated revolution from falling into chaos and anarchy. That is why the government would not—“in the first years after liberation”—“stand for a democracy in the Mid-Victorian sense of the term.” It would use whatever military force was necessary to maintain law and order, and would not relinquish authority or re-establish more regular forms of government until it felt confident that “the work of postwar social reconstruction” had been completed and “a new generation of men and women in India, fully trained and equipped for the battle of life” had emerged.

Bose clearly anticipated that authoritarian rule would not last beyond the period when social reconstruction was completed, and law and order were established—when India was “on its feet,” as he often wrote. As he frequently stated, Bose aimed for nothing less than the formation of “a new India and a happy India on the basis of the eternal principles of liberty, democracy and socialism.” He rejected Communism (at least as it was practiced in the Soviet Union) principally because of its internationalism, and because he believed that the theoretical ideal found in the writings of Marx could not be applied, without modification, to India. Still, he maintained socialist views throughout his adult life, and, on very many occasions, expressed his hope for an egalitarian (especially classless and casteless) industrialized society in which the state would control the basic means of production.

He was opposed to liberalism, believing that greater emphasis should be placed on social goals than on the needs or desires of individuals. Individual wishes, he reasoned, must be subordinated to the needs of the state, especially during the struggle for independence and the period of reconstruction immediately following liberation. Nonetheless, having himself been imprisoned eleven times and sent into exile three times, he was fully committed to upholding the rights of minority intellectual, religious, cultural and racial groups. He hoped for an “all-round freedom for the Indian people—that is, for social, economic and political freedom,” and would, he said “wage a relentless war against bondage of every kind till the people can become really free.”

It could be argued that he was not as committed to the principle of democracy as he was to socialism and freedom (as he defined it). While he extolled democracy on numerous occasions, at other times his words suggest a belief that other parties would have a place, in a free India, only as long as they were “working towards the same end, in whole or in part,” as his governing party. Political pluralism did not appeal to him at all. He seems to have envisioned a free India that was more authoritarian than democratic. His own actions as head of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind illustrate a lack of regard for the democratic process.

## Mass Mobilization

Bose was, nonetheless, a consistent advocate of total mobilization: the mustering of national resources on a scale normally associated with military-like action. Realizing that manpower was easily India’s greatest resource (and arguably