THE INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY: A FORCE FOR NATIONALISM?

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Last but not least, this thesis is dedicated to you Leonard, my son. I hope you will enjoy reading it when you grow up.
**Glossary of Indian and military terms**

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<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Havildar</td>
<td>An Indian NCO, equivalent in rank to a sergeant.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Izzat</td>
<td>Honour, prestige, reputation or standing</td>
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<td>Jemadar</td>
<td>An Indian company officer, immediately junior to a subedar, and corresponding to a lieutenant.</td>
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<td>Naik</td>
<td>An Indian NCO, corresponding in rank to a Corporal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regiment</td>
<td>A body of soldiers, composed of one or more infantry battalions or several cavalry squadrons, usually led by a Colonel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sepoy</td>
<td>An Indian soldier employed under European, especially British discipline; an Indian infantry private. Derived from Perisan and Urdu sipahi, ‘Soldier’ or ‘horseman’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subedar</td>
<td>The senior Indian officer of an infantry company.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subedar-Major</td>
<td>The senior Indian officer of an infantry battalion.</td>
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Abstract:

This thesis aimed to delve past the nationalist myth of the Indian National Army (INA) and the Indian Independence League (IIL). Few histories examine why the British Indian Army soldiers joined the INA and how internment and the stresses of combat influenced their decision to defect. To ignore the many reasons why individuals joined the INA and the IIL whitewashes history and ignores the nuances of a complex historical subject of study. Any attempt to evaluate the INA as a nationalist organisation necessitates an examination of its relationship with the diaspora community as they provided much of its funding and manpower. A social history of the INA and the IIL which eschews the grand themes of nationalism and self-sacrifice is needed to give a more accurate historical account of the INA and the IIL and this thesis hopes to go some way in filling the gap in this respect.
Introduction

The Indian National Army (INA) was born of defeat, intrigue, nationalism and ambition. This thesis will explore several aspects of the history of the INA and evaluate its contribution to Indian Nationalism. The Indian National Army was a military organisation conceptualised, organised and equipped by the Japanese with the advent of the fall of Malaya and Singapore in 1942. It was an organisation which had several aims. It was meant to support and flesh out Japanese claims of setting up a Greater Asia co-prosperity sphere. The INA was also established to encourage the growth of armed Indian nationalism. Lastly, the INA was conceived to undermine the British Indian Army, that cornerstone of British Imperial control in the Far East. The INA was staffed by no fewer than 40,000 Indian soldiers. It was led initially by Mohan Singh and then by Subhas Chandra Bose. The INA’s military contribution was minor. The army fought one major engagement at the Battle of Imphal-Kohima on the Burma-India frontier but was defeated piecemeal. Its contribution to the cause of Indian Nationalism, was, however, by no means minute. Following the surrender of thousands of INA personnel, trials were held at the Red Fort to decide the fate of these men. The trials placed the British in nothing less than an imperial quandary. At the same time, the trials also gave birth to a myth of the INA which has persisted and influenced scholarship in the field ever since.

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3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
This thesis will present a number of inter-related arguments to demonstrate that the INA contributed significantly to Indian nationalism. Nationalism will be defined in this essay as “an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential ‘nation’.”

Firstly, the formation of the INA not only re-energised the flagging nationalist movement following the failure of the Quit India movement in 1942 but also politicised and weakened British control of the Raj, by weakening its hold on the institutions by which British rule was upheld. The British Indian Army showed signs of discontent, the Indian Navy mutinied in 1946 and the staffs of the Indian civil service were demoralised. The INA trials essentially forced the British to establish a timeline by which to establish Indian independence. Between having to deal with the mass of nationalist feeling triggered as a result of the INA trials and withdrawing from India, the British logically chose to do the latter.

This thesis will also explore the extent to which the INA was a sovereign body which sought vigorously to maintain its independence from the Japanese. The INA leaders were forced by circumstance to work with the Japanese and accept the latter as their patrons. While they cherished their liberty, they were, however, forced to balance this sentiment against the need for continued Japanese materiel support to fight the British. It was a delicate balancing act and one in which they were relatively successful. Lastly, the impact of the INA on the Indian Diaspora will also be examined as part of an attempt to better gauge the impact of the INA on the Indian nationalist movement. Such an analysis is particularly vital considering that it was the overseas Indian community in Singapore and Malaya who were the first Indians to be

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governed by the INA. An examination of the INA with the overseas Indian community would yield much relevant data and assist in the evaluation of the INA and its contribution to Indian nationalism.

This thesis will also examine the social history of the INA, in order to develop a more nuanced picture of the organisation. The motivations of the INA rank and file were far from homogenous. Not all yearned to sacrifice themselves for the sake of nationalist endeavour. Some were coerced while others joined out of opportunism. The motivations of the mass of INA personnel and the leadership will thus be examined, so that a more balanced picture of the INA can be drawn. The motivations of the main leaders in joining the INA will also be examined. Not all INA leaders joined willingly. A study of what drove INA personnel is crucial in building a more accurate depiction of the organisation.

This paper will be divided into three chapters. The introduction will examine the literature in the field and place the paper in the context of existing scholarship. Chapter 1 will give a brief history of the INA and set the context for the discussion in the rest of paper. This chapter will examine the INA’s origins, mode of recruitment, aims as an organisation, key characters, combat history and eventual demise. Both the first and second INA will be included in this analysis. The first INA was formed by Captain Mohan Singh of the INA in collaboration with Major Iwaichi Fujiwara of the Imperial Japanese Army. As a result of the disagreements between the INA and the Imperial Japanese Army, Subhas Chandra Bose assumed leadership of the INA. His tenure marked a sea change in the INA as an organisation. It clarified its agenda, set goals to achieve that agenda, and organised the means by which it could attain

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Indian independence. The second INA assumed a stature of authority which made it hard for the British to ignore. The fighting ability of the INA was, however, shattered at Imphal-Kohima in 1944, and Bose died in a plane crash, leaving a legacy which is still controversial.

Chapter 2 of the paper will, thus, explore the aims and motivations of the rank and file personnel who signed up for the INA. The aim is to examine whether the mass of the INA consisted of nationalist cadres or mere collaborators biding their time to survive the war. Ultimately, while the INA and its leadership were nationalist, the rank and file were not completely so. There were numerous reports of abuse in the prison camps. In several instances, troops were beaten, deprived of basic necessities and even shot if they refused to join the INA. In order to determine the extent to which the INA was a nationalist organisation, it is necessary to examine to what extent the majority of the members believed in its cause. This chapter does just that. To examine the full impact of the INA on Indian nationalism and its nature as an organisation, it is also necessary to explore the nature of its governance of the overseas Indian community in Singapore, Malaya and Burma.

Chapter 3 of this essay will argue that the INA was indeed an organisation which was nationalist not only in form, but also in function. First, it was not a pawn of the Japanese and did retain a measure of autonomy. Both Mohan Singh and Subhas Chandra Bose went to great lengths to assert the INA’s independence from the Japanese. Both leaders clarified their war aims and political objectives and mapped out the means by which they could be achieved. Where their nationalist interests came into conflict with that of the Japanese, they

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8 Field Marshal Viscount Wavell to Lord Pethick Lawrence, 1 October 1945, Nicholas Mansergh (Ed-In-Chief), Constitutional Relations Between Britain and India: The Transfer of Power, 1942-1947 (London: 1976), VI, pp.305-306.
9 Ibid.
never backed down. Such recalcitrance effectively led to the dissolution of the first INA. Second, the INA was not only nationalist in ideology but also in function. It fought the British under the most appalling conditions at Imphal-Kohima, broadcast repeated messages to encourage an uprising within India, and laid out an ideological basis for establishing a government in India. In essence, the INA set up an effective infrastructure for the construction of an independent Indian state. On the other hand, the INA was not staffed completely by personnel who believed in its political objectives. Many members of the rank and file were coerced or joined up to avoid punishment. They also did so out of their wish to follow their officers. While the topmost echelons of the leadership were without a doubt, nationalist, the lower echelons of the INA were not completely so. Third, the relationship between the INA and the overseas Indian community was complex. This paper will examine this relationship as the INA’s treatment of the Indian community and the latter’s response to the INA provides some insightful points regarding the nature of the INA and the Indian Independence League (IIL) as an organisation.

Chapter 3 of this essay will therefore examine the nature of the INA’s governance in the occupied territories and its impact on the overseas Indian community. The reception, dealings with and relationship between the overseas Indian community and the INA will be examined to develop a richer historical understanding of the INA as a nationalist organisation. This chapter will argue that the INA was essentially harsh in its treatment of the overseas Indian community and sought to utilise them for monetary support of the organisation. The establishment of the IIL organised the overseas Indian community into a source of funding and manpower to support the INA. Essentially, Bose extorted funds from the wealthy overseas Indian community and used many of its young men as recruits. Ultimately, coercion was the primary means by which Bose dealt with the Indian community in Malaya and
Singapore. This chapter examines how the overseas Indian community perceived the INA and received it. The second INA was in many ways, a government and an army rolled into one. It would be erroneous to focus merely on its role as a military organisation. Bose’s own political philosophy will also be factored into the analysis of the INA’s relationship with the Indian community in Singapore and Malaya.
Chapter I: Setting the context

Methodology/Annotated Bibliography

This thesis examines whether the Indian National Army was the nationalist body which it claimed to be. To accomplish this assessment, a host of sources, both secondary and primary, will be utilised.

The primary sources have been divided into four categories. They are collections of documents, memoirs, one diary by the second last Viceroy of British India, and newspaper reports. Collections of documents will be analyzed to assess the nature, role, impact and constitution of the Indian National Army.

Two particularly important sources are the massive seven volume *Transfer of Power* and five volume collection of documents, the *Indian National Army: A documentary study*. Nicholas Mansergh’s *Transfer of Power* was a compilation of documents which aimed to frame the achievement of Indian independence as a planned and peaceful British handover of power to the Indians. It is a treasure trove of correspondence and documents authored by the highest echelons of the British administration in India. Everything from intelligence reports to debates by senior officials on how to deal with the Indian National Army were included. The sources in the compilation, while comprehensive, have a British slant on the events which transpired to end the Raj. The reader has, as a result, to view the sources critically with an eye to the fact that the British may not have transferred power. They may quite simply have been forced out by circumstances prevailing at the time. In this light, T.R. Sareen’s five volume study of documents relating to the Indian National Army is extremely useful. Sareen, an Indian historian specializing in the INA, compiled as many documents as he could which related to the INA and arranged them in a chronological order. The documents included in the
collection are both Indian and British in origin and therefore provides a more nuanced view of the INA when studied. It is, however, best to utilise both in tandem to establish as broad and comprehensive a picture of events as possible. Transcripts of the trial proceedings at the Red Fort will be used to glean information on the motivations of INA personnel, their recruitment methods and the aims of the organization; all are important factors in determining if it was a nationalist organization. An example is Shri Moti Ram’s *Two Historic trials in the Red Fort* which, through the court proceedings and the cross examination of various key witnesses, gives insightful revelations regarding the motivations of the personnel who joined the INA. Oral history recordings at the National Archives of Singapore will be utilized to examine the relationship between the IIL and the Indian diaspora.

Several high ranking personnel of the INA, including the original Japanese liaison officer Major Iwaichi Fujiwara, were prolific writers who wrote memoirs detailing their experiences from the INA’s inception to the disbandment of the organization, and the trials of its personnel. Their writings are a useful source of information in establishing the nature of the organization and what it aimed to do. Naturally, there is a tendency in the memoirs to present the INA in a glorified and heroic light. This bias does not detract from the fact that important information can be gleaned from a careful reading of the memoirs. The diary of Lord Wavell, though harboring strong prejudice on certain issues, is useful in gaining some candid insights regarding the INA. Newspapers like the *New York Times* covered the INA trials and its aftermath in great detail. The reports published in the press provide a good feel of the atmosphere and events of the time and assist in the effort to develop a more comprehensive picture of the INA as an organization and its impact on India. Where possible, newspapers from Japanese occupied Malaya and Singapore were also be utilised.
The secondary sources this paper will be using will be divided into three main categories. They are general histories of the INA, general histories of the Raj and the Indian Army, and books examining various aspects of Indian nationalism. The general histories on the INA aid in understanding aspects of the INA such as its organizational structure, leaders and battles fought. Of all the general histories, K.K. Ghosh’s *The Indian National Army: Second front of the Indian independence movement* is by far the most useful and comprehensive introduction to the INA. Most importantly, much of his data was based on primary source material such as interviews of numerous key personnel in the INA who were still alive at the time. Joyce Lebra’s more recent two books provide a more up to date history on the INA but fail to match the analytical clarity of Ghosh’s work. Her books sought more to narrate the INA’s relationship with Japan but did not actively question the nature of the Indo-Japanese alliance and perpetuated the myth that the INA was an all nationalist force.

To understand the INA, it is first necessary to gain some comprehension of both the British Raj and the British Indian Army. Barbra Daly Metcalf’s *Concise history of India* contains a succinct and well written section on the course and impact of British rule in India. Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalaj’s *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* provides a refreshing look at the history of British rule in India with a focus on economics. It is also necessary, in order to understand the demands placed on India, to analyse the Raj in the context of the British Empire. The multi-volume *Oxford History of the British Empire* is very useful in this respect as it analyses the growth and demise of the British Empire through thematically structured chapters. It also contains a comprehensive bibliography to assist in further reference on the subject. There are numerous works dealing with a history of the British Indian Army. The traditional text in the field is Philip Mason’s *A Matter of Honour*.

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This text was authoritative as it was written by a former administrator of the Raj and provided a most comprehensive survey of the Indian Army from its origins under the East India Company to the point of its handover to an independent India. More recent scholarship has, however, produced some excellent work on the Indian Army. An important example is David E. Omissi’s *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940*. His work is a succinct thematic study of aspects of the British Indian Army and is an extremely useful reference. It assists in sieving out the sources of discontent arising from service conditions that may have led Indian Army soldiers to defect to the INA in the first place.

It is also vital to relate the INA to the larger events of Indian nationalism during and immediately before World War II. Biographies such as Judith Brown’s books on Nehru and Gandhi are useful in mapping the world view of key Indian nationalist leaders in that tumultuous era. Monographs such as Bidyut Chakrabati’s *Subhas Chandra Bose and Middle class radicalism: A study in Indian nationalism 1928-1940* aid in analysing the origins of the Indian Nationalist movement and its impact on Indians, whilst assisting the author in relating the movement at large to the foundation of the INA. An important outline of Indian nationalism available is Jim Masselos’s *Indian Nationalism: A history*. Several miscellaneous journal articles and a documentary are also useful in helping the author construct a clearer image of the INA and the British Indian army.

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**Literature review**

The literature on the INA can be divided into two distinct groups. The first group consisted of histories of the INA which were written by the protagonists themselves.\(^{12}\) The second group consisted of scholars who attempted to write a history of the INA which was less emotive and who had the benefit of greater evidence to assist their writing and research.\(^{13}\) While the second group of scholars contributed much to the field, there were on the other hand, several remaining problems. First, none of the scholars provided an in-depth analysis of the motivation of the majority of the INA personnel in joining the organisation. Second, there was little attention paid to the impact of the INA on the overseas Indian community. Last, much of the secondary literature regarding the INA either reinforced or accepted the nationalistic myth of the INA.

The first group of works on the INA were written in the immediate post war period. Individuals who were involved with or encountered the INA in some way sought to write their history of the organisation. Not surprisingly, much of the work done judged the INA’s contributions in a manner which related little to any standard of historical objectivity. The primary point of contention in the literature of the period was determining whether the INA was truly a nationalist organisation. One school of thought argued that the INA was not a nationalist organisation but one made up merely of turncoats who chose to betray their oath to the Raj. This view was championed by several British scholars who were part of the establishment of the Raj.


Sir Francis Tuker, a general in the British Indian Army argued in his book *While memory serves* that the INA consisted merely of soldiers who betrayed their country in order to preserve their lives and welfare under Japanese rule. He painted the INA in an exceedingly bad light. His prejudice was evident when he called Subhas Bose a “plump Bengali of overweening ambition”.

Philip Mason, who was Colonial Secretary for Defence, wrote a comprehensive history of the Indian Army titled *A Matter of honour*. While the book did not focus merely on the exploits of the INA, it did, however, dedicate a substantial section to explaining the existence and nature of the organisation. Again, the INA and its personnel were portrayed as turncoats and traitors who betrayed the trust placed in them by their colonial masters. What these books failed to do was explain the deeper reasons behind the inception of the INA, explore the roots behind the defection of so many soldiers, and evaluate the nature of the organisation’s nationalist intentions. The works mentioned above interpreted the foundation of the INA from the standpoint of the British Raj. Not surprisingly, the INA was judged harshly as a result.

Sir Hugh Toye attempted in *The Springing Tiger* to paint a more nuanced and less biased portrait of the INA. He focused on Subhas Chandra Bose and his efforts to reform the INA into a dynamic organisation and narrates a brief history of the INA in the process. While he did explain the perceived reasons for many personnel in joining the INA, he argued that the INA’s contribution to the achievement of Indian independence was minimal because of the

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15 Ibid., p.72.
17 Hugh Toye, *The springing tiger* (London: Cassell,1959)
fact that the British had decided to leave India in 1942, and did eventually do so. His argument that the INA had minimal impact on the British decision to leave India ignores the pressure which mass sentiment surrounding the trials placed on the British administration and its perceived ability to hold on to power. Little mention was made, also, of the reasons for rank and file participation in the cause of the INA. While Philip Mason did argue in the foreword that most INA personnel were misled into joining the INA, how can we reconcile that with the simultaneous, enthusiastic response of forty-thousand Indian soldiers towards the Japanese declaration that they would support Indian independence? It was in Philip Mason’s interests to promote the idea that the Indian soldiers who joined the INA were misled. If the majority did join out of true conviction and belief in the INA cause, this reflected poorly on the state of British rule. This was all the more so considering Indian soldiers held a position of status and privilege in the society of the Raj - Indian soldiers of the Raj were meant to be true to their salt. Philip Mason’s main intention in writing A matter of honour was, after all, to extol the deeds of the British Indian Army and the individual sepoy. The INA simply did not fit within his paternalistic, colonial interpretation of what the Indian Army was.

On the other end of the spectrum, INA personnel also wrote in support of the INA and its actions. Their works were, however, coloured by the same lack of objectivity which resulted from being party to events they were writing about. Mohan Singh, the leader of the first INA, gave an outline of the organisation and the reasons and circumstances leading to its inception in his Soldier’s contribution to India’s independence. He wrote it as part of a biography of his life and needless to say, the viewpoint is heavily coloured by his perception of events at

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18 Ibid., pp.168-184.
19 Ibid.
20 Singh, Soldier’s contribution to India’s independence
the time. A clear example of this was seen when he gave a rousing description of the trials at Red Fort while evaluating their significance in obviously nationalist tones.\(^{21}\) He also categorically denied any personnel were coerced to join the INA.\(^{22}\) This was in stark contrast to numerous personnel who claimed they were abused into joining the INA, during the trials. Another perception of the matter was offered by Major General Mohamad Zaman Kiani in his *India’s freedom struggle and the great INA*. Kiani argued that most INA personnel who signed up were motivated by the nationalist cause. Those who chose not to did so out of fear of fighting and disillusionment which resulted from the defeat in the Singapore-Malaya campaign as opposed to any feeling of loyalty to the British.\(^{23}\) This is in stark contrast to Philip Mason’s claim that Indian personnel who opted not to join the INA did so out of an abiding sense of loyalty to the Raj. Obviously, there remains the unresolved question of how motivated the rank and file of the INA were to their cause.

