The Indian National Army and Japan

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Abstract

Overview

This is a reprint of *Jungle Alliance: Japan and the Indian National Army*, which was originally published in 1971 by Donald Moore for Asia/Pacific Press. It has long since been out of print and is unavailable. It covers the beginnings of the Indian National Army, as part of a Japanese military intelligence operation under Major Iwaichi Fujiwara, and moves forward to the arrival of Subhas Chandra Bose and the enlarged INA and Free India Provisional Government under his direction from 1943 until the collapse of Japan and the INA in August 1945.

Specific Aspects

Chapters relating to the origins of the INA in the interaction between Fujiwara and a young Sikh Major, Mohan Singh, are covered here as critical to the birth of the INA. The book also deals with the earlier career of Subhas Chandra Bose, including his stay in Berlin and the Indian Legion there.

How This Book Differs From Others

This is still the only volume dealing with the interaction between the Japanese Army and the Indian National Army that also deals with Japanese sources. No other book in English has replaced this book, which is why a reprint edition is required at this time.

Foreword

It is a quarter of a century ago that Japanese armed forces left Southeast Asia, yet even now our knowledge about the occupation years can be likened to a jigsaw puzzle in which far too many pieces are still missing. Happily, the number of researchers devoting themselves to the study of wartime Southeast Asia is increasing. More than that, many if not most of them are better trained than the handful of scholars who preceded them. Thus, though there are entire countries about which we know as yet lamentably little, others, or parts of others at least, have emerged into ever-clearer perspective. This is particularly true of what might be called "macro-political" studies, which focus on the centres of political and administrative power, if not also on the largest, or dominant, population groups. Far less is known about regional and local developments beyond the capital cities, about smaller ethnic groups and, at least equally important, about racial minorities. It is surely remarkable that no monograph on the Chinese in wartime Southeast Asia has yet appeared, and that in spite of the highly complex relationships between Nanyang Chinese and Japanese.

The more fortunate, then, that we now have before us the first detailed study by a Western scholar of the second largest alien Asian minority in Southeast Asia, the Indians. It most ably supplements and complements K. K. Ghosh's *The Indian National Army: Second Front of the Indian Independence Movement*, published in India in 1969. Indeed, Dr Lebra's major concern is not with the Indian communities in Malaya, Burma and Thailand as such. Rather, it is with a peculiarly fascinating and turbulent chapter in modern Indian history—a history that happened for the greater part to take place in Southeast Asia (some of it of course also in Japan and one agonizing moment even in India proper). And though several prominent Indian residents in the region played a far from negligible part in the events

of the 1940s, which also involved tens of thousands of their local compatriots, the real leadership lay with others. In order of appearance in the unfolding historical drama, there were, first, some of the officers of the British-Indian Army who went over to the Japanese and founded the Indian National Army as the Allied defences in Malaya crumbled; second, Rash Behari Bose, long-time Tokyo resident; and there was, finally, the towering figure of Subhas Chandra Bose, who, as soon as he reached Southeast Asia from self-imposed exile in Berlin, became the undisputed *Netaji*—head not only of the INA, but also of *Azad Hind*, the Provisional Government of Free India.

From rich published and unpublished sources in Japan and India, no less than from personal interviews, the author has distilled a story of absorbing interest. She knows how to hold her readers' attention by shifting from analyses of larger movements, policies and strategies to fascinating close-ups of incidents and major *dramatis personae*, especially those on the Japanese side. To mention the best example, Major (now Lieutenant-General) Fujiwara Iwaichi, the founder of the almost legendary *F Kikan*, up to now a dimly perceived marginal figure, emerges in Dr Lebra's pages as a full-blooded, dedicated—and in the end frustrated—"ugly Japanese" of the purest vintage. With the obvious exception of Dr Ba Maw's highly colourful autobiography, such portraiture is all too rare in the literature of occupied Southeast Asia. Almost equally rare is Lebra's objectivity. She takes both Japanese and Indians seriously, looks at them dispassionately and tries with success, as far as I am able to judge, to view their purposes and actions in the frameworks appropriate to their specific situations and personalities. We are at long last getting away from the stereotypes of evil, or at best clumsy, Japanese unsuccessfully trying to manipulate clever, patriotic, if not heroic, "subjects".

In at least one major respect the story told in these pages is, of course, unique: unlike the countries of Southeast Asia, India played at most a marginal role in Japanese thinking, for it was never envisaged as part of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Few at most were the Japanese enthusiasts who, like Fujiwara, wished to make the cause of Indian independence that of *Dai Nippon*; at no time did they succeed in converting high-level policy makers to their point of view. Nor was the ill-begotten foray into Imphal in 1944 planned as the opening act of a Japanese move into the

subcontinent but as a defensive move to protect Burma against British counter-attacks. Thus the juxtaposition between Japanese and Indian aims was wide, indeed, and Bose's position far weaker than that of leaders representing peoples and lands actually occupied by Japanese forces. Dr Lebra rightly observes the very severe limitations which Tokyo imposed on such ostensible gestures of support as the pseudo-recognition of Bose's Provisional Government. True enough, yet one wonders whether any of the regimes "recognized" by Japan (and her Axis partners) enjoyed a much higher degree of real international stature in the eyes of the Imperial Government.