Colonel Gurbakash Singh Dhillon also wrote memoirs which recounted his experiences of serving with the INA. This work, was also coloured by strong nationalist undertones.\(^{24}\) These memoirs essentially failed to deal comprehensively with the nature of the organisation as a nationalist force. The INA, to them, was a patriotic organisation through and through, little mention was made of its impact on the Raj and the motivations of the individual sepoys who fought and died for the INA. To the upper echelons of the INA, they were all heroes. An interesting perspective was offered by Major Iwaichi Fujiwara of the Japanese Imperial Army. In his *F.Kikan: Japanese army intelligence operations in Southeast Asia in WWII*, he examined the reasons for the Japanese formation of the INA, its relationship with the Indian

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\(^{21}\) Ibid., pp.270-302.  
\(^{22}\) Ibid., pp.189-205.  
\(^{24}\) See: Dhillon, *From my bones*, pp.93-236.
leaders of the organization and Tokyo, and the difficulties faced in maintaining a close working relationship between the INA and his superiors in Tokyo. While his work did provide an intimate look at Japanese-INA relations, the context for that relationship and the difficulties in making it work, it did not examine the INA and its contributions to Indian nationalism in great detail. For example, to Fujiwara, all INA personnel were nationalist and their effort was to be applauded.\textsuperscript{25} This perception was perhaps reflective of the level of interaction he had with key INA personnel and what he believed was the nature of the organisation. His viewpoint, like many others dealing with the INA in this first phase, may also have been coloured by his close relationship with Mohan Singh. Any attempt to frame the INA in anything less than nationalist terms would have been offensive to Singh, and mutual ties of friendship may have led him to gloss over what appeared to be unpleasant minutiae. For instance, there was no mention of abuse of the INA personnel in prison camps.

The second body of literature on the INA emerged in the late 1960s-1970s. This new body of scholarship sought to redress the polarized state of historiography on the INA, explore the nature of the organization, and place the INA in a proper historical context. These attempts at writing a non-emotive history of the INA were easier to do considering the authors were not party to the events of World War II. The first scholar who attempted to do an all-encompassing, analytical history of the INA was K K Ghosh. His \textit{The Indian National Army: Second front of the Indian independence movement} saw the INA as having contributed greatly to the Indian independence movement.\textsuperscript{26} He reviewed many of the key participants in the INA saga, both British and Indian, and wrote his work based on primary sources. What

\textsuperscript{25} Fujiwara Iwaichi, \textit{F.Kikan: Japanese army intelligence operations in Southeast Asia in WWII} (Hong Kong: Heinemann Asia, 1983)

\textsuperscript{26} Ghosh, \textit{The Indian National Army: Second front of the Indian independence movement}
emerged was a comprehensive analysis of the INA’s organisation, fighting record and political history. It was an impeccable work of scholarship in all regards but two. It failed to contextualise the INA’s contribution in terms of the broader nationalist movement, or delve in greater depth into the motivations of the rank and file of the INA personnel. For example, while he examined cases of abuse in the Gurkha camps and how coercion may have been a factor in INA recruitment, he failed to explore how bad it was.27 This was all the more surprising considering that he interviewed numerous key personnel and assessed much of the primary documents regarding the INA. There was also little mention of the impact of the INA on the Indian community overseas. While the Indian Independence League (IIL) was mentioned, the INA’s treatment of overseas Indian’s other than as a source of wealth was barely noted.

Gerard Corr’s War of Springing Tigers attempted to write a narrative history of the INA. He did include an interesting analysis of the reasons motivating the individual INA personnel, but this was marred by a lack of referencing which reduced his analysis to mere speculation.28 What he did was rehash old facts into a new narrative form. There was little attempt to deal with controversial issues such as the methods of recruitment or the impact of the INA on Indian nationalism. Peter Fay Ward’s substantive work The Forgotten Army: India’s armed struggle for independence could be seen in a similar light. While it was interesting and well researched, it failed to offer a new critical viewpoint on the INA and the historical issues involved. There was no critical evaluation as to whether the INA was a truly nationalist organisation in the first place, the motivations of the mass of the members, the nature of its relationship with the Japanese, and the reasons for its popularity in the immediate post war

27 Ibid., pp.91-92.
period. He accepted the INA myth wholesale. T.R Sareen’s *Japan and the Indian National Army* did give a short analysis of the reasons for INA personnel joining and mentioned the dilemma which many senior officers faced. Like the other works mentioned, it did not explore the matter in greater depth. Rather, his analysis focused on the INA-Japanese dynamics and the British response to the INA.

Joyce Lebra’s two books on the Indian National Army attempted to redress the analytical balance regarding the INA. Her first book on the INA and its relationship with the Japanese went far in redressing the need for updated scholarship on INA-Japanese relations. It did not, however, examine the nature of the INA as a nationalist organisation. In her *Jungle alliance: Japan and the Indian National Army*, Lebra hinted at the discord present amongst the top leadership. The extent of this discord was, however, not elaborated upon. There was also no treatment on the motivations of the rank and file personnel in the INA. Evidence of discord amongst the top leadership was treated by the wayside and never dealt with in depth. Thus, while high ranking personnel such as Shah Nawaz Khan’s and M.S. Dhillon’s reluctance to join the INA were mentioned, no further analysis was conducted. Bare mention was also made of the individual sepoys besides a note stating that 10 000 of them refused to join the INA. Her work also appeared to accept, uncritically, the INA myth.

Joyce Lebra’s book on the Rani of Jhansi regiment painted an intimate portrait of the elite female unit of the INA and was a well-researched attempt to construct a social history of the

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30 See: Lebra, *Jungle Alliance*; Joyce Lebra, *Japanese trained armies in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian studies, 2010); Joyce Lebra, *Women against the Raj*
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., p.124.
INA. While the analysis did sieve out several interesting points as to why female personnel joined the INA, the analysis was not applicable to the majority of the INA personnel. This was due to the fact that the Rhani of Jhansi regiment was a detachment made up of devoted, handpicked INA women who swore to fight the British. They were also never part of the British Indian Army and were, thus, in no way representative of the mass of fighting men who constituted the INA. Like Peter Fay Ward’s book, *The Rhani of Jhansi regiment* is a story of selfless sacrifice on the part of the INA personnel. Although mention is made of troops deserting and being shot, these points are glossed over.

In conclusion, there is a need to delve in depth into the social history of the INA soldiers. Existing scholarship on the INA has focused mainly on the officers and key players of the organisation. While their motivations can be deciphered, the motivation of the mass of soldiers remains relatively unknown. This ambiguity regarding the rank and file personnel of the INA is further aggravated by the fact that secondary works on the matter appear to contradict each other. Little mention has also been made of the impact which the INA made on the overseas Indian community. This lacunae is surprising as the overseas Indian community in Southeast Asia were a key component in Bose’s plans to liberate India. There is also an on-going debate of the INA’s role in Indian independence. Again, the works mentioned largely accept the INAs role in aiding Indian independence as being significant or rubbish it as having had no part to play. A study analysing British policy objectives regarding an eventual withdrawal from India and its evolution in the *longee duree*, while analysing the INA’s role in influencing British policy, would assist greatly in contextualising the INA’s historical contribution. This last aspect, will however, have to be covered elsewhere.

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34 Lebra, Joyce *Women against the Raj*
35 Ibid., pp.61-68.
36 Ibid., pp.44-45.
The Indian national army was born of deceit, defeat, intrigue and opportunism. Its rise could be attributed to several factors: Indian dissatisfaction with British rule in India and its administration of the army, the Japanese search for allies and a way to ferment unrest in British India, a confluence of strong characters determined to shape the course of history, and British defeat in the Malayan campaign. This chapter will set the context for the rest of the thesis by giving a brief outline of the history of the Indian National Army (INA) from inception to downfall.

(I) The British Indian Army

To understand the INA and the factors which led to its rise, it is first necessary to gain a brief understanding of the British Indian Army; namely, its role and function in the Empire, how it was administered, the manner in which it was staffed, its military culture and the impact nationalism had on it. The British Indian Army was formed when the East India Company setup a trading station in India. It was realised that armed force was needed to secure and protect the Company’s territories and assets. Eventually, three armies were raised to protect the three presidencies of Bengal, Madras and Bombay. These units were staffed, for the most part, with Indian personnel. White soldiers normally staffed the senior positions in the army and held commissions as senior and junior officers. Relations between Indian soldiers and their white employers were largely cordial until the outbreak of the Indian Uprising of 1857. The inclusion of a comprehensive account of the mutiny is beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice it to say that the primary trigger of the mutiny was sepoy anger at having to use

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musket cartridges greased with cow and pig fat. They thus began a mutiny in Northern India. It was only the arrival of massive British reinforcements which allowed the Company to quell the mutiny and exact a terrible retribution on those involved. The mutiny was however a watershed in British-Indian relations, and defined the way in which the British treated India afterwards.

The reformed army of the Raj was deliberately weakened and reorganised following the 1857 uprising. The British sought to refashion an instrument of coercion which would allow unfettered control of India but would not be used against the British themselves. Numerous measures were taken to this end. The British administration sought to make an example of disloyal mutineers. Prisoners were blown apart by cannons, shot or exiled from India. The formations which had revolted against British rule were disbanded and Indian artillery units, which were used to such great effect against the British, were dissolved. After the mutiny, it was hereafter decided that India was always to have a ratio of two Indian soldiers to one British solider whilst all heavy artillery units were to be manned by British personnel. Never again were British guns to be turned on soldiers loyal to England. British officers were to staff all senior positions of leadership while Indian personnel were relegated to junior leadership positions. The highest rank an Indian soldier could reach, and only after 30 years service, was Havildar/Subedar-Major. Even then, he was inferior in rank to the lowest ranking British officer, the Subaltern who was often just 18 years in age. Indian troops were also brigaded with British troops in operations. Two Indian battalions were to accompany one

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British battalion in any deployment. The ratio of European to Indian troops was also never to fall below one is to four.

How then was the British-Indian Army staffed and what was the nature of its recruitment? The Indian Army was essentially a mercenary army. It was staffed by soldiers who joined up in the hope of enjoying a stable (by Indian standards) and substantial income, generous allowances of food, free lodgings and some adventure. The individual sepoy was for the most part recruited from the peasantry and, as a result, often illiterate. In return for the service benefits they received, Indian Army soldiers were obliged to swear an oath of loyalty to the Raj. To break such an oath was anathema to an individual’s izzat, or sense of honour. Indian army formations were quartered on cantonments away from civilian lines and soldiers were prevented from mingling with civilians. The average soldier’s existence thus centred on life within the regiment he was posted to. Good food, exercise, plenty of sport and drills occupied the better part of a soldier’s daily routine. A strong military culture which promoted regimental pride, loyalty to one’s officers and the Raj was, through such means, inculcated within the British-Indian army. As a result of its quartering and strong military culture, the British-Indian Army was fenced off from politics and was essentially, a reliable tool of the administration. It was a sword of the Raj.

43 Philip Mason, A matter of honour, pp.313-325.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
The British-Indian Army had three functions within the British Imperial system. Firstly, the Indian Army’s primary task was to police India. It was, in this capacity, used to quell disturbances which the Indian Police were not able to handle. A brutal example of one such instance was Amritsar in 1919.49 The army’s deployment for much of the 19th century reflected this preoccupation with internal security. Small units were dispersed throughout the Empire to show the flag and respond to any local disturbances.50

The Indian Army’s secondary role was to defend India from any armed external aggression. For the better part of the 19th and 20th century, this threat was identified to be the expanding Russian Empire.51 Indian military planners agonised over the possibility of hordes of Russians storming into India through the remote passes of the North-West frontier. A far more pressing threat, however, were the marauding tribes which resided along the North-West frontier and in Afghanistan. British-Indian soldiers fought a long, savage and continuous conflict over the duration of one hundred years to contain the tribal lashkars and protect India from their incursions.52 It was an ongoing war where no quarter was given or expected.

The Indian Army’s final role and function in the Empire was to act as an Imperial reserve which could be deployed to wherever the Raj deemed necessary. Indian troops were thus

49 Mason, A matter of honour, pp.313-325.
51 Mason, A matter of honour, p.335.
utilised to maintain and protect British interests in territories adjacent to India and beyond. Indian army units fought in the Opium Wars, garrisoned Singapore and Malayan, and protected Malta during the Napoleonic wars. In addition, they served in Africa, Europe and the Middle East in World War I, with the addition of Southeast Asia in World War II. Arguably, the British-Indian Army’s role as an Imperial reserve placed the greatest strain on the economy of the Raj. In this context, the numbers speak for themselves. Indian soldiers contributed no fewer than 1.2 million men in World War I. In World War II, India deployed more than 2.35 million men across the world, including the Malaya Campaign. Considering that much of its imperial responsibilities lay either on the frontier or in the desert, the British-Indian Army was, at the onset of World War II, primarily trained for desert warfare. This lack of jungle training proved devastating during the Malayan campaign as the Imperial Japanese Army tore through the poorly prepared Indian units.

The growth of nationalism in India did affect the British Indian Army despite its insulation from society. Recruits exposed to nationalism were bound to question the manner in which the British exercised power in the Raj. Little tangible evidence has survived to shed light on what the individual sepoy thought about the matter, but it is safe to assume that some recruits must have been aware of growing nationalist sentiment in their villages and homes. Nationalism in India also led to the failed British project to Indianise the army of the Raj. Indianisation began in 1921 as a British response to the demand of Indian nationalists to increase the number of native commissioned officers in the Indian army. There was little sincerity in the move to Indianise the army. Initial British plans laid the framework for the

54 Ibid., pp. 248-266.
56 For a comprehensive account of the campaign see: Brian Farrell, The defence and fall of Singapore 1940-1942 (Stroud: Tempus, 2005).
57 Mason, A matter of honour, p.455.
gradual Indianisation of the entire Indian Army over a period of 42 years (which meant the Indian army would only be Indianised by 1960!)\textsuperscript{58} The effort to Indianise the British Indian Army only took off after 1942 when, faced with the threat of imminent Japanese invasion, the Raj commissioned Indian officers on a massive scale. In 1941, the ratio of British to Indian officers in the Indian Army was 12:1. By 1945, it was 4.2:1.\textsuperscript{59} Many Indian officers were, by the onset of the war, deeply offended at the manner in which Indianisation was conducted, and there was much ill feeling against the Raj. The British-Indian Army had to evolve effectively to face the new nationalist challenges, but before it could do so World War II broke out. In 1942, the shattering defeat of the commonwealth forces in the Malayan campaign led to the formation of the INA.

\textbf{(II) The Indian National Army (INA)}

The INA was conceived of by the Japanese to fulfil several functions in the war effort against the Allies. INA units were formed to demoralise and weaken the British-Indian Army. This was not surprising considering that the British military presence in Asia was largely maintained by British Indian troops. Indian soldiers garrisoned India, Ceylon, Singapore, Malaya and Hong Kong and formed a substantial part of the reinforcements dispatched to Malaya to fight the Japanese. When the Commonwealth forces surrendered in 1942 following their defeat in the Malayan campaign, no fewer than 55 000 Indian troops were taken

\textsuperscript{58}Ibid.

Such was the extent of India’s commitment to the war effort in Asia during World War II.

The Japanese hoped that the presence of Indians fighting for the cause of Indian nationalism would have the effect of subverting the loyalty of the British Indian forces. They were not disappointed. Indian units which made up the burgeoning INA went over repeatedly to Allied lines during the Malayan campaign and persuaded groups of Indian soldiers to defect to the Japanese. It is interesting to note, however, that the INA propaganda detachments targeted British-Indian units which did not have any English officers present. This was not surprising as white officers were a beacon of leadership. Their presence would have dissuaded most Indian soldiers from defecting. The nascent INA leadership was aware of this fact. When Mohan Singh and Major Fujiwara came up with a standard operating procedure during the Malayan campaign for INA agents, it included orders to target Indian groups without British officers. British-Indian soldiers remained, by mercenary standards, admirably loyal— even when Indian troops faced defeat and their formations were in disarray.

The official purpose of the INA was to aid the Indians in liberating India from the British. Indian troops led by Indian officers were tasked with preparing for the eventual invasion of India via Burma. The Japanese high command and the Indian overseas nationalist movement hoped that the formation of such a force would inspire rebellion at home and encourage Indians worldwide to join the nationalist call to arms. It was a movement that was intended

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64 Fujiwara, F.Kikan: Japanese army intelligence operations in Southeast Asia in WWII, pp.110-112.
to grow from strength to strength as the war dragged on. The IIL was the political overlord of
the INA and was headed by Rash Behari Bose. Its task was to direct the INA and the overseas
Indian community, who were resident in Japanese occupied territories, to victory. The IIL
was to mobilise the masses politically and harness civilian support for the INA. As stated in
Major Fujjiwara’s memoirs:

Japan’s policy towards Indians in Asia should be executed in such a way as to support
the Indian movement, respecting their autonomy … . The political policy should be
aimed at uniting the several millions of Indians in Asia with the IIL movement, and the
military policy, based upon the political policy should be designed to create a strong
INA composed of Indian POWs and volunteers recruited from all over Asia. The
combined strength of the IIL and the INA should be redirected to India to generate a
massive nationalist movement in India.65

The official Japanese policy was, however, a front for utilisation of the INA as a propaganda
tool by which to advertise Japan’s legitimacy and strength as an anti-colonial power. The
INA was valuable to the Japanese as it allowed them to weaken the British-Indian Army. It
also offered the Japanese the opportunity to create disaffection in the Raj with the intention of
weakening British rule there.66 Formation and support of an Indian nationalist government
which possessed an army was meant to excite the sentiment of Indians living in India, thereby
undermining British rule. The Japanese ceded, for instance, the Andaman and Nicobar
Islands to the Free India Provisional government (FIPG) led by Subhas Chandra Bose in
1943.67 Situating an Indian-run government on the very doorstep of the Raj was extremely
provocative to say the least. The INA was also conceived of as a force which would assist the

65 Ibid.
66 Lebra, Jungle alliance, pp.65-68.
67 Ghosh, The Indian National Army, p.163.
Japanese in intelligence gathering as well.\(^{68}\) In addition to the propaganda functions it served above, INA forces were intended to infiltrate Indian lines in Burma to gain information which might be useful to the Japanese armed forces. This intention was clearly reflected in the organisation of both the first and second INA which included guerrilla regiments as part of their battle order.\(^{69}\)

How then, was the INA formed? The INA was formed as a result of the efforts of three men: Major Iwaichi Fujiwara of the Imperial Japanese Army, Captain Mohan Singh of the British Indian Army and Pritam Singh of the IIL. Major Fujiwara had been tasked by the Japanese Imperial high command with the mission of gathering intelligence in Southeast Asia prior to the Japanese invasion of Malaya. If and when war broke out, Fujiwara was to assist in the building of Indian – Japanese ties. He went one step further. Together with Pritam Singh, Fujiwara conceived of plans to form an Indian nationalist army from Indian prisoners of war taken during the Malayan campaign. To this end, they actively searched for Indian troops. The first body of men they encountered were those led by Mohan Singh. The latter’s unit was routed at Jitra and following the defeat, had contacted the Japanese with the intention of joining them to raise a force to fight the British. Following a meeting with Major Fujiwara, Singh began to conceptualise plans for the establishment of an INA.\(^{70}\) Mohan Singh’s enthusiasm for the Indian nationalist cause helped greatly in the formation of the INA. Following several weeks of negotiations, Mohan Singh agreed to join Fujiwara and assumed leadership of the burgeoning INA on New Year’s Eve 1941.\(^{71}\) All that was left to do was

\(^{68}\) Lebra, *Jungle alliance*, pp.60-67.
\(^{69}\) Singh, *Soldier’s contribution to India’s independence*, p.137.
\(^{70}\) Ibid.
\(^{71}\) Ibid., p.34.
define the INA’s relationship relative to the broader overseas Indian nationalist movement at large and the Japanese Imperial government.