Be that as it may, the author makes us realize the fantastic personality of Bose, chief of state without a state and commander-in-chief of a token army, and hence a leader with virtually no bargaining power. But for him, Tōjō and his cabinet colleagues might never have done as much as they did to help the cause of Indian independence, albeit indirectly and symbolically rather than substantively. (How important Tōjō rated personalities and how deeply he, in turn, impressed some of the wartime spokesmen of the occupied countries can be gleaned from passages in the present book, as well as from Ba Maw's *Breakthrough in Burma.*) But for the *Netaji*, too, the Indian independence struggle in the *Nampō* might have completely disintegrated amidst debilitating personal and factional feuds and disputes. Had Subhas Chandra Bose not crashed to his untimely death four days after Japan's surrender to the Allies, Indian history might well have taken a somewhat different course. Ironically, the weakest of Japan's "collaborators" may well have been the strongest among her "allies", a man far less likely to have disappeared from centre stage than did, say, Ba Maw and Jose Laurel, who yet had seemed, for a few fleeting moments, to wield more real power than Bose.

Others, with special knowledge of Japanese and Indian history, will no doubt find even greater satisfaction in reading this fascinating book. Perhaps, too, they may find points of detail and interpretation to quarrel with. Whether this was the main reason why Dr Lebra preferred to entrust me with the writing of some introductory lines I cannot know. But let me, a specialist in modern Southeast Asian history, say that I have benefited from her account and that I hope others will emulate her painstaking research and graceful style.

New Haven, Connecticut — HARRY J. BENDA
October 1970

Preface

In the decades intervening between the publication of the first edition of this book in 1971 (*Jungle Alliance: Japan and the Indian National Army*, Singapore: Asia/Pacific Press) and this present edition, the outpouring of volumes on Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army has continued. None of these studies in English focuses on the relationship between the Imperial Japanese Army and the INA and also uses Japanese sources. For this reason this work is being reprinted.

With the exception of the book by Peter Fay (*The Forgotten Army*, 1993), most of these studies of the INA contain no more than a passing mention of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, if that. This women's regiment, part of the Indian National Army, was composed primarily of teenage girls from Malaya and Burma who had never seen India, yet were eager to volunteer in response to Bose's summons, to donate not only their jewellery but also their lives in the struggle to liberate India.

A companion volume to this new edition of the 1971 publication will therefore be published, *Women Against the Raj: The Rani of Jhansi Regiment*. It is designed to address the academic vacuum on the subject.

JOYCE CHAPMAN LEBRA

Singapore
2008

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It goes without saying that responsibility for errors of fact or interpretation is the author's alone.

JOYCE CHAPMAN LEBRA

Boulder, Colorado
1968

Introduction

FOR over two decades following the end of World War II, Japan's goals and tactics in wartime Greater East Asia have remained buried in government and military archives and in the memories of wartime leaders still living. The image, fostered through the proceedings of the International Military Tribunal in Tokyo, of Japan as one of the world's most rapacious militarist powers has long prevailed on both sides of the Pacific. Difficulty of access to private and official archives of the war years has helped perpetuate the darkness which still obfuscates many aspects of the Pacific War. Japanese historians still remain reluctant to scrutinize the concepts, goals, and implementation of Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in Asia.

American scholars have only recently pioneered in re-examining Japan's war aims and have begun the work of revising earlier assumptions. This task has been facilitated by the appearance of the first volumes of the Japanese official history of World War II, edited by the staff of the War History Office of the Defence Agency.

The war, according to some American revisionists, was not simply a Japanese version of the capitalist pattern of imperialism described by Lenin and demonstrated by Western powers. It was more significantly a war for preservation and defence of vital interests threatened by the advance of Western imperialism in Asia. Similarly, the traditional image of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere as the grand design for Japanese empire in Asia can also be questioned. For one thing, the borders of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere were nebulous and elastic. The concept crystallized in the minds of various individuals, some civilian but mostly military, by late 1940. But the forerunners of the Sphere—the East Asia Co-operative Body and the New Order in East Asia—were advanced even earlier, during the Manchurian Incident. For some,

by early 1941, the Greater Sphere, or sphere of influence, would sweep across Asia to embrace India, Australia and New Zealand within its compass. The goal of economic self-sufficiency provided the rationale for political and cultural arrangements. The concept of the Sphere grew as more of Southeast Asia fell under Japanese military occupation.