Two conferences demonstrated the disparity in intentions between the Indian nationalists and the Imperial Japanese government. These were the Bangkok and Tokyo conferences of 1942. The Tokyo conference was held in March 1942 and sought to unite the Indian overseas nationalist movement. It was held at the suggestion of Rash Behari Bose. Bose was himself a prominent Indian nationalist leader who lived in exile in Japan. The conference decided that the Indian Independence League would be the representative body of all Indians living in East Asia. A council of action was also formed to head the IIL. This council was meant to reduce friction between the leading members of the IIL and formed a steering committee which directed the organisation. Promises were made by the Japanese that any invasion of India would be undertaken by the INA. Japanese forces were only to assist in such an invasion.

The Bangkok conference of 15 June 1942 was essentially organised by Indian nationalists recognised the parameters of a working relationship with the Japanese government. Thirty-nine resolutions were tabled for Japanese consent. These included terms which stated the IIL was to be declared the political arm of the Indian nationalist movement, while the INA was to be the military wing. The Council of Action of the IIL was to be headed by Rash Behari Bose while Mohan Singh headed the INA. The Japanese never categorically approved any of the

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73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid., pp.70-81.
resolutions. They merely agreed to extend their cooperation to the best of their abilities. The gulf which existed between Japanese intentions regarding the INA and Indian expectations of what the organisation was to be led to misunderstandings and disagreements which provoked the dissolution of the first INA.

The first INA was organised to deal with the task of liberating India from British rule. One division of 17,000 men was raised to fight in guerrilla warfare. These men were divided into three brigades. Special sections of men were also setup to conduct propaganda work, provide medical services, gather intelligence and conduct sabotage. An officer’s training school was also setup. Somewhat ironically, the troops were equipped with captured British arms and vehicles taken as spoils from the Malaya Campaign.

The decision was made to dissolve the INA not long after it was first organised. Several reasons could be offered for the dissolution of the first INA. First, the Japanese wanted to use those Indian prisoners who did not join the INA as manual labour in military projects throughout South-East Asia. Mohan Singh objected to this, which caused much friction with Iwakuro Kikan, the Japanese liaison agency. In addition, the Japanese military confiscated all Indian property in Burma rather than place it under the control of the IIL. Thirdly, there were personal disagreements between Mohan Singh and Rash Behari Bose. Mohan Singh

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76 Ibid., pp.43-78.
77 Ibid.
78 Singh, *Soldier’s contribution to India’s independence*, p.137.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
84 Singh, *Soldier’s contribution to India’s independence*, pp.198-212.
86 Singh, *Soldier’s contribution to India’s independence*, p.240.
tried to force the INA leadership into gaining concessions from the Japanese. He resigned when they could not. Rash Behari Bose, trying to steer a middle ground between the Japanese refusal to fully cooperate and growing Indian demands, ordered the arrest of Mohan Singh. Upon his arrest, INA units followed standing orders issued by the latter in the event of such an occurrence and disbanded. The first INA was dissolved on the 20 December 1942.86

(III) The second INA

The Second INA was officially setup in July 1943 under the direction of the charismatic nationalist leader Subhas Chandra Bose.87 Rash Behari Bose, with the tacit support of Colonel Iwakuro, struggled to prevent the INA from disintegrating by persuading officers and men to stay on. They did succeed to an extent, but the INA had lost much credibility in the eyes of many Indian personnel.88 The memoirs of Gurbakash Singh Dhillon, Fujiwara, Mohan Singh and Mohammad Zaman Kiani mention little about why the INA was reconstituted. It is not hard, however, to understand the reasons for the Japanese decision to reinstitute the INA. Never before in the history of the Raj had an anti-British army staffed and operated by Indians been formed for the purpose of liberating India. There was also the fact that the Japanese had promoted and publicised the INA to such an extent that it was well-nigh impossible to demobilise it with impunity. To do so would have severely damaged the credibility of Japan’s purported claim to be the liberator of Asians living under the yoke of colonial rule. There was also little utility in disbanding the INA. In doing so, the Japanese

86 Ibid., p.207.
87 Kiani, India’s freedom struggle, pp.75-76.
would have had to disarm and intern some 40,000 Indians who would not have contributed in any further way to the Japanese war effort.

Although it might be argued that the INA was a mere auxiliary force of the Imperial Japanese Army, there is, however, the fact that it had its uses. It could be utilised as a reserve pool of manpower and/or deployed as a police force in occupied territories, thereby freeing up Japanese troops for deployment to the frontline or essential tasks. Indian prisoners of war were, for instance, deployed to the Solomon Islands and Guadalcanal as anti-aircraft gunners.\(^89\) Indian personnel were also deployed in Burma and assigned menial tasks such as road building and transport of supplies.\(^90\) Needless to say, it was also good propaganda to maintain so many Indian soldiers in an anti-British formation. The effectiveness of the latter could be seen in the alarm and consternation with which the British high command regarded and dealt with the INA in 1942-1944.\(^91\) Before the task of liberating India could begin, Bose faced the formidable challenge of reorganising and reforming the INA into a force capable of facing British arms.

Bose wanted to maximise the fighting capability of the INA. He saw in it a force capable of fighting the British capably and ferociously.\(^92\) The two main prerequisites were, first, a need to reorganise the force to bring out its fighting potential and second, the provision of Japanese materiel support. The task of reorganising the INA was made all the more urgent as morale

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\(^89\) Kiani, *India’s freedom struggle*, p.72.
\(^90\) Singh, *Soldier’s contribution to India’s independence*, pp.272-281.
\(^91\) For a feel of the urgency and panic with which the British viewed the INA, it is suggested that the reader take a look at the file L/WS/1/ 1576-1578 in the India Office records. These files hold all Indian Army correspondence with reference the INA. Most of the documents dating from 1942-1943 would be useful in this regard.
amongst the personnel had sunk following Mohan Singh’s dismissal, arrest and subsequent orders for the organisation to be disbanded. The INA was organised into four fighting regiments. The 1st INA Regiment composed of three battalions supported by light armour in the form of infantry fighting vehicles, field artillery and mortars. Its task was to engage the British in open warfare.

The 2nd, 3rd and 4th INA regiments were designated as guerrilla regiments and assigned the dual task of spreading discontent amongst the civilian population and harassing British formations on the battlefield. A special service group was also formed. Personnel from this unit were handed the dangerous and unenviable task of infiltrating all along enemy lines to “create confusion, disrupt communication and subvert British-Indian military personnel.” Troops from the special service group were to be deployed all along the frontline in small detachments at the onset of battle. An intelligence group was also established. This group’s assigned tasks were identical to that of the special service group, with the exception that they were not required to infiltrate enemy lines. A reinforcement group was also setup. Members of this group were charged with receiving Indian soldiers captured in battle, re-educating and convincing them on the justness and veracity of the INA cause, and recruiting them into the organisation. Due to a shortage of materials, and perhaps to confuse the enemy in order to allow INA personnel to get closer, or infiltrate enemy lines to perform their designated tasks, it was decreed that INA personnel would utilise their old British army khaki drill uniforms with INA patches sewn on for identification. In an attempt to increase support for the INA, even more radical measures were taken.

93 Singh, Soldier’s contribution to India’s independence, pp.290-327.
94 Ibid.
95 Kiani, India’s freedom struggle, p.73.
96 Ibid.
In addition to reorganising the INA, Bose also raised a regiment of purely female soldiers. These were called the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, named after the Indian heroine who stalwartly resisted British forces during the uprising of 1857. The regiment was first established with the opening of its regimental camp at Singapore on 21st October 1943. The regiment consisted of no fewer than 500 girls whose task was to train for warfare when the regiment was deployed to the front. Training was gruelling and thorough with the girls being taught to handle a wide variety of weapons; everything from heavy Lee-Enfield rifles to 3-inch mortars. A nursing detachment was also formed to care for INA personnel wounded in battle. Despite its small size, the Rani of Jhansi Regiment was well equipped with the tools of war, while its personnel were endowed with a firm belief in the cause of Indian independence and willing to fight for it.

There remains the question as to why the Rani of Jhansi Regiment was formed, despite acute shortages of food and supplies, and received stalwart support from the INA leadership right up to the disbandment of the Regiment. Several reasons can account for this puzzle. First, the act was a signal for the need and possibility of positive change in India, where women played as active a role in politics as the men. Bose was seen as an effective and decisive leader willing to bring radical change where change was needed. This very much reinforced his

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97 Lebra, *Women against the Raj*, p.78.
98 Ibid., p.79.
99 Ibid.
101 See: Lebra, *Women against the Raj*, pp.72-74. All the oral history recordings held at the National Archive, Singapore and which concern the INA mention the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. It is a testament to the impact which the establishment of the Regiment had on the Indians living at the time.
radical image in India where he challenged not only the Raj, but Gandhi as well.102 The power of such an image was, at the time, all the more potent considering that Congress leaders were incarcerated as a result of the failure of the ‘Quit India Campaign’ of 1942. Bose was, thus, offering an alternative vision of effective Indian nationalist leadership.

Second, the Rani of Jhansi Regiment served not only to generate excitement and interest in the INA but also assisted in mobilising support from a previously quiescent section of the Indian population- women. This was no doubt due to the manner by which orthodox perceptions of gender were shattered by the formation of a women’s regiment. Where men previously dominated the domain of warfare, here, in stark contrast, stood a regiment full of well trained and well-armed women who wielded rifles, bayonets, mortars and grenades.

The third reason which could account for the formation of the regiment was that it was a wholly unprecedented event of immense symbolic value. Bose’s naming of the all-female unit after the legendary Rani of Jhansi had the effect of immediately associating the struggle of the INA with that of the uprising of 1857. Naturally, the propaganda value of such a unit was immense. Bose knew this and clearly intended to use the unit for the purpose; they were deployed to Burma but kept out of harms way.103 Revolutionary policies aside, Bose needed a territory to govern in order to prove the legitimacy of the Provisional Government of free India and the cause it stood for.

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Bose knew that a government without a territory to administer could have no credibility. It had neither negotiating power nor prestige in the eyes of the international community. To correct this dearth of territory, Bose asked the Japanese government to transfer control of the only Indian territories under Japanese occupation to the Azad Hind government. These territories were the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. While they were tiny plots of land, Bose, astute politician that he was, understood the symbolic power of placing his seat of government there. There was the possibility—as he well knew and anticipated—of whipping popular support for the Provisional Government of Azad Hind (FIPG). Two explanations could be offered for this assertion. First, by setting up his government there, he would shock the Raj and force the Indian population to notice the presence of his government. There was also the second effect of lending credence to his claim that he was on the verge of liberating India. He was, quite literally, on the door step of India.

Bose also setup an internationally recognised government which was organised on a rational administrative basis. The provisional government of Free India was setup on the 21 October 1943. There were two effects to this declaration. The first was a systematic rationalisation of government which was a great improvement over the dual partnership between the IIL and the INA. By wielding the two component parts together, Bose effectively restructured the government so that the various organs of states possessed clearly delineated responsibilities. There was also the added benefit, through strict separation of the military and civilian organs of government, of preventing any clash between the civilian and military bodies of state. Governmental efficiency was thus improved. Bose also avoided the formation of a military

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104 Dhillon, *From my bones*, p.205.
dictatorship of the kind which threatened to take form under the first INA when Mohan Singh clashed with the IIL.

A newly established government also allowed the international community to recognise Bose’s nationalist movement. All the Axis and Axis related governments proceeded to recognise the FIPG following its formation. The movement led by Bose now had a modicum of legitimacy in the eyes of international law. It was no longer a group of bandits fighting for independence but a full-fledged alternative Indian government in possession of a state from which to assert its claims. The combined effect of the formation of the FIPG was that it made Bose’s movement a credible, viable, sovereign and alternative government which Indians residing in India would have the courage and confidence to support. The cornerstone of the FIPG’s plan was, after all, to ride the crest of mass popular unrest upon entry to India to overthrow the Raj. Through his efforts, Bose organised what he saw as the nucleus of a mass armed movement which would eventually liberate India from the British. All that was left now was for it to enter India to destroy the Raj.

The Japanese were, initially, unwilling to deploy the INA in combat.\textsuperscript{105} This unwillingness stemmed from several reasons. The first reason was cultural. INA personnel were seen as cowards who surrendered rather than die in combat. To make matters worse, they were also perceived as turncoats. According to the Japanese military code of conduct or \textit{Bushido}, such behaviour was anathema. Bose, however, persuaded the Japanese to do otherwise and

\textsuperscript{105} Kiani, \textit{India’s freedom struggle}, p.111.
demanded for the INA to be sent into frontline combat with the Indian army.  

He hoped the INA would prove its worth by being thrown into the crucible of fire and erase any perceived doubts which the Japanese military leadership held of its combat capabilities - The battle of Imphal-Kohima did demonstrate the INA’s ability to fight, but was a catastrophe.

The battle of Imphal-Kohima was a bloody shambles. The battle was fought because the Japanese wanted to invade India before the British build-up of forces for a counter attack was complete. Japanese plans were to invade Assam after defeating the British forces in India. The Japanese Command led by Lieutenant General Mutaguchi was so confident of inflicting a rapid and decisive defeat of the British that soldiers were ordered to carry minimal quantities of food, ammunition and heavy weaponry, to allow for a more rapid advance. Each Japanese soldier, for instance, carried only 21 days’ worth of food and ammunition while Japanese howitzers were each allocated fewer than 100 rounds for the campaign. There was some logic to this apparently overconfident Japanese assessment of the enemy. The Indian Army had, after all, been repeatedly defeated before the Imphal campaign by lightly armed Japanese troops who then proceeded to make lightning quick advances. It was under such circumstances that the INA was thrown into the maelstrom to prove its worth in battle.

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107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 Slim, *Defeat into victory*, pp.34-126.
Despite appalling lack of food, ammunition and medical supplies, the INA gave a good account of itself as a military organisation. The INA contributed two divisions to the campaign. While the Japanese command was initially reluctant to employ them at the frontline, the INA formations were eventually given combat roles. While some units surrendered without much of a fight, others fought ferociously.\textsuperscript{111} For instance, the Nehru Division of the INA was broken holding up the British advance at the Irrawaddy, surrendering only when the odds became impossible.\textsuperscript{112} On the whole, retreat became an inevitable because of the Japanese defeat and a critical shortage of essential supplies. Without supplies, no army could sustain a fight. What more in the hostile jungle terrain of Burma? Graham Dunlop’s comprehensive study of the importance of logistics in the Allied victory in Burma elucidates this point clearly; armies simply wasted away in the jungles of Burma if they were not adequately supplied.\textsuperscript{113} The defeat at Imphal-Kohima marked the end of the INA as a fighting force.

Following the defeat, INA forces retreated into Malaya to rest and regroup. There was slim chance of the INA entering, much less liberating India following this catastrophic defeat. Bose issued a series of orders and speeches to raise the morale of the war weary troops but it was clear the end was near.\textsuperscript{114} For the rest of the war, the INA acted as an auxiliary force which was deployed in Singapore and Malaya. Even then, only the 3rd INA division escaped

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{111}] Kiani, \textit{India's freedom struggle}, pp.114-115.
\item[\textsuperscript{112}] Dhillon, \textit{From my bones}, pp.271-298.
\item[\textsuperscript{113}] For an account of the appalling state the INA soldiers were in as a result of the shortage of supplies see: Kiani, \textit{India’s freedom struggle}, pp.123-124.; Graham Dunlop, \textit{Military economics, culture and logistics in the Burma campaign} (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009)
\end{itemize}
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destruction. The INA in Southeast Asia eventually surrendered to the British on 18 August 1945.\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{115} T.R. Sareen, The Indian National Army: A documentary study Volume 4, p.207.
Chapter 2: Were the INA personnel truly nationalist?

This chapter will examine if the INA personnel were nationalist. To explore if the INA rank and file were nationalist, it is first necessary to examine the motives of why they joined the INA. On a personal level, INA personnel joined for a bevy of reasons. Some joined because their officers did so. Others joined because they found living conditions in the prison camps too difficult to bear. Several joined because they saw it as a means to return to the British side when the opportunity presented itself. Yet others joined because they were sincerely nationalist. The roots of the INA may, however, lay in deeper institutional problems that were present in the British Indian Army. Perhaps the best indication of the mindsets of the rank and file soldiers could be seen in the response of those soldiers in the crucible of battle. These factors deserve to be investigated in turn.

(I) Duress in the Prison camps.

The soldiers who joined the INA were influenced by several factors. There was the outcome of the campaign, the trauma they had suffered at the hands of the Imperial Japanese Army, the humiliation and helplessness of being surrendered to a foe by superiors whom they respected and last but not least, the trauma of life as prisoners of war. Life in the prison camps was for many, the main cause for which they decided to defect to the Japanese.

Living conditions in the prison camps were abysmal. The soldiers of the Indian Army who were taken prisoner were sent to six camps; Nee Soon Camp, Tyresall Camp, Bidadari Camp,
Kranji Camp and Seletar Camp.\textsuperscript{116} The camp quarters were all overcrowded and simply could not accommodate the large numbers of prisoners of war located in them. Nee Soon Camp, for instance, held 23,000 personnel when the camp lines were built to house only 2,000 to 7,000 personnel.\textsuperscript{117} Bidadari camp was also too small. Put together, the numbers indicate that the prison camps were overloaded with five times the number of personnel they were designed to accommodate. Overcrowding led in turn to bigger problems. Sanitation began to deteriorate as the latrines were overloaded with waste. This dissatisfactory state of affairs deteriorated further under the heat of the tropical weather. The waste attracted flies and other pests and the stench was horrendous. More soldiers also began to fall ill as a result from diseases such as dysentery and cholera. Water was also in short supply. In Nee Soon Camp, the inmates resorted to damming the drains in order to collect sufficient rainwater for drinking.\textsuperscript{118} Needless to say, the incessant attacks by mosquitoes added to the misery and in some cases the casualty lists, as men began to be afflicted with malaria. The prisoners, alas, were forced to endure other privations as well.