In actuality, military strategy was never devised to push the boundaries of the Sphere much beyond Burma. Protection of the Burma border and disruption of China-India lines of communication took the Japanese Army in 1944 into Imphal in the state of Manipur, India. Militarily, the campaign was ill conceived; it was a fiasco in execution.

Politically, however, India was included in the vision of the Japanese sphere of influence, even before the outbreak of hostilities in the Pacific. The propaganda goal of "Asia for the Asiatics" served Japan well in Southeast Asia. Japan adopted a policy aim of encouraging anti-British sentiment throughout Southeast Asia and particularly in Burma, Malaya and Thailand. Intelligence missions were sent inside the borders of India. The Imphal campaign of 1944 was designed in part to encourage Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army, and thereby to incite revolution within India. In Japan's military fiasco at Imphal the immediate political goal was also defeated.

From the Indian viewpoint, the struggle throughout Asia was for independence. The roots of Indian nationalism extend back into the nineteenth century under the British Raj. During the early decades of the twentieth century the political mainstream of Indian nationalism followed the Gandhian doctrine of non-violent disobedience. But there was another tradition, a heterodox political vision with equally ancient roots, which turned toward violence. Subhas Chandra Bose became leader of this militant wing of the nationalist movement, splitting with Gandhi and Nehru over the issue of the use of force against the British. Despite the opposition of Gandhi, however, Bose was elected President of the Indian National Congress in 1938 and again in 1939.

Bose was a Bengali revolutionary. Nurtured in a Kshatriya family on reformist doctrines prevalent in Bengal at the turn of the century, he advocated the use of force as the only means to rid the motherland of the British imperial power. Placed under house arrest in 1940, he eluded the authorities, escaping to Afghanistan and then to Nazi

Germany, where he sought aid in his campaign to liberate India from without. With the German defeat at Stalingrad, Bose turned east to Japan for help. Coming to Southeast Asia in the summer of 1943, he assumed leadership of the Indian National Army and Indian Independence League, which had already rallied civilians and Indian POWs to the struggle for independence.

This study is concerned with the interaction between Japan and the Indian independence movement in Southeast Asia. The logic of the alliance was the existence of a common enemy, Britain. A limited co-operation evolved from the confrontation between Japan's pan-Asian push southward and Indian nationalism. There was some initiative on both sides: on the Indian side by Subhas Chandra Bose and his revolutionary predecesssors, Mohan Singh and Pritam Singh, and on the Japanese side by a young major sent by Imperial General Headquarters to Bangkok on an intelligence mission. Major Fujiwara brought India to the attention of IGHQ and helped organize the INA. Fujiwara established the initial sincerity and credibility of Japanese aid for the Indian independence struggle. Captain Mohan Singh, a young Sikh POW from the British-Indian Army, co-operated with Fujiwara in the inception of the INA.

Disagreement and a disjunction in aims also became apparent between the Japanese and Indians. For Japan there were strategic considerations of a total war in which her resources were proving deficient and in which India was a peripheral concern. For the Indian National Army and *Azad Hind* (Free India) Government there was the single goal of independence which took precedence over all other considerations. From these divergent viewpoints arose obstacles to the working out of effective co-operation. Japan was willing to grant the form but not the substance of independence to the *Azad Hind* Government. Japan was ready to assault Imphal together with the INA, but with the INA only as guerrilla or special services units ultimately under Japanese command. The INA co-operated because without Japanese aid there was no real hope for effective military action against Britain. But Japan could not satisfy INA pressure for material and military support. It was an uneasy alliance, but some of the Japanese who activated it were alert to the need to maintain the delicate balance.

The political repercussions of the wartime struggle of the INA are still being felt within India today. British withdrawal in 1947 was in part precipitated by the trial of INA officers for treason and

the popular protest against the court martial of INA patriots. Nor did the story of the INA end with India's independence. Out of the legacy of the struggle of the INA and *Azad Hind* Government an attempt was made to create a new political party dedicated to Bose's ideals, the *Azad Hind Sangh*.

The lessons learned during World War II provided the groundwork for Japan's extraordinary success today (1970) in Southeast Asia. In the words of one former general, Japan has quietly achieved in the "new Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" the goals she sought by other means in World War II.

CHAPTER ONE

Mission to Bangkok

I THE ASSIGNMENT

1 OCTOBER 1941 was a hot, muggy day in Thailand. A young Japanese major stepped from a Douglas Dakota and was momentarily blinded by the rays of the Bangkok sun. He was tense and, in his nervousness, felt certain the eyes of the airport employees were fixed on him—curious about the nature of his mission. His shirt had wilted in the humidity, and he thought briefly of the autumn air of Tokyo. As he sank into the back seat of the Embassy car which drove him to the Thailand Hotel he worried about his lack of experience in international intelligence. Although the hotel was Japanese managed, the major, travelling under the civilian alias Yamashita Hirokazu, was unable to relax—it would be better, he thought, to avoid questions from inquisitive Japanese. At the same time he was lonely and thought of the lieutenant assigned to him who was forced to remain in Taiwan with an attack of acute appendicitis.

In the solitude of his room Yamashita—in reality Major Fujiwara Iwaichi—was awed by the importance of his mission and his own lack of experience for it. Of course, a young major in the 8th Section, Second Bureau, Imperial General Headquarters had no choice. This was his duty and he would do his best. The Imperial Japanese Army assigned important missions to middle-ranking officers and gave them plenty of leeway to use their own initiative in executing their tasks. In this respect the Japanese Army differed from the British or American armies and the army of the Third Reich. And because of this difference Fujiwara was now involved in ideological

warfare in Bangkok, unable to speak any Malay or Hindi and with only a smattering of English remembered from high school.

Fujiwara was not a complete stranger to Bangkok. He had been sent down on a brief secret mission about eight months ago in late March. He was, after all, in propaganda broadcasting affairs in the 8th Section at Headquarters. Even earlier, in December 1940, Fujiwara had been responsible for three Indian escapees from a British prison in Hong Kong who were given safe passage on a Japanese ship bound for Bangkok. Once there, the exiles contacted leaders of the Indian independence movement in Southeast Asia and the Japanese military attaché. The mission had been accomplished so quietly that the names of the three Indians were not even recorded at Headquarters.

Still, Fujiwara's assignment had come as a surprise to him. It was a logical enough policy for Japan to step up intelligence operations in Southeast Asia, as it looked increasingly like war in the Pacific. Japan already had Indochina, and the British-American-Dutch economic blockade had tightened when Japan entered the alliance with Germany and Italy. Doubtless Bangkok was already infested with British, American, Chinese and German intelligence agents. Japan could not afford to fall behind. Further, Southeast Asia was a source of tin, rubber and oil supplies that were vital for Japan. Bangkok was a key listening post for all of Asia.

In the event of war in the Pacific, the Indian, Burmese and Malayan (Malaya is now West Malaysia) independence movements would assume great importance for Japan. Japan could recognize the aspirations for independence in Southeast Asia and weaken Britain at the same time. Headquarters knew of these movements. And Fujiwara had some ideas of his own. Convinced from the beginning that political warfare had to be waged without pushing one's own interests too hard, he felt Japan must show genuine sympathy for the liberation movements. Others in the Second Bureau, however, deprecated Fujiwara's views, and this shook his self-confidence. He had asked for one night to think over the new assignment before accepting.

Fujiwara now reflected on his decision. That afternoon in Tokyo he had walked with his small daughter to the shrine of Yoshida Shōin, the super-patriot who had influenced many loyalist leaders of the Meiji Restoration and then become a martyr for his nation. This afternoon visit gave Fujiwara the courage to undertake his

assignment. Before leaving Tokyo Fujiwara also visited the shrine of the Emperor Meiji.

Courage was no substitute for knowledge, and Fujiwara was dismayed on looking through the library of General Staff Headquarters to find only an Indian travelogue by a Japanese and scattered references to India. Clearly, in the push into Manchuria and China, Headquarters had neglected India and also slighted Southeast Asia. This was the beginning of Fujiwara's sense of mission toward India and the Indian independence movement.

Chief of General Staff Sugiyama on 18 September called in Fujiwara and five commissioned officers assigned to him. General Sugiyama handed Fujiwara a typed directive: "You will assist Colonel Tamura in aiding movements in the Malayan sector and particularly in maintaining liaison with the anti-British Indian Independent [later Independence] League and with Malays and Chinese." As Fujiwara looked up from the typed sheet, General Sugiyama said, "Apart from your official duties, if an Anglo-Japanese war should break out, you will prepare to facilitate military strategy and encourage friendship and co-operation between the Japanese Army and the Malayan people. I want you also to look at the total Indian situation and to consider future Indo-Japanese relations from the standpoint of establishing the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Further, I hope that you will study the skilful organization and leadership of the British-Indian Army which is designed to restrain any anti-British movements among the Indians."[1] As Sugiyama finished, Fujiwara stood in stunned silence for a moment. Quickly collecting himself, he replied, "In order to realize the great concept of a New Asia we will encourage Indian independence and Japanese-Indian co-operation, beginning with operations in the Malayan sector."[2]

II INDIANS IN BANGKOK

Now Fujiwara was thrust into the midst of it. His intelligence operation would spread from Thailand to Malaya and then to Burma. He was to maintain liaison with Chinese, Malays, and especially with the Indian independence movement. Thailand was the crucial foothold in working with these movements. Japanese military strategy

would not succeed in Malaya and Thailand unless Fujiwara did his job well. This was the task of a thirty-three-year-old major, a staff of five commissioned officers, and a Hindi-speaking interpreter.