Malnutrition was a major problem in the immediate period following the fall of Singapore to the Japanese. British ration stocks ran out quickly or were controlled by the Japanese. As the Japanese refused to release the stocks of rations or allocated them to their own troops, Indian Army soldiers began to suffer from the effects of malnutrition. Diseases such as scurvy and Beriberi which resulted from sustained consumption of a nutritionally poor diet began to afflict the soldiers.\textsuperscript{119} For troops used to a spicy and rich Indian diet, there can be little doubt that the sudden deprivation of foods as basic as milk damaged the health and morale of Indian Army soldiers considerably. An army, after all, fights on its stomach. To make matters worse,

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{116} Khan, My memories of INA and its Netaji. Accessed online at http://www.subhaschandrabose.org/ina/snk08.html
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{117} Kiani, India’s Freedom Struggle, p. 45., Dhillon, From my bones, p. 100., Khan, My memories of INA and its Netaji. Accessed online at http://www.subhaschandrabose.org/ina/snk08.html
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{118} Ibid, p. 46.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., p. 46.; Dhillon, From my bones, p. 101.
\end{flushright}
there was little cure for the ailments suffered by the Indian Army soldiers in the prison camps.

There was a chronic shortage of medical supplies which critically affected the health of the sick and wounded soldiers. The Imperial Japanese Army requisitioned most of the medical supplies for its own use while others were taken by the British doctors to treat their own personnel. There were insufficient drugs to treat the ailments suffered by the soldiers. Quinine, for instance, was for instance in short supply for treating malaria. There were also no drugs to treat cholera and dysentery. It did not help the medical practitioners that, in poor living conditions, diseases spread rapidly in tropical climates. Those afflicted also suffered under the conditions of heat, filth and humidity. The Indian soldiers were also forced to endure other privations, not least of which was brutal treatment meted out by Japanese soldiers.

The Indian soldiers were treated harshly by their Japanese captors. The Japanese did not hesitate to maltreat their prisoners. Indian soldiers were beaten for the most trivial of reasons, deprived of water or tied up as punishment for various minor infringements of camp rules. This was even in cases where Indian army troops were supposed to have been protected by the IIL. Mohamad Kiani’s memoirs stated as much when he narrated a ‘humorous’ episode where Japanese soldiers tried to beat up an Indian officer for disobedience but failed to do so because of the latter’s large physical build in comparison to the shorter Japanese soldiers. Kiani’s classification of the act as being humourous and the lack of narration of other instances of Japanese brutality may have had to do with the fact that the Japanese were INA

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120 Khan, My memories of INA and its Netaji . Accessed online at http://www.subhaschandrabose.org/ina/snk08.html
121 Kiani, India’s freedom struggle, p.46.
123 Kiani, India’s freedom struggle, p.46.
allies after all. He, in turn, worked for the INA and criticising the Japanese for brutality would have made the INA appear like stooges to criminals.

Indian soldiers were also, reportedly, in the first INA, refused medical supplies if they did not join. Philip Mason, in a spirited exchange with Asaf Ali who was a member of the Viceroy’s council, in a debate in 1945, stated that INA soldiers who sought medical attention were told “No medicines for you unless you join the INA.” Indian Army soldiers were also told to dig latrines and were beaten in prison camps. Despite the hostile weather, lack of food and medical supplies, poor living conditions and the threat of disease, the soldiers had to endure the task of conducting heavy fatigues. The Indian soldiers interned at Nee Soon camp were, for example, dispatched to bury bodies and clear rubble. Occasionally, soldiers were humiliated by being made to carry sacks of earth at the double. To humiliate the soldiers further, the sacks were sometimes filled with dung. For high caste Indian soldiers, this was an unbearable insult to their religious sensibilities. Mason may have been exaggerating his case in order to nullify popular sentiment towards the INA in the heated days of the trial at the Red Fort, but it is hard to doubt the veracity of these claims considering that prisoners in numerous Japanese camps endured similar, if not worse treatment.

In the worst cases, Indian soldiers were threatened with death or actually murdered if they chose not to join the INA. In one instance, a Japanese officer threatened to execute 24 Indian prisoners for refusing to be incorporated into the INA following the end of the Bangkok resolutions. Only the rapid intervention of Shah Nawaz Khan prevented them from being sent

125 Ibid.
126 Dhillon, From my bones, pp.37-38, 100.; Kiani, India’s freedom struggle, p.46.
to their deaths. The most famous case of INA-inflicted brutality was that of Havildar Abdul Rashid who in three cases abused personnel who refused to join the INA. In the first case, a Havildar clerk Taj Muhammad Khan was beaten twice after living under the guise of a civilian following the fall of Singapore, and refusing to admit to the charge that he was an INA deserter when he was rounded up. Khan was beaten twice over two days while being hung from a tree. Only when he could no longer take the punishment did he admit to the charge presented to him. Even then, he added the caveat that “I have never been a member of the INA but I will now do whatever you tell me to do…” Shah Jamadar Mohamad Nawas, Lieutenant Abdul Qadir and Havildar Ham Rikh were all beaten for refusing to join the INA as well.

There is the argument that the acts were an isolated case of INA brutality since these charges were all laid against one man. Mohan Singh and Gurbakash Singh Dhillon’s memoirs all disavow any use of violence against prisoners who refused to join the INA. This may be honest considering that the INA was a large organisation and Mohan Singh, despite his best intentions, may have been powerless to prevent any actions contrary to orders given by him. It must, however, be noted that the brutality exercised by Abdur Rashid was not an isolated incident as other cases were documented by the British. In another example, a Captain Fateh Khan was charged with abusing and executing Indian prisoners under his charge.  

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131 ‘Transfer and stay to KL’.  
132 Ghosh, The Indian National Army, p.202. For a list of the brutalities conducted against personnel who refused to join the INA, see: Shri Moti Ram, Two trials at the Red Fort: An authentic account of the trial by a general court martial of Captain Shah Nawaz Khan, Captain P. K. Sahgal and Lt. G. S. Dhillon, and the trial by a European Military Commission of Emperor Bahadur Shah (New Delhi: Moti Ram, 1946), pp.220-228., where victims of INA brutality gave their accounts of INA brutality towards Indian prisoners who refused to join the INA.
More interestingly, brutality towards captured Indian army personnel was not an isolated incident when we examine how Indian prisoners were treated in the various theatres of war. It appears that there was a general policy of mistreating those who refused to turn towards the Axis forces. Evidence abounds for the mistreatment of Indian prisoners of war captured by the Italians and Germans in North Africa. These troops were brutalised if they defied the call to arms by the Axis armies. If they did join, their treatment improved markedly. One report stated the treatment that Indian soldiers who were captured in North Africa underwent:

The methods which they have adopted to achieve this success can be guessed from a report which …states that a considerable number of prisoners sadly deficient in clothing and footwear had arrived at Muhlberg from Koenigsbrucke where propaganda amongst the Indian league was very intense. Those who refused to yield to Nazi pressure had their clothing removed by their disloyal compatriots. It is therefore clear that objectionable and illegal pressure is being brought to bear on Indian prisoners of war to break their spirit and induce them to change their allegiance.\(^\text{133}\)

Another post war report stated that:

The Germans have used every endeavour to undermine the loyalty of Indian prisoners. Propaganda and ill treatment have been the two chief methods adopted and there is evidence of prisoners having been “beaten up” and deprived of food and Red Cross parcels in the efforts to suborn them. Of the total number it is believed that some 3000 have accepted service with the Germans, the majority under force majeur. A few were indeed “politically minded”, but in the main it is believed that self-preservation or the desire to obtain amelioration of their conditions was the motive for volte face.\(^\text{134}\)

The reports indicate that the treatment was general. One in particular, deserves to be quoted at length:

\(^{133}\) L/P&J\!/12/647. IPI to Mr Silver. “Note in Indian prisoners of war in Germany and Italy”. 230443..File pp.29
\(^{134}\) L/WS/1/1536. Draft. Note for the minister of information concerning the return of Indian ex prisoners of war from Europe to the United Kingdom. p.131.
The German Indian prisoners of war succumbed in the same way. 1942. 10) North Africa. Appendix ‘b’ gives extracts from reports showing the treatment meted out to Indian POWs in North Africa by their German and Italian captors. The technique is similar to that which had already been employed by the Japanese in Malaya, Burma and Hong Kong. Starvation, deprivation of water, public debasement of British personnel, and general ill treatment were followed by propaganda lectures, in which stress was laid upon the better treatment which would be accorded to volunteers for the HIFC. For example, in September 1942 at Bari which was a transit camp for POWs to Germany, “3000 Indian Ps.W. in batches were brought through Bari-put on short rations and attempts to starve them into “Free Indian” movement without success.” In mid-September 1942, an “Indian named SARTO and an Urdu speaking German came forward from Benghazi in effort to subvert relatively recent captured Ps.W. Visit reported generally unsuccessful and 5 Sikhs forcibly removed at point of the Bayonet.” Treatment for prisoners was also rough on the whole. Italian troops on several instances shot Indian troops when they fell out of the march and deprived them of food and water on occasion. 135

Considering the widespread use of coercion to induce Indian soldiers to join the Axis, it is hard to see the charges levelled against Abdul Rashid and his co-offenders in the Red Fort Trials as being isolated instances of brutality calculated to pressure recalcitrant members of the Indian army to switch their loyalties. 136

With the harsh conditions of internment, the Indian soldiers were placed under much mental stress, which began to erode their sense of discipline. There was an evident breakdown of discipline in non-Indianised units. Soldiers from these units refused to follow the orders of their Indian non-commissioned officers in absence of the authority of any British personnel. There were also instances of soldiers stationed at Changi Camp who snuck out of the premises frequently to rape and loot from the civilian population who lived nearby. 137

135 L/WS/1/1576. GHQ India to Army HQs. “Hitler inspired fifth column”.
137 Khan, My memories of INA and its Netaji. Accessed online at http://www.subhaschandrabose.org/ina/snk08.html. ; Singh, Soldier’s contribution to India’s independence, p.112.
Perhaps most indicative of the drop in discipline was the fact that there were reported instances of soldiers roughing up their officers.\textsuperscript{138}

Discipline and military order evidently deteriorated amongst the captured Indian personnel. The breakdown in military discipline, on the other hand, highlighted the fact that a proportion of the Indian Army did not see itself as part of an army anymore. There was no longer a chain of command which they respected. The perpetrators of these acts of insubordination and crime obviously did not foresee a return to British power anytime soon. There was no apparent fear of British military law to deter their acts. The Indian POWs after the fall of Singapore were, in sum, a force of mistreated, dejected men who had fought in a miserable campaign characterised above all by retreat. They had been surrendered to an enemy they barely knew and understood. Morale and health were poor. A statement made by Kiani in his memoirs probably has more than a grain of truth in it, “The army before the war was considered to be a respectable calling but the ordeal of being let down and made to suffer humiliation, both during and after the fighting was something the Indian sepoy could not understand.”\textsuperscript{139} Indian Army personnel were fertile soil on which the seed of INA propaganda was ready to germinate.

Already under duress, it is not surprising soldiers started signing up for the INA as a result of Japanese propaganda. Mohan Singh had, in 1942, following the end of the Bangkok conference, sent propaganda units to give lectures to the POWs in order to persuade them of the righteousness of the INA cause.\textsuperscript{140} The propaganda mentioned above emphasised the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{138}{Ibid.}
\footnote{139}{Kiani, \textit{India’s Freedom Struggle}, p.61.}
\footnote{140}{Singh, \textit{Soldiers Contribution to Indian Independence}, p.82.}
\end{footnotes}
friendship and goodwill that existed between Japanese and Indians and the need to uproot Western Imperialism.\textsuperscript{141} As explained above, the propaganda did have an impact as thirty thousand Indian soldiers chose to join the INA. A case in point could be seen from Lance Naik Y’s account of how he ended up joining the INA. Even though Lance Naik ‘Y’ was captured from the Burma front, he underwent an almost identical experience to that of his comrades fighting in Malaya; defeat, shock, dejection, captivity and deprivation. His example was thus a telling one. Lance Naik ‘Y’ had been captured from the defeat in Burma and ended up in Japanese captivity. Once there, he had been subject to propaganda lectures given by INA officers on a daily basis and under duress of ill treatment chose, eventually, to join the INA.\textsuperscript{142}

\textbf{(II) Campaign stress}

The Malayan campaign was a disaster which deeply affected the morale and spirit of the men who survived the campaign. The campaign conducted by the IJA was swift and decisive. The Commonwealth formations facing the IJA were shattered. The Malayan campaign must be examined in order to comprehend the trauma felt by the individual sepoy. Two main arguments can be put forth. First, the Indian Army units sent to Malaya during 1941 were not trained for jungle warfare in the peninsula. Indian Army units were trained to fight a conflict in the large flat plains which characterised the terrain of Northern India. Corresponding to the needs of warfare on such a terrain, Indian Army doctrine emphasised mobility, speed and the use and control of roads for combat.\textsuperscript{143}

The principles that enabled the Indian Army to fight effectively on the plains and deserts of Northern India were, however, an impediment to the basic principles of fighting effectively in

\textsuperscript{141} Kiani, \textit{India’s Freedom Struggle}, p.49.
\textsuperscript{142} L/WS/1/1433. Weekly Internal intelligence summary. 27 February 1942. p.2.
the jungle. Jungle warfare emphasised rapid flank attacks which could interdict an enemy’s
line of communication and supply. It was also fluid and fast. Most important, jungle warfare
depended very much on the skill and aptitude of the individual infantryman to acclimatise,
fight and follow orders in such a hostile terrain. Soldiers had to learn how to survive as the
jungle itself could be an enemy.\textsuperscript{144} It was filled with snakes, mosquitoes carrying the deadly
malaria virus, putrefying water, and was hot and humid. Men and equipment wore out fast in
such an environment. Fighting in such terrain also required developing, through training, an
acumen of how to use the terrain and fight in it. This was because the dense vegetation
presented problems of cover and mobility. Infantry mobility to counter enemy thrusts around
the flank and launch swift counterattacks was vital. Needless to say, inter-unit
communications in such dense terrain were vital for any defensive or aggressive action to
succeed. Indian troops were simply not trained for this form of warfare.\textsuperscript{145} When pitted
against the well trained and equipped Japanese soldiers, it was a disaster waiting to happen.

The lack of training in jungle warfare was further exacerbated by the process of ‘milking’ of
Indian Army units. The Indian Army was rapidly expanded immediately before the war to
meet the requirements of an increasingly volatile international situation. To accomplish this,
new units were established around a nucleus of experienced officers, men and non-
commissioned officers who were’ milked’ from other units. This had a detrimental effect of
on training and combat efficiency as Indian Army units struggled to make good their losses.
The units in Malaya suffered as a result and many of their soldiers who arrived to defend
Malaya were raw recruits.\textsuperscript{146} A clear example of consequences of deploying such

\textsuperscript{144} See: Frederick Spencer Chapman, \textit{The jungle is neutral} (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2009) for
an infantryman’s account of the challenges of fighting in the tropics.
\textsuperscript{145} T.R. Moreman, \textit{The jungle, the Japanese and the British commonwealth Armies at war 1941-1945} (New
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
inexperienced soldiers to the field was seen in Percieval’s account of the 3rd Indian Cavalry’s performance in the Battle of Kedah:

The 3rd Indian cavalry was totally unprepared. “Of the other divisional troops the 3rd Cavalry was in Penang with a squadron at Sungei Patani. This unfortunate regiment, “mechanized” in the phrase of one of our politicians “in the sense that it had been deprived of its horses” was, on paper, the divisional reconnaissance regiment with an imposing array of armoured vehicles. Of these it actually had none and, if it had had them, it would not have been able to drive them. It consisted of three squadrons of dismounted men, many of them recruits, sent from India with little training and no vehicles and equipped in Malaya with a few unarmoured trucks. Its fighting vehicles were scheduled to arrive later. It was totally unfit for its role of divisional reconnaissance unit.147

The Indian Army was badly mauled by the Japanese during the campaign. Indian positions were repeatedly overrun as Japanese soldiers cut around the Indian flanks and encircled their formations.148 Indian formations attempted to hold their defensive positions but simply could not overcome the impediments of poor command, repeated orders to withdraw and a lack of air and armoured support. As a result of these disadvantages, Indian units were repeatedly overrun or forced to withdraw. Examples of this pattern of engagement, encirclement and retreat were seen at Jitra where the 11th Indian division was overrun, at the Battle of Slim River at Kampar, the 45th Indian Brigade at Muar and the 22nd Indian Brigade at Batu Pahat.149

The repeated cycle of retreat and defeat exhausted the will of the Indian soldiers to fight. By the time of the surrender, many of them were depleted of strength both mentally and

148 Ibid., pp.11-45.
physically. This sentiment was clearly borne out in memoirs. As Kiani recounted in his memoirs “the demoralisation had become shamefully widespread.”\textsuperscript{150} For the Indian soldiers, there was worse to come.

The surrender of Singapore came as a rude shock to many of them. The Indian Contingent alone, on paper, still possessed approximately fifty-thousand men. Many Indian soldiers thought there was still much fighting that could have been done. Even more galling to the individual Indian soldier was a feeling that he had been betrayed. An extract from Kiani’s memoirs deserve to be quoted here:

There are instances in history when this (surrender) had happened but it is a terrible blow to those who have taken pride in their profession which requires them to use their weapons to the end. The word surrender, in martial traditions, carries a stigma of a stinking kind regardless of the factors responsible for bringing this about.\textsuperscript{151}

For Indian soldiers who had been brought up in a martial culture and who were schooled in concepts of izzat, or honour, this was an unbearable shame.\textsuperscript{152} This sentiment was not an exaggeration. Indian soldiers who fought on the North-West frontier against the merciless Afghan tribesmen expected no quarter when they fought and there were numerous instances of cornered units fighting to the last.\textsuperscript{153} The resentment felt by many Indians could also be seen from Shah Nawaz Khan’s reflection on the surrender - the bitterness is palpable: “The Indian troops were told to obey the orders of the Japanese in the same way as they had been obeying the orders of the British. The Indians were treated as mere cattle and quite naturally felt deserted by the British for whom they had shed their blood so freely.”\textsuperscript{154}

\textsuperscript{150} Kiani, \textit{India’s Freedom Struggle}, p.35.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} Mason, \textit{A Matter of Honour}, p.388. Take for example the defence of the Fort at Chakdara by 200 of Rattray’s Sikhs against thousands of Afghan tribesmen.
\textsuperscript{154} Khan, \textit{My memories of INA and its Netaji}. Accessed online at http://www.subhaschandrabose.org/ina/snk06.html.
In addition to a sense of betrayal, Indian soldiers also felt a sense of disillusionment with British rule. With the surrender, they saw the British as weak. To understand why, one must look through the world view of a sepoy. The individual sepoy was normally a farmer. He lived in a world where the British represented the ruling elite and whose power could be clearly seen in the way the British administered the land. British soldiers officered the army, British judges ruled in courts, British teachers taught at the highest and most prestigious institutions of learning in the country, British Superintendents led the police force, while British engineers linked the country with a network of telegraphs and railroads. The might of British power was clearly visible in India. Respect for British power diminished, however, with the surrender. Again, Shah Nawaz Khan’s words clearly elucidate the latter point:

The British had, through their clever propaganda, established a legend about the superiority and invincibility of the White people, a legend which the average Indian soldier, quite unconsciously, believed. To the Indian soldier the White Sahib could do no wrong. During the battle of Malaya, the same White Sahibs were seen running about in panic trying to save their lives. Gone was the dignity and superiority of the White Sahibs. The Officer class of the White Sahib did not do much credit to its race either. In battle it is the duty of officers to lead their men, but they were so scared of being captured alive by the Japanese that they always kept well to the rear of their Indian soldiers. The British officers had sufficient reasons for their dread of being captured alive by the Japanese.