Next morning Fujiwara took a taxi, past orange-robed priests holding up their begging bowls in the morning rain, to the quarters of the military attaché. Colonel Tamura greeted Fujiwara with an invitation to breakfast, which included a whisky and soda. But Colonel Tamura was serious and went straight to the point. He gave Fujiwara instructions for contacts with three projects: the Indian independence movement, the overseas Chinese merchants, and Malay organizations and sultans. Another project called *Harimao*[3] involved a Japanese contact in Malaya.

Tamura warned Fujiwara of the sensitivity of the Thai Government to intelligence activities of the competing powers. Part of the Thai Government was friendly to Britain, part of it to Japan; the political balance was delicate. Tamura also cautioned Fujiwara to avoid contact with the many Japanese working in Bangkok. Some were training the Thai Army, some were businessmen with the Mitsui Trading Company, some were on political assignments such as arbitrating a Thai-Indochinese boundary dispute. Fujiwara apologized for his lack of knowledge and experience, but Tamura assured him that the important ingredient was enthusiasm. Fujiwara went to work immediately. His staff included a "boy" in the Thailand Hotel who had to visit Fujiwara stealthily at night.

Fujiwara had a memorable first meeting with a leader of the Indian independence movement. He went secretly to the quarters of the military attaché on 12 October at noon. He was as impatient as if going to a midnight tryst with a lover. Fujiwara anticipated a robust revolutionary; he met a young, turbaned Sikh of delicate physique. Pritam Singh greeted Tamura and Fujiwara with the Indian salutation of hands clasped before him. Fujiwara was overcome by the Sikh's idealism, sincerity and enthusiasm for Indian liberation from British rule. Fujiwara offered, "I have come to help you realize your lofty ideal and I look forward to co-operating. I have confidence that Indian independence will be achieved through devotion and friendship." Colonel Tamura interpreted. Fujiwara then inquired after the three Indians who had been sent to Bangkok aboard a Japanese ship the previous year. Pritam Singh's face lit up at this: "Oh, was it you who sent the three men? Then we're already old comrades, aren't we?"[4] He told Fujiwara then of his own escape

from India in 1939, his experience teaching the Sikh religion to Indians in Bangkok, and of the hopes of Indians for independence while Britain was fighting in Europe. It was an appropriate beginning for Fujiwara's mission and for Indo-Japanese co-operation in Southeast Asia.

In the interests of security Fujiwara moved out of the hotel into a modest house near the Bangkok railway station. He next met Pritam Singh in an out-of-the-way place—the house of an Indian cloth merchant over a Japanese pickle factory on a back alley. It was a sweltering evening and the mosquitoes were persistent. Fujiwara half-heartedly quenched his thirst with water. Pritam Singh told Fujiwara that there were two Indian organizations in Bangkok: the Indian Independence League composed mostly of Sikhs, and an Indo-Thai cultural organization centring around a swami and a man named Das. Fujiwara felt a premonition about the apparent antagonism between the two organizations and inquired about the possibility of a reconciliation. He also worried lest the co-operation between himself and Pritam Singh's faction be revealed by someone in the opposing faction.[5]

Fujiwara decided Pritam Singh's faction was the group he must work with most closely. Pritam Singh's organization already had men scattered through South Thailand and north-east Malayan coastal cities, whereas the Swami-Das group was an organization of intellectuals interested primarily in things cultural. The Sikh and his cohorts were already distributing propaganda leaflets among Indian officers and men in the British-Indian Army in the border states of Malaya. According to Pritam Singh, Indian soldiers in the British-Indian Army harboured anti-British feelings. These men were fertile ground for Pritam Singh's propaganda; why not try some Japanese propaganda on them? Fujiwara was excited by Pritam Singh's ideas but also had to avoid giving him any hint of Japan's military plans.[6]

Pritam Singh suggested anti-British broadcasts beamed to India from Tokyo. The audience would be limitless: not only soldiers in the Army but all of India! Pritam Singh already had contact by telegraph with Indians in Shanghai and Tokyo. With a bit of Japanese help the whole movement could be unified. An electrifying idea! Pritam Singh's statements were punctuated by coughing, and Fujiwara saw by the dim light of the single bulb that the Sikh's face was pallid. When Fujiwara asked about his health Pritam Singh

replied that he had respiratory trouble but that he wouldn't die before completing the mission entrusted him by God. The two men parted after promising to meet again. Fujiwara transmitted a report of his meetings through Tamura to Imperial General Headquarters.[7]

Fujiwara's staff members arrived in Bangkok and were given assignments, some to trading firms, some to the military attaché. Fujiwara briefed his men daily, through the night and early morning hours. Fujiwara often worked all night, as his Indian colleagues later complained. He constantly dwelt on the theme that the Japanese should not appear as conquerors, that all Asian peoples should work together in mutual respect and harmony. For Fujiwara this was an article of faith. Japan had little experience or skill in ruling other peoples compared with Britain; caution and sincerity should be the order of the day. Japan would encourage independence movements but with no hint of constraint. Fujiwara and his men would mediate between the Japanese Army and the local inhabitants to avoid cruelties like those perpetrated in China. Pritam Singh had warned Fujiwara of Indian antagonism toward Japanese actions in China.[8]

Fujiwara and Pritam Singh planned another secret meeting. Fujiwara reminisced that it was the eve of the anniversary of the Meiji Restoration and the chrysanthemums would be blooming in Japan. Pritam Singh brought with him a white-bearded, white-robed old Sikh, Amar Singh. He approached Fujiwara softly and stood still as a clay image, hands clasped before him. His flashing eyes met Fujiwara's directly, as he recited a soft incantation from the Sikh holy scriptures. Fujiwara intuitively felt the strength of the venerable Sikh; here was a man who could be trusted. The prayer ended, and the old priest was led to a chair. He began to speak with revolutionary fire of the inhumanity of British rule of India. He had been imprisoned for ten years in the Andaman Islands and in Rangoon. In British prisons his fighting spirit had been incubated. Fujiwara was deeply impressed but also beset by doubts. Amar Singh was obviously a man of emotion rather than reason. How suited would he be to lead a vast independence movement? Perhaps Amar Sihgh and Pritam Singh together could lead. Fujiwara described to the two Sikhs Japan's ideal of mutual existence and prosperity for all Asia. Finally Amar Singh stood and prayed for Divine protection. Fujiwara heard a cock crowing in the distance and realized it was 4 a.m.

III A VISION OF REVOLUTION

Fujiwara and Pritam Singh continued their secret meetings. In mid-October from Tokyo came news of the fall of the Konoe Cabinet and formation of the Tōjō Cabinet. The Hull-Nomura peace negotiations in Washington were deadlocked. Uneasiness spread through Bangkok. Japanese plans for the occupation of Thailand and the capture of Malaya and Singapore were laid, but intelligence reports told of Singapore's defences being strengthened. Fujiwara had to conceal information of Japanese preparations but at the same time give Pritam Singh some inkling of what Fujiwara hoped the Indian group would do when war broke out. It was a delicate position. Headquarters did not anticipate co-operation from the Indian soldiers or Pritam Singh's group; Fujiwara would have to surprise and convince Tokyo. Fujiwara and Pritam Singh concocted their own plan: as soon as war erupted they would dash behind enemy lines to reach Indian soldiers in the British-Indian Army. The propaganda activities of Pritam Singh's Indian Independence League would be expanded in the British-Indian Army and among Indian civilians as well. Fujiwara's staff would protect Indian prisoners and inform them both of Pritam Singh's organization and of Japan's aims. These prisoners would form a revolutionary army to fight for Indian independence. Eventually all Indians in the British Army would be drawn to it. Indians all over Asia would volunteer. Fujiwara's staff would protect Indian lives and property. It was a bold design. Fujiwara and his staff would work and fight for Indian independence side by side with Indians.[9]

Fujiwara's group were also assigned to Chinese merchant groups and to anti-British Malay organizations such as the Malay Youth League. Fujiwara had to arrange co-operation with all these groups in short order. His staff was now a small, close-knit unit of twelve members, who worked well together with a feeling of camaraderie among them. Fujiwara named his group the *F Kikan*[10] or *Fujiwara Kikan*. Fujiwara preferred "F", for it stood also for freedom and friendship.

Fujiwara's operation encompassed several projects besides the India project—the Sumatra project, the Malay Youth League project, the overseas Chinese merchant project, and the *Harimao* project. Fujiwara was to make contact and co-ordinate co-operation with all these groups to facilitate the military offensive in Singapore.

Fujiwara's staff members went under a variety of guises—as businessmen, watchmakers, druggists, hotel boys, mining engineers in mountain areas, and rubber merchants and brokers on plantations. For all the major objective was the same—gathering intelligence. *F Kikan* members also became scouts for Japanese units and engaged in espionage, disrupting communications, collecting provisions and military *matériel.* Malays, Thais, Chinese, and Indians worked under *F Kikan* staff members, multiplying by several times the effectiveness of the operation. The network spread from Bangkok through Thailand and Malaya and south toward Singapore.[11]

IV "TIGER OF MALAYA"

Fujiwara found a ready-made agent in Tani Yutaka, the "Tiger of Malaya". The *Harimao* project revolved around a fanatic young Japanese whom Fujiwara came to respect. Tani had been brought to Malaya from Japan as an infant by his parents in 1911. They opened a barber shop in Kota Bahru and grew prosperous. At the time of the Japanese takeover of Manchuria in 1932 anti-Japanese sentiment spread not only among the Chinese merchant community but among the Malays as well. Chinese merchants seized the chance to organize boycotts and to harass customers of Japanese shops, with police support. Anti-Japanese sentiment ran so high that mobs killed Japanese on sight, including children. One of the victims in November 1932, was the eight-year-old sister of Tani Yutaka. Enraged, Tani, by now twenty-one, took the name "Tiger" and began a rampage of revenge. He organized a group of Malays and Thais who returned violence for violence. The legend of *Harimao,* the gangster chief who spoke Malay and Japanese, spread throughout Malaya.