This same sense sentiment was also felt by those living in Malaya and Singapore:

The ease and speed with which the Japanese defeated the British forces in the Far East broke the legend of British power. The Indians became convinced that the Japanese would ultimately succeed in defeating the British quite easily. This was also true in case of the attitude of Asiatic civilians in Malaya. The British had often boasted of their might and promised to protect them from Japanese domination, but the Malayan debacle convinced them of British impotence.

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157 Ibid.
What was worse was the fact that many of the Indian soldiers had just arrived in Singapore. Examples included the 44th and 45th Indian Brigade.\(^{158}\) They had essentially landed on the island to be surrendered to the Japanese. Needless to say, the said Indian soldiers were shocked, disillusioned and felt a deep sense of betrayal.

It might however, be too callous to assert that all Indian soldiers felt so. The argument that many did was apparently vindicated by the popular response the soldiers gave to Mohan Singh’s speech at Farrer Park. It is clear, however, that the fall of Singapore and the disastrous campaign experienced beforehand massively damaged the morale of the Indian soldiers.

### (III) Opportunism?

Many Indian Sepoys no doubt joined the INA because of the opportunities that such an act offered. Indian soldiers who joined the INA saw a chance to thrive in a new, Japanese dominated environment. Bose offered all his officers rapid promotion so that officers who previously could not even dream of reaching the upper levels of command could now do so. There is no doubt that such a possibility of advancement and the privileges which accompanied rapid promotion led many officers to consider switching their allegiance.\(^{159}\) Giving the men who defected to the INA greater responsibilities through promotion also encouraged them to develop a sense of loyalty to the organisation and its cause. The British realised the effectiveness of Bose’s policy of rapid promotion. An excerpt from a weekly intelligence summary indicated the impact which rapid promotion had on Indian personnel.

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They felt respected and trusted in a new army in which they were key stakeholders. There was essentially a sense of ownership and pride in the organisation:

A personal factor affecting individuals is that a number of them received rapid promotion beyond anything they could have expected in the Indian Army. As a typical instance, on one occasion when the Officer, who recorded these impressions,, was talking to an INA LT COL, whose Indian Army rank was captain, an INA sepoy approached and addressed the latter as COL Sahib. When the sepoy had gone the officer remarked on this mode of address. The Captain replied “I do not care what you think my rank is. To my men I am a Colonel.” On another occasion, a man reported himself voluntarily stating that he was a Captain. When asked his INA rank he looked surprised; it eventually transpired that he was an upper division clerk. (e) The conclusion reached by this officer as a result of his observation of the INA in Rangoon was that as a class they have been thoroughly imbued with Bose’s ideas and that it is doubtful if they can be rehabilitated as soldiers again.160

A clear example of an INA member who saw the opportunity to defect to the INA was Mohan Singh. Mohan Singh was dissatisfied with the prejudices he encountered in the Indian Army. As a keen, intelligent officer, he was dissatisfied with the way in which he and other Indians were treated in the British Indian Army. Following defeat in Malaya, the dissatisfaction with British rule that had been bothering him erupted into open rebellion.161

Several INA personnel joined the INA to defect at the first opportunity presented to them. These men saw the INA as a means by which to survive Japanese captivity and head back to British lines the moment they were thrown into combat. The case of Major Nripendra Singh Bagat is illustrative. The latter joined the first INA to wreck it. He repeatedly warned Mohan Singh about Japanese intentions, particularly in light of their conduct in Manchuria and China. Partially as a result of Major Nripendra’s constant warnings, Mohan Singh grew

161 Singh, Soldier’s contribution to India’s independence, p.50.
suspicious of the Japanese and began to take a firmer and more confrontational stance towards them, thereby leading to his downfall. Following the dissolution of the latter, Major Nripendra joined the second INA and sought to influence Bose in the same manner. Bose was, however, of sharper political acumen and had Major Nripendra arrested. This attitude was held by many Indian soldiers who defected to the INA. Philip Mason’s speech at the legislative assembly after the war summarized British conclusions following the interrogations of thousands of INA POWs.

The first important circumstance was that out of 20000 of these a pretty considerable number were able to prove conclusively that they went over to the INA, either with the object of sabotaging the movement or with the object of getting out and coming over as soon as they could to the allied lines and rejoining their former friends.”…

There lay the question of why the INA did not surrender en masse upon contact with the British in Burma. Instead of surrendering, many units fought before giving up their weapons. An interrogation report of two senior staff officers of the second INA Division explained why. While the INA officers were for the most part willing to surrender, they were, however, reluctant to do so as the men they led on patrol were largely pro-INA personnel. The officers could also not talk freely about deserting as Bose had planted spies amongst the rank and file. They had adopted - in the words of the report - a mind-set which ran along the line of “one wrong move and I’m a dead man.” Most thus went along with their orders.

163 L/WS/1/1579. Speech. File pp.1.-10. It must be noted that Philip Mason derived his figures as a result of the interrogation process which all INA prisoners were placed through in order to classify them as ‘white’, ‘grey’ or ‘black’. See: India Office Library and Records F.No R/3/1/330, ‘Minutes of the meeting by the War department to frame policy with regard to the INA’, cited in T.R. Sareen, Indian National Army: A documentary study Volume 5, p.223.
The evidence suggests one reason why British Indian Army soldiers joined the INA was because of opportunism. It was the best means by which the soldiers could preserve their lives under Japanese captivity. Rather than face torture and internment by the Japanese, joining the INA afforded them better conditions while preserving their status as fighting men, allowing them to preserve their *izzat*. Many fighting troops wanted, after all, to defect at the first opportunity.¹⁶⁵ There were also deeper economic reasons which underpinned this sense of loyalty to the British. Many Indian soldiers held land from the Raj in agricultural colonies as a form of remuneration. By joining the INA, they were worried for the well-being of their dependents who remained in India, fearing that the latter would be left pauperised if the British confiscated their land.

The soldiers were caught up in a maelstrom of emotions under the most trying of circumstances. Some joined out of nationalist intent, others out of peer pressure, and yet others as a means to escape harsh treatment by the Japanese. Those who did not faced the possibility of abuse by the Japanese. Neither choice was an easy one to make. If the sepoy chose to join the INA, he risked having his land confiscated. The report of the Officer Commanding of a Jat battalion gave a keen and insightful summary into the basic concerns of the average sepoy soldier:

> The sepoy is, first and foremost, a zamindar. That means he lives for his land. He breeds a family to farm that land. If that land or that family are threatened, the whole background and reason of his existence is threatened. It speaks well for him that he

serves on faithfully, as the majority do, with his own home threatened by economic depression with all its morale and material evils.\textsuperscript{166}

John Baptist Crasta, upon the end of the Farrer Park address, also witnessed the dilemma that he and his comrades faced. Following the enthusiastic reception of most sepoys to Mohan Singh’s Farrer Park address, one soldier near Crasta “started crying like a child, muttering, “I have served my masters for twenty-five years. What will I have to do now? What will become of my family? Oh God…”\textsuperscript{167} The importance of land to the individual zamindar was in fact so critical that the British government later used it as a means by which to demoralise INA soldiers in their campaign against the Japanese. The Raj promised all those who defected to the INA that their land would not be confiscated if they surrendered.\textsuperscript{168}

(IV) Was the Indian Army mercenary?

Besides opportunism, nationalism, poor prison conditions and the stress of defeat in the Malayan campaign, there also is the possibility that the sepoys defected as a result of the mercenary nature of their employment in the Indian Army. The Indian Army was, at heart, a mercenary force. The nature of their relationship with the government has to be analysed in order to ascertain and better comprehend if mercenary intentions led the sepoys to defect in such large numbers in February 1942. To this end, two questions will be explored in this section. First, were the Indian army soldiers imbued with a sense of nationalist loyalty to the

\textsuperscript{166} L/W/1/1433. Weekly internal intelligence summaries. 29 October 1943. Appendix ‘B’. Extract from the security intelligence report for September 1943 from the OC of a Jat battalion.


\textsuperscript{168} Ministry of defence, File No. 601/10569/H.S., ‘General Staff Branch Instructions to the British officers to check the subversive activities of the INA against the Indian Army.’, cited in T.R. Sareen, \textit{Indian National Army: A documentary study Volume 2}, p.102.
empire they served? Second, why did the individual Indian soldier enlist and fight in the Indian army?

The individual sepoy did not feel a sense of nationalist loyalty to the imperium he served. In fact, there were few cultural or historical similarities which he shared with his overlords, the British. Nationalist loyalty in the sense of a shared ethnicity simply did not exist. There was no common historic territory or homeland, no myth of common ancestry, no substantial bank of shared historical memories, no common culture or a sense of solidarity between ruler and ruled. There was, it could be argued, a massive gulf between ruler and ruled. This was a separation both encouraged and utilised by the British to rule their subjects. Clear examples of this state of separation between ruler and subject were seen in the different clothing which the white community wore and the separation of living spaces for whites and Indians. The Indian soldier did not fight for nationalism.

The Indian sepoy enlisted and fought for a slew of personal reasons. Material rewards were the most powerful reason for a sepoy to enlist. Indian soldiers were well paid and, most important consistently paid by their British employers. Their pay always arrived on time. In addition, every cent of their salary was accounted for by their paymasters so that it would be sent, correct to the last cent, back to their families even if they died in battle. The British also implemented policies that kept the soldiers loyal as they served. Pay increments were issued based on the duration of a sepoy’s years of service. Every sepoy could also look forward to a pension during his retirement. Pensions were also given to a soldier’s family if he were killed in battle. This latter policy ensured that sepoys fought with the necessary courage and valour

in battle. Sepoys who ended their term of service could also look forward to a grant of land in the canal colonies. Sepoys who were not issued with a grant of land could purchase one with the money they had saved over the years.

There were many intangible rewards for enlisting as well. Apart from the general prestige associated with being a soldier of the Raj, sepoys could also look forward to being held in a position of respect and high esteem by their fellow villagers. Besides returning from leave or a term service dressed in the finery of a uniform and a pocketful of pay, this sense of respect was further enhanced by certain privileges accorded to them by the government. Gurkhas in Nepal, for example, were excused from corvee labour when they returned to their villages. The relatives of sepoys recruited from the Punjab could be assured of gaining preferential treatment when they were being considered for recruitment into government positions. During a sepoy’s term of service, he was could also look forward to long periods of peaceful inactivity in a quiet cantonment, free from the harsh backbreaking labour in the fields which was the fate of so many of his peers.\footnote{Omissi, \textit{The Sepoy and the Raj}, p.79.}

The British recognised the fact that the sepoy’s willingness to enlist and his combat performance was ultimately tied to his material well-being. The comments by an OC (Officer Commanding) of a Jat battalion in a security intelligence report are revealing and shed light on the psychology of the Indian soldier. He deserves to be quoted in full:

It is absurd to think that the sepoy an fight for India as a BOR fights for Britain …The sepoy is, first and foremost, a zamindar. That means he lives for his land. He breeds a
Two extracts from a weekly intelligence report on desertions also highlight the material concerns of Indian soldiers:

**Desertions.** The latest flight of fancy is that the Americans have started an ‘Indian Army of their own’ in Calcutta on very high rates of pay.// It seems hardly necessary to deny such tales, but as in one unit at least men have offered themselves for transfer to this new Army, and another attributes an increase in desertions to this rumour ….

For the Indian soldier patriotism is clearly a far less vital source of the offensive spirit in the present war than it is with the Britisher. Attempts to imbue the minds of the Indian troops with hate for the Germans or even for the Japanese, though they may be useful, are bound to have a certain artificiality. To a large extent the sepoy is a mercenary soldier but this is no cause for disparagement since many of the best troops throughout history from the Roman Empire onwards have been mercenaries. In the case of the Indian soldier the source of the offensive spirit are his pride in his race and in his regiment or simply his pride in being a soldier of and following the honourable profession of arms … Judging from my admittedly limited experience in the regiment I find it difficult to believe that anti-British or Congress propaganda has had any appreciable effect on the loyalty of the troops, though I am aware that there were cases earlier on in the war in other regiments where it is said to have led to trouble.

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173 L/WS/1/317 .050143. Monthly Intelligence Summary. General and army Headquarters India.” Experience of Indian Army morale on joining a training battalion.” . p.10
Besides material rewards, the sepoy also fought to uphold his own personal sense of honour, or *izzat*. A soldier’s sense of honour depended very much on his conduct and bravery in battle. Bravery would earn him respect from his peers and cowardice, disdain. *Izzat* also included fulfilling the soldierly duties to those who paid the sepoy his salt. To do otherwise was deemed dishonourable. There were also negative motivations which held the sepoy to his oath. The sepoys knew the price of disloyalty and remembered the mutiny and the carnage which came with British retribution. A report by British military intelligence on the psychology of the Indian Army stated:

> Still the Indian army is apparently intact-loyal to the British. Why? Because deep down in the heart of every Indian, from rank and file to high above, there is a distinct feeling that the British would win in the end. Since the days of the mutiny, its disastrous effects has always been rubbed into the ranks of the Indian sepoys and hence their sense of awe towards British power.

The British were cognizant of the power which they held over the individual sepoy’s economic wellbeing and did not hesitate to discharge soldiers, and terminate pensions and grants of land, if sepoys or ex-sepoys chose to engage in acts of disloyalty to the Raj. This was not to mention the fact that many sepoys developed a sense of duty towards the Raj as generation after generation served in the Indian Army.

The Indian Army was mercenary but one with a sense of loyalty and attachment to the regiment the soldiers were posted in. Loyalty in the Indian Army was inculcated and maintained in several ways. To gain the loyalty of the sepoy, the British clothed him, fed him,

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174 Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj*, p.79.
175 L/WS/1/317. Secretary’s review of Indian armed forces, 18th March 1943
trained him and cared for his welfare. To maintain his loyalty, they issued land long service rewards whose issue was contingent on the good conduct of the sepoy. Many sepoys came from families whose men had served the military of the Raj for several generations and this inculcated a sense of loyalty and duty to the Empire they protected. Auchinleck best summarises the psychology of the Indian soldier:

Those who have served for many years with Indian troops, as I have done, have always recognised that the loyalty of our men was really to the officer of the regiment or the unit, and that although there may have been some abstract sentiments of loyalty and patriotism to the Government and to the King, the men’s allegiance for all practical purpose depended on welfare, advancement and future prospects.  

There were signs, however, that the character of the Indian Army was changing as a result of its rapid expansion immediately before and during the war. An MI 2 report gave a candid assessment of this change in 1945:

It must be squarely faced that the expansion of the Indian Army, political developments of recent years, the weakness of our propaganda and our negative attitude generally over a long period to attacks on our Imperial record in India, make it very unlikely that the ‘loyalty to the Sirkar’ which was so pronounced a feature of the pre-war Indian army still necessarily prove a sufficient leavening. There is little doubt that, among ICOs at least, loyalty in the old sense to the British Raj is fast disappearing and is being supplemented in many by loyalties based largely on political expediency. However sound the rank and file may be, it is the officers that count in a matter of this kind. It is not too much to say that the field open to the Japanese has been largely cleared by our own efforts or lack of effort in the past and this must be recognised in appreciating the problem. The skill with which the Japanese have exploited it is shown by the evidence

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that the Indian leaders of the INA are genuinely convinced they are acting in the best interests of India, appoint in which lies the greatest danger to our interests.  

Indian troops may also have defected as a result of the manner of their surrender. Lieutenant Colonel J.C. Hunt’s words of surrender of the Indian troops to the Japanese Army may have led some Indian troops to believe that they were being handed over to the Japanese as fighting men under whose authority they were supposed to obey. According to Colonel N.S. Gill, Colonel Hunt announced to the Indian soldiers gathered at Farrer Park that “Today, I on behalf of the British government, hand you over to the Japanese government whose orders you will obey and henceforth as you have done ours.” These words clearly contained two instructions. First, that the British were surrendering all Indian personnel to the Japanese. Second, they were to obey the instructions of the Japanese. Considering the mercenary nature of the Indian Army, it is not difficult to fathom that many Indian soldiers would have considered their oaths of allegiance absolved. When British intelligence investigated the feelings of the INA soldiers in Malaya after their surrender, they found “the emphases laid on the INA oath is interesting in view of the argument put forward by so many INA officers and men that their oath of allegiance to the British was automatically annulled at the time of the Singapore surrender and being handed over to the Japanese.”

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179 Another version according to Shah Nawaz Khan quoted COL Hunt as saying “From today we are all prisoners of war. I now, on behalf of the British Government, hand you over to the Japanese Government, whose orders you will obey as you have been doing ours. If you don't, you will be punished.”
There lay, however, the issue of the manner in which the Indian soldiers were handed over. Lieutenant Colonel Hunt denied ever speaking the words which the Indian soldiers attributed to him.\textsuperscript{181} The words by which he surrendered the Indians were also used by the defendants during the trial at the Red Fort in 1946. It was argued that if the Indian soldiers were surrendered to an enemy and instructed to obey their orders, how was it possible that they could be charged for treason by serving under the aforementioned enemy? Regardless of what Colonel Hunt said, the effect on the sepoys was demoralising. Many officers felt humiliated by their wholesale surrender to the Japanese. They felt that they could have fought on but were denied the ability to do so. To them, it was a disgrace and dishonour to have been surrendered in such a manner. The anguish felt by many Indian soldiers then was evident judging from accounts of the surrender which are recorded in several memoirs. Shah Nawaz Khan’s fury at the surrender is illustrative: “The Indian troops were told to obey the orders of the Japanese in the same way as they had been obeying the orders of the British. The Indians were treated as mere cattle and quite naturally felt deserted by the British for whom they had shed their blood so freely.”\textsuperscript{182}

Colonel N.S. Gill, who was pro-British throughout the war, expressed the same vitriol at the capitulation: “This shameful handing over not only adversely affected most of us towards the British but also figured prominently in the Red Fort trials as a defence argument.”\textsuperscript{183}

P.K. Sahgal’s account of the event was no less bitter:

This (the surrender at Farrer Park) came as a great blow to us all. The Indian army had fought bravely against the heaviest odds, and in return the British High Command had left them completely at the mercy of the Japanese. We felt that the British Government had, on its own, cut off all the bonds that had bound us to the British Crown and

\textsuperscript{182} Shah Nawaz Khan, \textit{My memories of INA and its Netaji}. Accessed online at http://www.subhaschandrabose.org/ina/snk06.html.
relieved us of all obligations to it. The Japanese handed us over to Captain Mohan Singh ... and we were left free under him to fashion our own destiny. We *bona fide* believed that the British Crown having ceased to provide any protection to us could no longer demand allegiance from us.\(^{184}\)

In sum, the Indian Army was angry, bewildered and disillusioned following their surrender to the Japanese at Farrer Park. While the manner of their surrender may have persuaded some to consider their oaths of loyalty absolved and defection to the Japanese, it was more likely, however, that the fact of the surrender itself disillusioned so many with their ruling masters.

**(V) Institutional fissures within the Indian Army**

Institutional fissures within the Indian Army led many of the POWs who were captured at Farrer to Park to join the INA. Several reasons could be offered to back up this assertion. First, the timetabled process of Indianisation in the Indian Army was too little too late to satisfy nationalists and the Indian soldiers who looked forward to achieving higher ranks of command. The slow process was, in fact, offensive to the Indians and clearly demonstrated to them that the British had no intention of relinquishing power over the army to the Indians for any foreseeable period in of the future. For example, the Indian Army was scheduled to be fully Indianised over a period of 64 years! The process and history of Indianisation need not be covered here as there is extant literature on the subject. What is of concern, however, was the impact of Indianisation on the individual Indian soldier, particularly the more well educated officer class.

\(^{184}\) Shri Moti Ram, *Two trials at the Red Fort*, p.113.
Many officers felt slighted by the Indianisation process. The long process laid out for the Indianisation of the army meant that many officers felt discriminated against. They felt that the British did not trust them enough or hold their abilities in sufficient regard to hold more senior positions of command. Such sentiment naturally made the Indian officer corps which surrendered in Malaya far more amenable to the Japanese argument that Indians were being discriminated against. Only too late did the British realise the errors of their policy on Indianisation. A memorandum by General Sir Claude Auchinleck which was addressed to all army officers following the end of war demonstrated the negative impact which half-hearted Indianisation had on the minds of Indian officers who chose to defect and join the INA:

There is no excuse for the regular officers who went over, beyond the fact that the early stages of Indianisation from its inception to the beginning of the late war were badly mismanaged by the British government of India, and this prepared the ground for disloyalty when the opportunity came [bold and italics added].

The policy of segregation of Indian officers into separate units, the differential treatment in respect of pay and terms of service as compared with the British officer, and the prejudice and lack of manners of some … British officers and their wives, all went to produce a very deep and bitter feeling of racial discrimination in the minds of the most intelligent and progressive of the Indian officers ….

It is no use shutting one’s eyes to the fact that any Indian officer worth his salt is a nationalist…If he is anti-British and this is as often as not due to his faulty handling and treatment by his British officer comrades.

It is essential for the preservation of future unity that this fact should be fully understood by all British officers.\(^{185}\)

An MI2 report from as early as 1943 also admitted, with equal honesty, that had Indianisation occurred earlier, the Japanese effort to build the INA may not have met with success.

In 1938, a group of junior staff officers in GHQ India attacked the new army policy of Indianisation by segregation…..But they wished for once to get ahead of events, to ride the storm rather than be submerged by it…..They were defeated. The war quickly accomplished what they could not. Long before this, their most bitter opponent had admitted that he was wrong. But such opportunities do not recur……Had we been less

cautious in 1938, the danger from the INA in 1942 would have been a great deal smaller.\textsuperscript{186}

Indian officers, particularly the Viceroy’s Commissioned Officers who formed the majority amongst the officer corps would have been more loyal had the British sped up Indianisation. This is clearly hinted at from an intelligence report on the receptivity of different Indian classes officers towards German attempts to change their loyalty. The report stated “Many Commissioned officers had joined the “Free India” movement, but disloyalty was more frequent among Viceroy-Commissioned officers than among holders of the King’s commission.”\textsuperscript{187} Many officers who defected in 1942-1943 to the INA might not have done so if the British had Indianised the Army in a more sincere and expedient manner.

Discrimination against coloured troops of the Indian Army resulted in widespread disaffection with British rule and was another contributing factor to the decision by so many to defect to the Japanese. Indian soldiers regardless of rank were often treated in a discriminatory manner by the British. In fact, Indian personnel frequently found themselves on the receiving end of what could be classified as racist treatment. Memoirs written by INA personnel all include recollections of poor treatment at the hands of the British. Extracts from these memoirs give a sense of the anger and hate which such discriminatory treatment engendered on the part of the Indians.

G.S. Dhillon, for instance, cited numerous examples of discriminatory treatment by the British. When he signed up for the local officers mess in Lahore, he was “very politely

\textsuperscript{186} L/WS/1/1711. LTC C.S. Owen MI2 to General Lockhart 311242, pp.1-5.

\textsuperscript{187} L/P&J/12/647. IPI to Mr Silver. “Note in Indian prisoners of war in Germany and Italy”. 23\textsuperscript{rd} April 1943, p.30.
advised by the British mess major not to apply for membership of the club.” Puzzled by the outcome, he later found out why the reason from a more another Lieutenant, Hardial Singh, who explained angrily that:

Don’t you know that we Indians, inspite of our rank and all the show of equality, are not allowed membership of the club? That is an exclusive white men’s club. We are Sahib Bahadurs only to work but not to share the privileges of the ‘ruling race’. You have humiliated not only yourself but all the Indian officers…socially, we are bloody niggers and you better be careful.  

The incident clearly had an impact on his political orientation as he said that afterwards, “I(he) felt that we Indian officers … were submitting to the national humiliation for the sake of remaining in service … This was an early seed of disaffection sown in my mind. The pride and aspiration with which I had decided to join the army received a big jolt.” Shah Nawaz Khan expressed the irony of the situation in his memoirs:

Indian Officers were not admitted as members of a large number of clubs in Malaya. The British authorities always impressed upon the Indians that they had come to Malaya to protect the person and property of the inhabitants of Malaya which also included Europeans who refused admission to these protectors to their clubs.

Even issues such as the food being served in the mess generated disaffection amongst the Indian ranks. Dhillon gave an account, for example, of a British officer who said that he “didn’t like this wretched Indian food.” Indian officers also had to “fight hard to get Indian food into the mess.” In his memoirs, Kiani stated that there “had been friction between the

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188 Dhillon, From my bones, p.67.
189 Ibid., p.68.
190 Khan, My memories of INA and its Netaji. Accessed online at http://www.subhaschandrabose.org/ina/snk05.html,
191 Dhillon, From my Bones, p.82.
192 Ibid.
British and Indian officers”. The British generally “refused to admit Indian officers to some of the clubs run under their control.” There were also “disputes in the ‘Indianised’ unit messes as to what food to cook—European or Indian—and what musical programme to put on radio—from London or from Delhi?”

Another area in which Indian officers felt greatly discriminated against was in the usage of transport. Dhillon, for instance, witnessed an incident where an Indian Captain who while sitting in front of two white Second Lieutenants while awaiting transport in a station wagon, was shouted at by a senior officer, Major Anderson. The latter said “How dare you sit in front of the officers? Get back.” Dhillon again felt slighted and as a result of the incident, “remained out of elements throughout the exercise.” In another similar incident which occurred during the campaign, Dhillon heard of a case where an Indian Captain was asked to leave the first class compartment of the train in which he was travelling by the railway guard who was on duty. Even though the English officers accompanying the Indian officer objected to the treatment, they were told that it was Malayan Federated States railways rules that a coloured man could not travel in the same cabin as a white man. Dhillon and numerous Indian officers who heard the account were deeply traumatised. They “(We) wondered why we were serving in the war to support such a system of discrimination! Weren’t we in the Army as mercenaries to defend the British Empire? Where was the much talked about fidelity and honour?”

193 Kiani, India’s Freedom Struggle, pp.42-43.
194 Ibid.
195 Dhillon, From my bones, p.82.
There is the possibility that the account Dhillon and his fellow officers heard was untrue. What is clear, however, is that such discriminatory treatment was meted out to Indian officers frequently enough for those who heard the story to believe in its authenticity. Shah Nawaz Khan stated, in his terse style, that it was one of the issues which led officers to join the INA: “In Malaya there was an order by the Railway Authorities of Federated Malaya States that an Asiatic could not travel in the same compartment as a European, and the fact that they both held the same rank and belonged to the same unit did not seem to matter in this respect.”

Ultimately, it was the sheer arrogance and contempt by which the Indians felt they were held which angered the Indian soldiers. Kiani noted that “some of the British officers behaved (behaving) obnoxiously or rudely, even to Indians senior in rank”, British soldiers did not salute particularly the Sikh officers. On one occasion, he even witnessed an occasion where the commanding officer of his battalion, “Major Adams was seen spitting at a Sikh Havildar whom he saw grinning at a time when the news of the naval disaster that had befallen the British ships, The Prince of Wales and The Repulse, had only recently come in. The Sikh, unfortunately, had the habit of grinning most of the time.” In fact, a report by an Indian Emergency Commissioned Officer (ECO) listed “discrimination between Indian and British officers on the trains in Malaya” as one of the sources of discontent amongst Indian officers. Lower ranking soldiers were not immune from discriminatory treatment, even in wartime. John Baptist Crasta described an incident where, under heavy artillery

197 Kiani, India’s Freedom Struggle, pp.42-43.
bombardment by the Japanese, an Australian driver asked his Captain if “he would like to escape, leaving the Indians there.”

The discriminatory treatment meted out to the Indians continued even after the fall of Singapore. Indian troops lacked medicine as the Director of Medical Services, who was British, had taken most of the available medicine to Changi Prison where the British soldiers were held captive. Only when the Japanese intervened as a result of Indian protestations did the British give up part of their medicine stocks to the Indian POWs. This double standard angered the Indian POWs who felt that they were left to suffer a harsher captivity. The British officers in charge of the officer’s messes also took away whatever tinned food which was available there. Many Indian officers suffered as a result as no rations were distributed by the Japanese for three days.

The discriminatory treatment did not escape British notice. A weekly Intelligence summary in 1943 stated that:

There is evidence that the treatment of Viceroy Commissioned Officers by young officers, and by BORs engaged in such duties as provost or movement control, not infrequently leaves much to be desired. VCOs complain that either from ignorance or disregard of their status they are spoken to or treated like IORs. The burden of the complaint is – “We joined this service because we have been soldiers for generations

201 Ibid.
and it is an honourable profession; and also because of our stomachs. But we did not join to be abused.203

The evidence suggests the Indian soldiers must have suffered considerably while garrisoned in Singapore during the Japanese occupation. Many soldiers, particularly the more exposed and educated officer class, felt themselves caught in an emotional dilemma. On the one hand, they were the upholders of British rule in the colonies. They were, however, discriminated against and regarded with disdain by the very establishment which they sought to defend. A quote by Shah Nawaz Khan succinctly illustrated this sentiment in his memoirs:

During his stay in Malaya, the Indian soldier found that he was hated by other Asiatics for being a British watch-dog. Under the circumstances, he adopted the only course open to him — a haughty and superior attitude towards other Asiatics. On the fall of Singapore for which he was not even remotely responsible, he found himself in the unenviable position of a defeated soldier in the presence of those whom he had affected to despise. His vanity was hurt and he asked himself the obvious question — why am I placed in such a predicament? The answer was not difficult to find. He knew that it was British incompetence. He realised that his humiliation was the result of his fighting Britain's war. Is it any wonder, therefore, that he decided not to continue as a watch-dog of the British any longer?204

During World War II, Indian soldiers were also disgruntled with the disparity in the rates of pay between them and the British. British soldiers, both officers and men, received far higher rates of remuneration than their Indian counterparts. Shah Nawaz Khan’s memoirs gave several examples to illustrate the disparity in pay received. British Second Lieutenants received 600 rupees a month as compared to Indian 2nd Lieutenants who received only 400 rupees per month. Appointment allowances were equally disparate. Indian officers, for instance, received only 60 rupees a month when they were assigned as adjutants or quartermasters while British officers received 100 rupees a month. This was even if the

204 Khan, My memories of INA and its Netaji. Accessed online at http://www.subhaschandrabose.org/ina/snkn06.html
Indian officer was more experienced and was in service for a longer duration of time than his British counterpart.\textsuperscript{205} A report from an Indian ECO indicated that pay was a cause of discontent amongst Indian officers and men who were stationed there.\textsuperscript{206}

Complaints about the disparity in pay generated so much discontent that it came to the notice of the British high command. In one of the surviving letters, a VCO complained that while Indian VCOs were paid 75 rupees a month, their British equivalents were being paid 320 rupees a month.\textsuperscript{207} The same source highlighted that British Second Lieutenants received 0.15 Rupees a day in allowances while Indian soldiers received .08 rupees a day. Congress was quick to harness/foment discontent within the army as a result of unequal rates of pay. A Congress letter from 1942, while inflammatory, clearly highlighted the differences in pay and remuneration between the British and Indian personnel: “When the minimum pay of the British soldier is 60 rupees, why does an Indian soldier get only 18 rupees? When a British soldier gets concession to travel by rail on 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} and interclass why an Indian soldier only gets a concession to travel by 3\textsuperscript{rd} class?”\textsuperscript{208}

The same report stated that “… the majority of Indian Army officers consider that their men should get higher pay and allowances. 6) The putting out of any form of propaganda to convince the Indian soldier that he is equitably treated will therefore be a difficult task ….”\textsuperscript{209} Indian soldiers in Singapore were also affected by the difference in pay. An ECO highlighted that Indian officers in Malaya “resented the fact that they were paid lower salaries than

\textsuperscript{205} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{207} L/WS/1/1576. DMI Report. 14 April 1943.
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{209} Ibid.
British officers.” He also highlighted that the resentment was based not so much on the salary paid as on the grounds of racial discrimination.”

While the argument was offered that the Indians had nothing to complain about since their standard and cost of living was lower than that of the Europeans deployed to serve in the Raj, it was, as early as 1942, acknowledged that the massive disparity in pay was a source of discontent amongst Indian soldiers, and a major concern in British intelligence summaries.

One report stated:

The recent changes in their rates of pay have not eradicated the widespread grievance of ICOs regarding inequalities of pay between themselves and their British colleagues. ICOs do not understand why they should be paid less than British officers, sometimes possessing less experience, who are performing similar duties. This grievance is based on a belief that it is an example of racial discrimination. Amongst letters seen in censorship, one writer compares his social status and military traditions with those of some of the British “shopkeepers” who are obtaining commissions on higher rates of pay than himself…..he argues, the armed forces are ‘no place for a respectable boy until the differences in service conditions have been removed.

Just one month later, another intelligence summary stated, “The vexed question of the disparity in pay between ICOS and that of other categories of officers, has again come to notice. There is reason to believe that it has recently been adversely criticised by ICOs attending the staff college.”

The issue of pay highlighted a key problem in Imperial administration. There was a fundamental contradiction between the liberal ideological underpinnings of Empire, which

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211 L/WS/1/1576. DMI Report. 14 April 1943.
212 L/W/1/1433. Weekly internal intelligence summaries. 15 May 1942. p.3.
213 Ibid., 26 June 1942. p.2.
proclaimed British rule to be democratic and enlightened, and the cold fact that Empires are run with the aim of benefitting the metropole, both financially and otherwise.

(VI) The role of Nationalism

There is the crucial question of whether Indian army personnel were exposed to nationalist sentiment and how far this played a role in their decision to defect to the Japanese. Indian soldiers, despite the Raj’s best efforts to contain nationalist sentiment, were exposed to nationalist sentiment; this exposure was due in no small part to the Congress efforts at increasing nationalist sentiment in rural India. Officers and men of all ranks were aware of the changing political circumstances in India. For example, Gill was distinctly aware of the rise of nationalism and even harboured a favourable view of Gandhi’s character. His admiration for Gandhi was so strong that, on one occasion, he was reprimanded and nearly brought to court martial for having remonstrated with a British officer speaking ill of Gandhi at the mess.  

Gill was not alone in harbouring nationalist sentiment amongst the officers. A report commissioned by the Department of Military intelligence (DMI) shortly after the fall of Singapore included an interview with an Indian officer who escaped the Island shortly before the fall of Singapore. In it, the officer highlighted the morale of the Indian officers who were served there: “That of the Indian officers (I do not include VCOs in this category) about 60% are nationalists and desire an early and complete independence from India. The remaining

214 Gill, The story of the INA, pp.9-10.
40% are in general very dissatisfied with British rule in Malaya but hold no strong political views.”

The report, however, also highlighted the fact that most Indian officers did not favour foreign, even Japanese rule over India. British rule was also not desirable and many, in fact, resented it:

That a great majority of Indian officers feel that India should have a national government. Under such a government *alone* [italics added] can they be induced to put their heart and soul into the war effort and make their men do the same. At present they feel they are merely helping Britain to beat her enemies and perpetuate British rule in India.

The Indian rank and file did not escape exposure to the nationalist sentiment sweeping the country. They were less concerned with the state of British rule in India or nationalism than personnel of officer rank. This ignorance may have stemmed from the fact that the Indian rank and file consisted of illiterate peasants whose main concern was the economic well-being of themselves and their dependants. The report submitted by the ECO stated as much. Eighty percent of the VCOs and men he encountered in Malaya were ignorant of the political situation in India and were concerned mainly with their own economic well-being. Twenty percent were dissatisfied with British rule in India. This dissatisfaction stemmed not from any interest in politics but the feeling that the Indian people “were not getting a square deal from the British.” As mentioned earlier in the essay, Indian soldiers stationed in Malaya were,

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216 Ibid.
however, exposed to anti-British propaganda as they complained vociferously about their inferior status and pay.\textsuperscript{217}

The views of one Subedar Major exemplified this mind-set. He said that “so far as he was concerned, he did not care whether the British or the Japanese ruled in India so long as he went on receiving his pension.”\textsuperscript{218} The main concern of the average rank and file Indian soldier was, thus, his economic condition. It was difficult to be nationalist when a sepoy had a large family to support and when nationalism entailed the removal from power of those who maintained his rice bowl. Crasta’s account of an Indian soldier’s reaction to the surrender illustrates this pragmatic view which was held by so many sepoys: “No sooner was this over that I could see several faces becoming sad. One person (H.L.) started crying like a child, muttering, ‘I have served my masters for twenty-five years. What will I have to do now? What will become of my family? Oh God…”\textsuperscript{219}

Indian soldiers were ultimately, at all levels, exposed to nationalist sentiment in one way or another. This exposure did not, however, mean that the Indian soldiers were all nationalist and anti-British. Nor were they inclined to act disloyally towards their colonial employers. Disloyalty was not a prerequisite for an interest in the economic and social well-being and development of India. As the report by the Indian ECO stated, after the commencement of hostilities, the complaints of Indian soldiers had nothing to do with disloyalty and everything

\textsuperscript{218} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{219} Crasta, \textit{Eaten by the Japanese}, p.23.
to do with the conduct of operations against the Japanese.\textsuperscript{220} In fact, a letter by a King’s commissioned Indian Officer (KCIO) which was intercepted by the British succinctly described the mindset of the typical Indian officer:

Every Indian desires a higher political status for India. The difference is only in degree. The extremists want complete independence; the moderates dominion status and the last group will be satisfied with something approaching dominion status. This produces a feeling of dissatisfaction which does not always or even nearly amount to disloyalty at present but under certain circumstances it might develop into disloyalty. This fact is most important and must not be lost sight of.\textsuperscript{221}

As highlighted earlier, Indian soldiers did, however, harbour certain grievances and these did indeed translate into disloyalty following the Singapore’s surrender. Many Indians chose to join the Japanese under a particular set of circumstances which existed following the fall of Singapore. In that particular case, the potential for disloyalty translated into actual disloyalty. Thus, while exposure to nationalist sentiment did not trigger disloyalty and mutiny on its own, it did increase the propensity of soldiers to be disloyal when circumstances changed, and it did change in a most drastic fashion following the fall of Singapore. In fact, the circumstances which befell so many Indian soldiers in 1942 were never to repeat themselves again in the war. The Indian Army never again suffered defections on the scale seen in 1942.