By November 1941 the name *of Harimao* came to the attention of *F Kikan* members. Kamimoto of the *F Kikan* rescued Tani from a jail in South Thailand. Kamimoto showed Tani some weapons of the Japanese Army, and Tani's eyes betrayed his delight.[12] Kamimoto told Fujiwara about Tani. Fujiwara looked at the picture of the unshaven figure in torn clothes with some dismay. There was no visible difference between the Tiger and the Malay members of his robber gang. But through a few probing questions Kamimoto con-

vinced Fujiwara that Tani was patriotic to the point of fanaticism. The Tiger looked like an ideal operative.

There was a hitch. Fujiwara and *F Kikan* members discovered Tani was constantly being tailed by Japanese-speaking Thai police disguised as Chinese coolies. By day he was immobilized in hiding. But by night he became a fish vendor peddling his bucket of fish. Below the fish Tani hid hand grenades and explosives. Once he was caught by vigilant Thai police. Armed with only a pistol he broke through the border of south Thailand into Malaya by bicycle as far as Kota Bahru and the Jitra line. Tani and his tough followers supplied the *F Kikan* valuable information on local terrain and routes into north Malaya. This intelligence speeded up the whole Malaya operation. Tani's group fanned out through the central mountain range, through jungles and rivers infested with wild animals and poisonous snakes and insects. Malaria caught members of Tani's gang and finally the Tiger himself. Tani continued his work from a stretcher with a fever of 104°F. When his fever abated the Tiger continued to strike, sometimes as an Indian merchant, sometimes as a Chinese banker, sometimes as a Thai official. Fujiwara's first meeting with Tani on the battlefield in January convinced Fujiwara that his earlier assessment of the zealous young patriot had been correct.

One of Tani's last jobs was to destroy a huge dam on the Perak River. The dam was guarded by a British platoon. Before the job was under way a counter-order arrived to save the dam. Tani's party, dressed as Malays, approached the dam from upriver in a local craft. They were to remove the explosive fuses. As they neared the dam it exploded before their eyes. The British platoon had counter-orders too and had beaten Tani to the dam.

At Ipoh the Tiger struck again, this time in the midst of the British-sponsored Malay Volunteer Army. The army of young Malays was acting as railway guards for the British Army. Tani in Malay guise encouraged the volunteers to return home, disrupting the army. It was later reorganized to help the Japanese Army in defence of occupied areas. The Tiger derailed British trains and cut British communication lines.

Neither Tani's zeal nor his fever abated. Arriving at Johore Bahru at the rear approach to Singapore he collapsed. Tani had written his mother telling of his love for Japan and his family. He felt he had been redeemed in both in his work for the *F Kikan* after his earlier gangsterism. Fujiwara brought Tani on his death-bed a letter from

home. Fujiwara praised Tani's work and assured him he would go on to the secret police of the Southern Army. The Tiger had become a legend in the Japanese Army before he died while yet a very young man. A wartime song, "*Harimao*", carried the legend through the Japanese fighting forces. Fujiwara made no attempt to check his tears as he clutched Tani's letter from home.

V BANGKOK WATCH

At the end of November Colonel Tamura told Fujiwara that when war broke out the *F Kikan* would operate under General Terauchi, commander-in-chief of the Southern Army, through Lieutenant-General Yamashita, commander of the 25th Army. Fujiwara and Pritam Singh met several times to devise plans to meet the eventuality. Fujiwara repeated his promises of Japanese help in the struggle for Indian independence from Britain. Fujiwara still had to forbear informing Pritam Singh of Japan's specific plans for an offensive in Burma and Thailand; their discussions remained somewhat abstract. Pritam Singh did agree that the Indian Independence League would advance with the *F Kikan* (aboard Japanese planes), following the Japanese Army into south Thailand and Malaya. There League members would contact Indians in the British-Indian Army. The Japanese Army, through the *F Kikan,* would help the League. Further, the Japanese Army would respect the lives, property, freedom and honour of Indians. Pritam Singh's group would wear the designation "F" for identification by the Japanese Army. This agreement was put into writing and signed on 1 December by Pritam Singh and Colonel Tamura.[13] Copies of the agreement were forwarded to 25th Army Headquarters, Southern Army Headquarters, and Tokyo. Fujiwara was satisfield that all was in readiness. Both the Fujiwara and Pritam Singh groups would wear khaki riding habits rather than regular Japanese Army uniforms. *F Kikan* members would not carry arms.