\textsuperscript{221} L/WS/1/1576. GHQ to all Commands. “Subversive activities directed against the Indian army”. March 18 1943.
(VII) The uniqueness of the 1942 defections.

There is a need to explore why so many sepoys defected in 1942 and so few in 1943. Several reasons could account for the fact that so few sepoys defected later in the war. First of all, the British took tighter security measures against the INA with the aim of preventing further defections. Anti-Japanese viral propaganda was carried out at the unit level. This propaganda was carried to inculcate in Indian soldiers a hatred of Japanese soldiers. It stressed the brutality of the individual Japanese soldier and the harsh nature of Japanese imperial rule.222 Specially trained JOSH (a word translated as ‘pep’ or ‘enthusiasm’ in Urdu) groups were also formed and sent down to the units for this purpose.223 These JOSH groups disseminated news about the war, conducted anti-Japanese and anti-INA propaganda at the platoon level. These personnel were distributed so that every platoon had three JOSH representatives. With the JOSH groups, the British found an effective way to combat Japanese rumours. Most importantly, the individual Indian sepoy was imbued with a sense of what he was fighting for. No longer could Indian soldiers be paid and expected to do as they were told, they now had to be persuaded. The JOSH groups were so effective that GHQ India decided to expand their use amongst Indian Army units in 1944 following the success of trials. The British also monitored all soldiers closely. Indian soldiers were watched and those going on leave were monitored and screened when they returned.224


223 Ibid.

224 L/WS/1/1576. Unit security instructions-Personnel-India Command. 1943
Second, concrete attempts were made to improve the service conditions of Indian Army personnel. As indicated above, Indian soldiers were given increased monetary rewards for serving in the army. This reduced a major source of disaffection in units and gave some resemblance of equality between Indian and British ranks. Greater effort was also made in encouraging interaction between Indian and British soldiers. It was hoped that greater interaction would improve the rapport between the soldiers of both armies and also reduce the appearance of racial segregation in the army. If the Indian soldier was to fight well, he had to fight for a colonial master who appeared accessible and congenial, not one who was aloof and arrogant and whom he did not understand. This quote from a weekly intelligence summary is indicative:

In previous summaries reference has been made to the lack of respect and lack of appreciation which British soldiers, through ignorance, sometimes display towards Indian troops. To combat this ignorance, a British Infantry Battalion has introduced a ‘Brains trust’ where questions about India asked by BOs and NCOs are answered by Indian officers from neighbouring units. This is said to be promoting good feeling and understanding for Indian troops.\(^\text{225}\)

Third, fighting conditions for the INA personnel on the Burma front were horrendous and morale suffered as a result. The INA soldiers had to fight without sufficient food, water, medicines and ammunition.\(^\text{226}\) How could one expect poorly, fed, clothed and equipped troops to persuade other soldiers to defect to their side?

\(^\text{225}\) L/WS/1/1433. SEAC and India Command Weekly intelligence summary. 3 December 1943. p.4.
Fourth, the British were clearly on the winning side on the Burma front. They had air superiority, possessed heavy artillery support and superior numbers.\footnote{Refer to Marston, *Phoenix from the ashes: The Indian army in the Burma campaign* for a clear illustration of the way the British perfected their tactical doctrine so that all formations received comprehensive artillery and air support.} There was little incentive for the individual sepoy to join a losing side. Fifth, Indian soldiers were also better trained and as a result, had better morale and were more confident of beating the enemy. Armed with the knowledge that they were on the winning side, Indian soldiers had little incentive to defect.\footnote{See: the following Weekly intelligence summaries for the excellent morale of the Indian Army personnel SEAC and India Command Weekly intelligence summary. 19 May 1944. Appendix ‘A’ L/WS/1/1433.; SEAC and India Command Weekly intelligence summary. 14 July 1944. p.2.; L/WS/1/1433. 2 LT Jang Bahadur Singh Grewal.; L/WS/1/1433 SEAC and India Command Weekly intelligence summary. 18 August 1944. ‘JIFs in Burma’. pp.2-3.; L/WS/1/1433 SEAC and India Command Weekly intelligence summary. 4 August 1944. p.1.} On the contrary, it was the INA personnel and not the Indian soldiers who were surrendering in large numbers. A British intelligence report on the INA’s overall performance in India indicated this fact. From 1944-1945, no fewer than 10 000 out of a force of approximately 15000 INA soldiers who served in Burma surrendered or were captured by the British.\footnote{WO 208/868, Note by CSDIC (I) on the part played by the INA in active operations against Allied forces. 12 May 1946 cited in T.R. Sareen, *The Indian National Army: A documentary History*, p.311.} This is not to say there were no defections by Indian Army personnel. They were, however, so few in number as to be inconsequential to the Allied war effort in the theatre.\footnote{Ibid.}

The fighting on the Burma front is indicative of several facts. First of all, there was little nationalist sentiment of the militant type on the part of the individual sepoy. Indian soldiers did not defect *en masse* to the INA. They did, in fact, quite the contrary. If Indian Army soldiers were truly nationalist to the point of armed insurrection, they would have defected when the opportunity arose, no matter how hard conditions were. If they had chosen to do so in large numbers, there is little doubt that the British war effort in the theatre would have
been placed in serious jeopardy. Indian troops did, after all, form the bulk of soldiers manning the Burma frontier. Ultimately, a successful revolt could have occurred if the Indian soldiers deserted *en masse* to the Japanese. The fact that they did not clearly illustrated two further points. First, while the individual sepoy may have felt nationalist, they did not all feel equally strongly about the issue of India’s independence, if they had any opinions on the matter in the first place. Second, they also did not share a common, militant vision to expelling the British by force of arms. Nationalism had different meanings to different individuals. There was no overwhelming single strain of radical nationalism which prevailed amongst the sentiment of the Indian army personnel.

Indian soldiers defected in 1942 largely under a set of circumstances which were not to repeat themselves during 1942-45. While increased unit security and psychological warfare did play a role in dramatically reducing the rate of defections and it preserved the fighting capability of the Indian Army, it did not, however, diminish nationalism in anyway. Nationalism was there. It was always a consideration to all concerned; be they British, Japanese or Indian. The sentiment was, however, never of a type militant enough to foster an armed rebellion amongst the armed forces in 1942-1945.
Chapter III: The nature of the Indian Independence League (IIL) and the INA: The Indian community in Southeast Asia: A case study.

This chapter will examine the nature of the INA and IIL as a nationalist organisation. To ascertain this, 3 main questions will be dealt with. First, was the INA merely a puppet of the Japanese? Second, were the INA leadership truly motivated by nationalism? Third, by way of a case study; how did the INA’s treatment of the overseas Indian community and the community’s reception of the IIL and INA reflect upon its nature as a nationalist organisation? It is vital to examine the INA’s treatment of the civilian population and the latter’s reaction to the INA to better comprehend the nature of the nationalist character of the INA and IIL. These questions will be discussed in order below.

The INA and IIL were not merely puppets of the Japanese. A clear example was seen in one of the papers published by the IIL, the Indo-Shimbunsha. The paper was independent to the extent that its editors were even given the leverage to write what they wished. There is no evidence that the reporters in the paper practiced any self-censorship. Dr Kanichat Raghava Menon, for instance, worked for the IIL newspaper the Indo-Shimbunsha as a reporter and the Indian information bureau. He stated that the Iwakauro Kikan was always happy with his work and they never checked on him. In fact, they were so pleased with him and the news he was disseminating that they repeatedly gave him cakes and coffee as gestures of
appreciation. Both the Bureau and the newspaper were closed down after two years, when news of Japanese defeats became so bad that any form of censorship was useless.

While the INA was not a puppet of the Japanese, there was a fundamental lack of respect between Indians on the one hand and the Japanese on the other. This was particularly so for Indians who did not join the INA. Japanese soldiers frequently abused the Indian troops who were not part of the INA. Most appallingly, they would abuse Indians despite their claims to be guardians of the Indian community. One of the main reasons why Devan Nair chose not to join the INA was the fact that he saw Indian labourers being shaped being shipped off to Siam to build the infamous death railways. Japanese soldiers were, however, mindful of the INA and IIL and its association with Indian independence; which the Japanese high command purported to support. For example, Japanese troops refused to enter V.S. Krishnan’s home when it was found that he had displayed Gandhi’s picture on the wall. Japanese troops were, thus, respectful of those who joined the INA and IIL but not those who did not.

The independence of the INA was also confirmed by accounts in all the major memoirs. It could be argued that it would be in the interest of those who wrote these memoirs to emphasise the INA’s independence in order to distance themselves from any accusations of

231 Interview with Dr Kanichat Raghava Menon, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No 000025.
233 Interview with Chengara Veetil Devan Nair, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000049.
234 Interview with V.S. Krishnan, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 002424.
being Axis collaborators. This independence is, however, corroborated by accounts of the INA in oral history.\textsuperscript{236} For example, it is highlighted also by the fact that there were numerous instances of persons who joined the INA in order to avoid arrest by the Japanese. If the INA was merely a puppet of the Japanese, then these persons would not have joined the INA for protection.

From the very beginning, the INA tried to maintain autonomy from the Japanese high command. This was clearly demonstrated by the shutting down of the first INA under Mohan Singh. Mohan Singh, following a series of incidents where he tried to assert the INA’s autonomy from the Japanese, was arrested. The autonomy of the INA was further seen when Indian soldiers followed Mohan Singh’s orders to disband the INA following his arrest by the Japanese.\textsuperscript{237}

The second INA was also no puppet to the Japanese. This was demonstrated by Bose’s constant resistance to Japanese demands which were contrary to the ideals, nature and purpose of the INA. The clearest instance of this was seen in Bose’s negotiations to define the Indo-Japanese relationship before commencement of the Arakan offensive and the expected occupation of Indian territory. Bose refused to split the Subhas Brigade of the INA into tiny detachments which were to be attached to Japanese units. INA units were to be under Indian command, all Indian territory which was captured by the Japanese was to be administered by the Azad Hind government, the INA was to be recognised as being the army of an equal ally and orders would be issued to INA soldiers to shoot any Japanese soldier.

\textsuperscript{236} See, for instance, the accounts in interviews with Dr Lakshmi Sahgal and Thivy Nirvan, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession Nos. 001182 & 002788.

\textsuperscript{237} For a clear account of events see: Singh, \textit{Soldier’s contribution to India’s independence}, pp.198-216. And Fujiwara Iwaichi, \textit{F.Kikan: Japanese army intelligence operations in Southeast Asia in WWII}, pp.238-246.
caught looting or raping on Indian territory. Most significantly however, was the fact that the INA was not to be, at any point in the campaign to liberate India, subject to Japanese military law. No other army allied with the Japanese enjoyed such a privilege. This autonomy from Japanese military law meant that no INA soldier could be tried by the Japanese for war crimes. The Japanese grudgingly agreed to all these terms.

The INA leadership was strongly motivated by nationalism. The archives clearly bear out Subhas Chandra Bose’s conviction and belief in his cause. Bose never demonstrated anything to the contrary. By all accounts, he was a tireless leader and worker who provided inspired leadership for his men. The middle ranks of the IIL leadership, while avowedly nationalist, did not always demonstrate that nationalism was their foremost aim in joining the INA. This was clearly seen from a British report which stated that in Burma:

Following the round-up of most of the IIL, interrogation of office-bearers and officials have revealed that this system was based on a form of gangsterism and blackmail. The IIL executives allowed nothing to interfere with their extortion of both rich and poor; donations were given by some people in order to avoid being handed over to the Kempeitai, to save their women folk being removed, or to avoid being conscripted into the INA. League funds were spent by office-bearers on presents for their wives and mistresses. One source describes the league as the most highly organised and well paid racket of the war.

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239 Ibid.
240 Interview with Mrs Hena Singha, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000354.; Mrs Singha heng talks about how he blew his top when the Japanese surrendered.
The INA/IIL did not enjoy the universal support of the Indian diaspora. The paradox was that whereas it proclaimed its own independence from the Japanese, the INA was however, dependent on the Japanese for its existence. For example, it relied upon the fear of Japanese arms to secure financial contributions from its own people. It also depended upon the Japanese for weapons and ammunition. While thus protecting Indians from the worst excesses of Japanese rule, it was ultimately reliant upon the Japanese for its existence. Ultimately, there were many strains of nationalism and Bose’s did not have a universal appeal.

Many members of the Indian community joined the INA and IIL for reasons other than nationalist fervour. Some persons joined out of an intention to avoid being conscripted by the Japanese as labourers. Take S.V. Lingam for instance.²⁴³ Someone told his father that if his son was in danger of being conscripted by the Japanese army for labour, then “Why not get your son admitted to this unit so that ...he can be here(Singapore)? And because he was assured that I will not be taken out of Singapore he made me to be there.”²⁴⁴ He also indicated to his interviewer that he, as an individual, was never happy to join the INA. Interestingly, he was bullied for speaking only English as all orders were given in Hindustani. It was so bad that he pleaded with his father every week to take him home, for “I(he) do not want to be here.” This illustrated the fragmented nature of Indian nationalism; anti-British sentiment was a core focus which overrode all other differences between the nationalists.

²⁴³ Interview with Mrs S.V. Lingam, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000014.
²⁴⁴ Ibid.
Other individuals joined the IIL to survive or gain material benefits. Dr Kanichat Raghava Menon, for instance, stated that with regards to the IIL’s role of fighting for India’s independence under the Japanese flag, “outwardly, everyone is in favour of that, inwardly, not a single one was in favour of that.”

He also joined the IIL and worked for the Indian information bureau and the Indo-Shimbunsha in order to get a salary to survive on. John Paul Kanagaratnam stated if one did not join the INA, one would suffer from a lack of food. There was thus an incentive to join the IIL in order to receive the extra food coupons issued to the IIL personnel.

Chelliah Thurairajah Retnam also pointed out that joining the INA brought more food to the table. Individuals also joined the IIL to gain material benefits. Velayuther Ambiavagar, for instance, stated that while most Indians disliked the INA, “many people joined them for the sake of personal gain, personal advantage and some did gain that way. They could curry favour with them and get … more supplies of food, certain positions of employment from the Japanese which they might not have otherwise. Yes for self-gain, self-advancement and self-protection. A few Indians did take advantage of that.”

Paul Kanagaratnam verified this when he stated that while there was no punishment for not joining the INA, there was the disincentive of receiving less food rations. There were also the material benefits for joining

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245 Interview with Dr Kanichat Raghava Menon, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000025.
246 Ibid.
247 Interview with John Paul Kanagaratnam, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 001713.
248 Interview with Chelliah Thurairajah Retnam, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000579.
249 Interview with Velayuther Ambiavagar, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000355.
250 Interview with John Paul Kanagaratnam, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 001713.
up. Dr Kanichat Raghava Menon stated “by joining the INA you get fine dress, you get fine food, you get to march, you can have drinks, you can keep your health good.”

The IIL were at times, extortionate. Harsh methods were utilised to extract funds from the Indian community for the purpose of supporting the INA. On the latter issue of fund raising, Dr Menon said:

There was no question of Indians keeping aloof you know…So Indians go and ask, means they have to give. If they do not give well…..we were under Iwakuro Kikan…They were controlling the Indian masses. You just tell them, Well we were only able to get so much. What! So many Indians and you could not get. Who are the people who did not give? Finished. The moment they see a Japanese with you they will give out the whole thing to save their lives.

This is verified by Abdul Kader Tyebally who stated that there was always the threat of persecution by the INA as he did not donate to the movement. This hostile treatment was exacerbated by the fact that he was a Muslim and the INA was a predominantly Hindu dominated. INA soldiers were repeatedly dispatched to his office to coerce him to donate more to the organisation. At one point, the INA even threatened to seize his title deeds in

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251 Interview with Dr Kanichat Raghava Menon, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000025.
252 Ibid.
253 Interview with Abdul Kader Tyebally, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000161.
order to sell off his property. K.M. Rangarajoo also stated that many wealthy Indians felt the pinch of having to donate so much to the INA.\(^{254}\)

Other Indians wanted to avoid brutal treatment by the Japanese. For example, Dr Kanichat Raghava Menon stated many Southeast Asian Indians joined the INA and IIL so they could be free of Japanese abuses. He said:

… and here in SEA Indians were forced to join the INA to save their skin, to save any further atrocities from the Japanese military force ... So which is better, to get into a military uniform power to fight for India’s independence or to get beaten to death by the Japanese militia.\(^{255}\)

In another example, S Damodaran stated that “once you were in the INA, you didn’t have much to do with the Japanese. So if you are an INA in uniform, they don’t touch you, they don’t stop you. And that was something like a ‘passport’. They had a great respect. They showed respect to the INA people.”\(^{256}\) Krishnan Kolamgare said that in order to avoid abusive Japanese, Indians just showed the INA badge or Gandhi’s picture.\(^{257}\) This is further backed up by K. Kesavapany’s account of how his brother slapped a Japanese soldier following an altercation and then joined the INA for protection against Japanese retaliation.\(^{258}\) In yet another account, Kartar Singh recounted how his brother, who was a

\(^{254}\) Interview with K.M. Rangarajoo, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000276.
\(^{255}\) Interview with Dr Kanichat Raghava Menon, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000025.
\(^{256}\) Interview with S. Damodaran, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000127.
\(^{257}\) Interview with Krishnan Kolamgare, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 001252.
\(^{258}\) Interview with K. Kesavapany, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 003553.
teacher, punched a Japanese soldier after the latter slapped him. His brother then fled home. On the advice of his cousin, he later joined the INA to protect himself from any punishments.\textsuperscript{259} Another example could be seen in Dato Krishnan, who was then working for the Japanese as a translator in Aceh. He incurred the animosity of Kempeitai agents in the district where he was posted. Fearing arrest and torture and seeing no possibility of being allowed by the Japanese authorities to be transferred elsewhere, he joined the INA’s boy’s cadet wing. He was posted out not long after as the Japanese authorities had to defer to the wishes of the INA.\textsuperscript{260} In yet another instance, Vilasini (Mrs) Perumbulavil, recounted an incident where her mother was ordered to cook for Japanese soldiers who were working near their house. She refused to and was threatened. Mrs Perumbulavil’s father then complained to the INA regarding the matter with the result that the Japanese soldiers were given a dressing down by their superiors and ordered never to harass the family again.\textsuperscript{261}

It must be noted many diaspora Indians were not enthusiastic about Bose’s call to arms. Gandhi’s non-violent approach to opposing the British was popular amongst Indians. So when Bose came to Singapore promoting direct action and armed opposition to the Raj, more than a few Indians were dismissive.\textsuperscript{262} According to Dr Raghava Kanichat Menon, this was the case for both the lower-educated Indians and the intellectuals.\textsuperscript{263} He further indicated that “They were jubilant that he was coming. Very few people were prepared to fight by his side. They said Oh Yes, Oh yes, Oh yes, yes, we are coming. But when it comes to the question of

\textsuperscript{259} Interview with Kartar Singh, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 002335.
\textsuperscript{260} Interview with Dato Krishnan, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 002192.
\textsuperscript{261} Interview with Vilasini (Mrs) Perumbulavil, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 002437.
\textsuperscript{262} Interview with Dr Kanichat Raghava Menon, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000025.
\textsuperscript{263} Ibid.
joining the army, you do not find anybody. That is wishful thinking.”