On 4 December a telegram from Tokyo announced war would begin 8 December. The attitude of the Thai Government was still in doubt. Fujiwara sent messengers to strengthen contacts and co-operation with the Malay Youth League and the sultans of the Malay states. Late on 7 December (6 December in the US) the military

attaché handed the Thai Cabinet a notice that a Japanese Army of occupation would pass through Thailand; immediate approval of the Government was requested. Tamura thought Premier Phibun Songgram's approval a ninety per cent certainty, but there was the danger that news of Japan's plans might reach Britain and the United States. If the Cabinet refused, the Japanese Army would probably be in Bangkok by noon 8 December anyway. If this happened, Japanese residents in Bangkok would be in danger. The atmosphere in Colonel Tamura's office was tense all through the day. Fujiwara kept glancing nervously at his watch.

About 9 a.m. the morning of 7 December a member of the Thai Cabinet had unexpectedly rushed into the room and said to Colonel Tamura without preliminaries: "Premier Phibun Songgram says the Japanese Army has inflicted an outrageous humiliation on the Thai Foreign Ministry and is advancing on the border of Thailand and Indochina. He's indignant and disappeared last night without reporting his whereabouts to anyone. Here is his letter."[14] The Thai cabinet minister abruptly left the room without waiting for any response.

According to the letter, on 5 December a section chief of the Thai Foreign Ministry had been sent to the border. Caught by an officer of the crack Konoe Division, he was beaten as a spy and released the next day without being given a chance to explain his mission. This senseless act had infuriated Premier Phibun Songgram and the rest of the Cabinet. Fujiwara was apprehensive that such stupidity might antagonize the people of Thailand and destroy his own work. Colonel Tamura lost no time in sending a report of the incident through channels to Tokyo, meanwhile apologizing to the Thai Government. Fujiwara asked Japanese Ambassador Tsubokami to try to find Premier Phibun Songgram before the deadline of the Japanese ultimatum expired. Meanwhile a telegram from Tokyo Headquarters demanded punishment of those responsible for the incident and authorized an apology and guarantee against such incidents in the future. The Thai Cabinet secretly told Ambassador Tsubokami that in the absence of the Premier it could not reply to the ultimatum. Arrangements were accordingly made for all Japanese residents to gather in the Japanese primary school. The situation looked bad for them.

Fujiwara could no longer postpone reporting to Pritam Singh. He sent two members of the *Kikan* to ask Pritam Singh to leave

for south Thailand on 9 December because fighting was about to begin.

Colonel Tamura was faced with a dilemma: should Japan count Thailand an enemy or ally? Japanese reconnaissance planes were already overhead looking for a signal from the Embassy. Tamura rushed men to the race track with orders to display the "unclear" signal. The men were immediately surrounded by vigilant Thai police, but the planes had already seen the signal and headed east. Simultaneously a news broadcast announced the successful attack on Pearl Harbour, the Imperial Edict declaring war, and the arrival of the Konoe Division on the outskirts of Bangkok. Premier Phibun Songgram unexpectedly cleared the air with a radio announcement of co-operation between Thailand and Japan. The Japanese Army was already dashing across south Thailand toward Malaya, securing airports en route.

Pritam Singh and Amar Singh met the commander of the 15th Army, Lieutenant-General lida Shōjirō, who promised help to all Indian patriots in Thailand. Fujiwara, Pritam Singh and part of their staffs emplaned on 10 December for Singora airport in south Thailand. Aboard the plane Fujiwara was moved when Pritam Singh tried to present the Japanese pilot with a monetary token of thanks, only to have the pilot return it to Pritam Singh for use in the fight for Indian freedom. When the plane arrived over the Singora airfield, overturned and burning fighter planes on the ground bore fiery witness to a recent British attack. The veteran pilot brought the plane down on a muddy runway, despite airport signals warning of another British attack.

Fujiwara immediately reported to 25th Army Headquarters. He learned that the main force of the 5th Division had landed on the coast of Singora and was advancing with lightning rapidity in the face of faltering opposition. Other units of the 5th Division had landed at Pattani and were also advancing steadily. Part of the 18th Division had landed at Kota Bahru. All three landings had surprised the British. While Fujiwara was being briefed on the military situation a report came in that the two British battleships, the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse,* had been sunk attempting to foil the landing at Kota Bahru. Shouts of "*Banzai*!" greeted this report to the group in 25th Army Headquarters.

Fujiwara was ordered to send a liaison unit with the League group into every military operation at the front. He was ordered also to