This was very much supported by Richard Corridon, who worked for the Malayan Security Service as an inspector. When asked if the Indian population had swung to the left as a result of Bose and the activities of the INA and the IIL, he stated this was not the case. The reason being most Tamils were Hindu and the religion was, by and far, a pacifist religion. Indians in Malaya and Singapore were, thus, more inclined to support Gandhi’s views of non-violence than Bose’s violent call to arms. He also repeated this statement later, stating that the Indians in Singapore were not overly influenced by the INA as they were likely to have been targeted for extortion during the war.

Those Indians who were supportive of Bose were drawn as much by the magnetism of Bose’s personality as they were towards the cause of Indian nationalism. Bose was, by all accounts, a charismatic and charming leader who was a major reason why many chose to join the movement in the first place. It is, of course hard to ascertain if it was Bose’s charisma or nationalism, or a combination of both, which persuaded so many to join. What is clear, however, is that Bose’s dynamic and charismatic leadership did convince many to enlist in the INA and IIL. For example, Narayana Karuppiiah initially had no interest in joining the IIL but enlisted when Bose became the leader. She had this to say about him, “it was the first speech given by Netaji. When we heard, it was really a magnetic speech. He was a dynamic leader. And we were attracted by his speech. Immediately, instantly I decided to join the INA to fight for the freedom of India.”

Devan Nair elaborated as much. “I had listened to Subhas Chandra Bose speak in Kuala Lumpur, Singapore. He was a fine orator. He delivered

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264 Ibid.
265 Interview with Richard Corridon, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000044.
266 Ibid.
267 Interview with Narayana Karuppiiah, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000050.
fiery speeches which whipped up anti-British enthusiasm and enthusiasm for the cause of Indian independence.”

Dr Menon described Bose’s first speech in Singapore as a “grand affair” and people were “spellbound. People forgot the heavens ... even the heavens were moved hearing his speech.” K.M. Rengarajoo stated likewise in almost identical terms. Bose was no less charming in person. As Mrs Hena Singha said, “If you just meet him and talk to him, you’ll be mesmerised. He talks so sincere.” Joginder Singh stated as much. “Bose had the makings of a good leader. He would for three hours at a stretch keep on talking, talking, talking, and he was a fiery speaker.” Singh further added “He (Bose) was a very impressive speaker, very fiery and he held the crowd in his control, nobody moved until he finished speaking.” Mehervan Singh also said that Bose had “the power to catch the mind of the people.” Just as the National Socialist Party in Germany was as much of a personality cult as it was a movement, so, the evidence suggests, was Bose’s INA. Bose was a charismatic, hardworking and energetic leader who managed through his personality, and superlative communicative skills, to convince previously doubtful Indians of the veracity of the cause of Indian independence. It was evident that he was central to the movement; Mohan Singh was never able to inspire as Bose did when Singh was in power.

268 Interview with Chengara Veetil Devan Nair, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000049.
269 Interview with Dr Kanichat Raghava Menon, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000025.
270 Interview with K.M. Rengarajoo, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000276.
271 Interview with Mrs Hena Singha, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000354.;
272 Interview with Joginder Singh, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000365.
273 Ibid.
274 Interview with Mehervan Singh, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000553.
Diaspora Indians did not join the INA for other several other reasons. Some Indians who worked for the British administration before the Japanese occupation remained loyal to their salt. Ahmed Khan was an example.\textsuperscript{275} Other members of the Indian community remained quite ambivalent towards the promotion of an aggressive Indian nationalist movement. Take, for example, Shammugasivanathan’s uncle and himself who were more preoccupied with surviving on a day to day basis than with any nationalist cause that was being promoted to them.\textsuperscript{276} Valuppillai s/o Pandarapillai also said this was so in his case. He was “in sympathy” with the INA but did not have the time or strength to join them.\textsuperscript{277}

There were also many who supported the INA at first but later turned their backs on it as they saw the true brutal nature of Japanese rule. They joined for the ideal but were far removed from the brutalities of Japanese behaviour towards Indians in the rural countryside. Demographically, support for the INA came in no small part from the urban Indian population.\textsuperscript{278} Damodaran. Many also joined quite simply because they were anti-British. They were, however, not pro Japanese.\textsuperscript{279} Mehervan Singh described it succinctly when he said that it was a fluid and complex situation and while many Indians were pro-nationalist, they were not pro Japanese.\textsuperscript{280}

\textsuperscript{275} Interview with Ahmed Khan, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000150.
\textsuperscript{276} Interview with Shammugasivanathan, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000263.
\textsuperscript{277} Interview with Valuppillai s/o Pandarapillai, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000339.
\textsuperscript{278} Interview with Chengara Veetil Devan Nair, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000049; Interview with S. Damodaran, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000127.
\textsuperscript{279} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{280} Interview with Mahervan Singh, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000553.
Ahmed Khan, who worked for the Special Branch and helped them investigate the INA and IIL after the war, saw that most Indians in Singapore, under the influence of Japanese propaganda, did support the IIL and the INA. This, however, changed when they saw the brutal nature of Japanese rule. INA and IIL participation also spread across all classes of Indians in varying professions.\textsuperscript{281}

Some Indians chose not to join the INA out of principle. They simply did not want to be part of what they perceived to be a puppet organisation. Former President of Singapore Devan Nair was one such person. Another example could be seen from Michael Fernandez. Nightly after dinner conversations with his family and members of the Malayalee community revealed the same sentiment. They supported Bose but did not join the INA for fear that it was a puppet organisation.\textsuperscript{282} T.R. Pathy was another case in point. He did not join the INA because “while that man (Subhas Bose) is a great man, actually he was for his country and all that ... he joined with the wrong partner-Japan. As a result, many people did not join the INA.\textsuperscript{283} It must be noted, however, that his anti-INA perceptions may have been moulded by the fact that he was Ceylonese. There were also those who did want to join the INA but changed their minds as the tide of war began to turn against the Japanese. Bala Subramaniam was one such example.\textsuperscript{284}

\textsuperscript{281} Interview with Ahmed Khan, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000150.
\textsuperscript{282} Interview with Mike Fernandez, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000076.
\textsuperscript{283} Interview with T.R. Pathy, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000360.
\textsuperscript{284} Interview with Bala Subramaniam, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 003202.
The Ceylonese community in Singapore and Malaya was unreceptive to the INA and IIL. Two reasons could be offered for this. First, they did not see themselves as Indians. Second, they identified strongly with the British cause. Velayuther Ambiavagar succinctly described the reasons for a lack of a Ceylonese support when he said “there were very, very few people from Ceylon who joined the INA. Not all Tamils from Singapore and south India who joined it either. Large numbers didn’t believe in it and didn’t join it. They didn’t think that was the way India would want to gain independence by joining the Japanese to fight the British. No.”

It is noteworthy that the subject being interviewed was Tamil but did not believe in the INA as he perceived his nationality as being Ceylonese. Chelliah Thuriaraju Ratnam also stated that few Ceylonese joined the INA as they were “Not Indians”. He further stated that the average Indian had a very negative attitude towards the INA. T.R. Pathy corroborated that there were very few Ceylonese who supported the INA. Some Ceylonese even hated the INA and thought the cause to be utterly useless. This was the case with Arthur Fernando Cyril who utterly discredited and ridiculed the INA in his interview.

It is difficult to establish the extent of the local Indian community’s support for the INA. Devan Nair and Mike Fernandez, S Damodaranand, Motiwalla, Abdeakalli Narwalla, and Shammugasivanthan all indicated that there was widespread support amongst the Indian community. But Richard Corridon states the complete opposite. Rangarajoo also stated

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285 Interview with Velayuther Ambiavagar, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000355.
286 Interview with Chelliah Thuriaraju Ratnam, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000579.
287 Ibid.
288 Interview with T.R. Pathy, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000360.
289 Interview with Fernando Cyril, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000328.
290 Interview with Chengara Veetil Devan Nair, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000049. ; Interview with Mike Fernandez, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000076 ; Interview with Motiwalla, Abdeakalli Narwalla,
that many wealthy Indians felt the pinch donating so much to the INA while Mahervan Singh declared that most Indians were anti-INAP292 This disparity in the views presented may reflect the fact Corridon was sent down by the British government to investigate and neutralise pro-INAnment after the war, when many were trying to hide their involvement with the INA and IIL during the Japanese occupation. Another individual who claimed the INA had little support, Dr Menon, may have possessed a sense of guilt about associating with the Japanese and was possibly trying to whitewash the community of any involvement with the movement.

In sum, the evidence suggests that the Indian community held a wide array of views regarding the INA. This is not in the least bit surprising as memories of the INA invoked strong emotions in this Indian community. The perception and memory of the interviewees with regard to the INA were shaped very much by the strong discourse and promotion of the nationalist myth which followed in the post war period.293 What emerges from the evidence, however, is that the INA and IIL did not have a universal following amongst the Indian community in Singapore and Malaya during World War II. The reactions to the Japanese were diverse and support for the IIL and INA was far from universal. Individuals joined for a bevy of reasons which ranged from the need to survive to a desire to serve a nationalist ideal.

The INA was very much an independent organisation. Its leaders were fiercely independent and it had its own government and system of administration. It was an allied army of the

Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000204 ; Interview with Shammugasivanthan, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000263
291 Interview with Richard Corridon, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000044.
292 Interview with Mahervan Singh, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 000553.
Japanese and not a puppet. While the organisation was avowedly nationalist, the same could not be said of all its members. Indians joined the INA and IIL for a variety of reasons. Some joined to avoid Japanese brutalities, others to survive and yet others to reap the material benefits of collaboration. While the evidence cannot conclusively pinpoint any overriding view regarding the INA, it does however, illustrate the Indian community’s varied reactions to the Indian National Army.
Conclusion:

The INA was a force produced by a set of circumstances present only at a particular period in the war. The primary circumstance leading to the surrender of so many Indian soldiers which pushed them to join the INA was the British conduct of the campaign in Malaya, which culminated in the eventual fall and surrender of Singapore. Indian Army soldiers were unprepared for the campaign in Malaya. They lacked jungle training and were repeatedly outflanked and outmanoeuvred by the Japanese forces. They were even outgunned. Indian troops did not have tanks and relied on light armoured vehicles like Bren gun carriers to form the mainstay of their armoured forces. The Japanese, on the other hand, were equipped with no fewer than 200 light and medium tanks from the 3rd Tank Brigade. Battle after battle with the Japanese resulted in defeat, culminating in the surrender of Singapore. Indian units were badly mauled in the retreat from the Malayan peninsula; many were scattered and virtually destroyed as fighting formations. Examples of these defeats were seen at the Battle of Jitra and Slim river where the 11th Indian Division were shattered. Only 1200 men escaped to Johore. The 12th and 28th Indian Brigades shared the same fate and ceased to exist as fighting formations.

The repeated cycle of defeat and retreat took a toll on Indian Army morale. Indian troops were demoralised and weary. The surrender at Farrer Park came as a shock to the Indian troops gathered there. An expected fight to the finish with the Japanese did not materialise. They were instead ‘handed over like sheep’ to the Japanese. The Indian POWs had two choices. They could join the INA or face harsh treatment in internment camps. POWs also

295 Ibid., p.32.
296 Ibid.
298 Shri Moti Ram, *Two trials at the Red Fort*, pp.105, 113, 118.
underwent rigorous propaganda sessions which inculcated a sense of nationalism in them.\textsuperscript{299} 45,000 prisoners eventually chose to join the INA.\textsuperscript{300} Those who did choose to face imprisonment were forced to undergo harsh treatment at the hands of their Japanese captors. When the second INA was formed under Subhas Chandra Bose, recruitment was largely conducted amongst the civilian population of Malaya and Singapore and the INA was expanded.\textsuperscript{301}

Inherent problems in the British Indian Army also led many British Indian Army personnel to defect to the INA. The slow and ponderous process of Indianisation in the Indian Army disillusioned many native officers with British Rule. Indian soldiers felt slighted by the apparent poor regard the British held of their abilities. There was discrimination against the Indian soldiers serving in the British-Indian army. Issues such as pay caused much resentment amongst Indian Army personnel. Indian troops were angered by the fact their British counterparts received more pay than themselves. They were also angered by perceived racial slights such as the barring of Indians on train carriages meant for whites in the Federated Malay States and the refusal of white officers to allow their Indian colleagues admission into the mess.\textsuperscript{302} Numerous such incidents of discrimination generated a sense of resentment and anger amongst the sepoys which encouraged them to join the INA.\textsuperscript{303}

The fact that the Indian Army was mercenary in nature also contributed to the desertions. Indian troops were recruited to serve in the Raj based not on any notions of nationalism but

\textsuperscript{299} Kiani, \textit{India's Freedom Struggle}, p.49.
\textsuperscript{301} Ibid., p.312.
\textsuperscript{302} Dhillon, \textit{From my bones}, pp.67,82.
\textsuperscript{303} See: Dhillon, \textit{From my bones}; Kiani, \textit{India’s Freedom Struggle}; Khan, \textit{My memories of INA and its Netaji}. 
rather, with lucrative financial incentives. Soldiers were paid, clothed and fed well in a stable and prestigious career and it was this fact that induced many to join the Indian Army. \(^{304}\)

When the British were defeated, several sepoys considered their oaths of allegiance dissolved. Some sought to survive under the changed circumstances. Others sought to thrive under the new regime. Personal interest was a factor which led some sepoys to defect.

The INA was nationalist in creed. The same cannot be said of its rank and file. Some were corrupt and sought to milk the Indian community of its wealth and valuables. Others joined the INA out of fear of the Japanese. The INA offered protection to those who had offended the Japanese occupiers or persons who simply wanted a guarantee against Japanese acts of aggression like being slapped or imprisoned; the Japanese treated those who wore INA badges with greater respect than those who did not. \(^{305}\) Several also joined the INA for the material benefits offered to them. For instance, those who joined the INA in Singapore and Malaya received extra ration coupons. \(^{306}\) These coupons were invaluable to many who were hungry and starving. This was all the more so as the Japanese military situation deteriorated and the supply of food to Singapore dwindled.

The Imphal campaign demonstrated clearly that circumstances, and not nationalism, was the key factor which led to the formation of the INA in 1942. In 1943, while few Indian soldiers defected, no fewer than 15 000 INA personnel surrendered. \(^{307}\) The fighting on the Burma

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\(^{305}\) Interview with Krishnan Kolangare, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 001252.

\(^{306}\) Interview with John Paul Kanagaratnam, Recorded by the Oral History Centre, National Archives of Singapore, Accession No. 001713.

front was indicative of several facts. First of all, there was little nationalist sentiment, of the militant type on the part of the individual sepoy. Indian soldiers did not defect *en masse* to the INA. They did, in fact, quite the contrary. If Indian Army soldiers were truly nationalist to the point of armed insurrection, they would have defected when the opportunity arose, no matter how hard conditions were. If they had chosen to do so in large numbers, there is little doubt that the British war effort in the theatre would have been placed in serious jeopardy. Indian troops did, after all, form the bulk of soldiers manning the Burma frontier. Ultimately, a successful revolt could have occurred if the Indian soldiers deserted to the Japanese.

The fact that they did not clearly illustrated two further points. First, while the individual sepoy may have felt nationalistic, they did not all feel equally strongly about the issue of India’s independence, if they had any opinions on the matter in the first place. Second, they also did not share a common, militant vision expelling the British by force of arms. Nationalism had different meanings to different individuals. There was no overwhelming single strain of radical nationalism which prevailed amongst the sentiment of the Indian army personnel. Not only did Indians refuse to join the INA, they also enlisted in massive numbers during World War II. No fewer than two million Indians volunteered for service during this period.308 A military censor’s report gave revealing clues as to why this was the case:

One of the reasons for this is suggested by the remarks of a small Lahore restaurant manager who says “while the poor suffer on account of high prices and food shortage, Govt has made elaborate managements for tea and other refreshments for its sepoys at railway stations. Every sepoy gets a very good supply of tea, cold drinks and food. Railway travel is very comfortable for a sepoy.”309

308 V. Longer, *Red coats to olive green*, p.216.
309 Fortnightly summary covering Indian troops for period 210443 to 050543. p.1. L/P&J/12/655.
Economics, rather than nationalism seemed to dictate the outlook of Indians towards warfare. The Governor of Punjab offered further candid insight into the workings of the peasant mind: “On the other hand, I fancy the agricultural masses would rather have welcomed a war, which would have had the immediate effect of sending up the prices of primary products and of increasing employment amongst the martial races.” If Indians were really against British rule in India, it was unlikely they would have flocked to join the armed forces which upheld that government’s rule.

The key difference between the Indian Army which surrendered in Singapore in 1942 and the Indian Army which fought in Burma in 1944 was the changed circumstances. The British Indian soldiers were better paid, led, trained and equipped. They were also effective at combating the Japanese who were on the contrary poorly led and poorly equipped.

In sum, Indian Army soldiers defected in 1942 largely under a set of circumstances which did not repeat themselves for the rest of the war. While increased unit security and psychological warfare did play a role in dramatically reducing the rate of defections and preserved the fighting capability of the Indian Army, it did not, however, diminish nationalism in anyway. Nationalism was there. It was always a consideration to all concerned; be they British, Japanese or Indian. The sentiment was, however, never of a type militant enough to foster an armed rebellion amongst the armed forces in 1942-1945.

312 Fujiwara Iwaichi, F.Kikan: Japanese army intelligence operations in Southeast Asia in WWII
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