

I: INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY- NETAJI **Dr. A. Ravisankar, Ph.D.,**

Following the outbreak of World War II, Japan invaded South East Asia. At the time 70,000 troops were stationed in the region, most of them along the Malayan coast. Japan conducted a lightning campaign which culminated in the fall of the Malayan peninsula and Singapore in 1942. In the Singapore campaign alone, 45,000 Indian prisoners of war were captured. It was from these prisoners of war that the Japanese decided to create an auxiliary army which would fight against the British.

The first INA was formed under Mohan Singh, a former officer of the British Indian Army captured during the Malay campaign. Conditions in the prisoner of war camps, as well as resentment against the British in general, saw many prisoners of war volunteer join the Indian National Army

The initiative received considerable support from the Imperial Japanese Army and from the ethnic Indian population of South-East Asia. However, disagreements between Mohan Singh and Japanese Army Command regarding the autonomy of the Indian National Army led to the disbandment of the first INA in December 1942

Subash Chandra Bose and the second INA

Although Mohan Singh had angered the Japanese Army Command through his actions, they relented to form a second Indian National Army. Mohan Singh himself recommended that Subash Chandra Bose for the leadership role. His reputation as a committed nationalist was known to both the Indian diaspora of South East Asia and the Imperial Japanese Army. As such, they were more open to the idea of a nationalist army led by Subash Chandra Bose. The activities of Subash Chandra Bose in India had forced the British authorities to imprison him, but he escaped and reached Berlin in 1941.

Although the German leadership were sympathetic to his cause, logistic problems prevented them from granting any support to his quest for raising an army to fight the British. However, the Japanese were ready to support him and upon their personal invitation, Subash Chandra Bose arrived in Singapore in July 1943 to take command of what would be known as the second Indian National Army, now known by its alternative name as the Azad Hind Fauj.

Operations of the Azad Hind Fauj

After Subash Chandra Bose took command of the Azad Hind Fauj, there was a swell of volunteers looking to join the INA. Although Subash Chandra Bose agreed for the INA to remain subordinate to the Japanese Army, he saw it as a necessary sacrifice towards the fulfilment of the ultimate goal of freeing India from the British Empire. The Azad Hind Fauj participated in operation U-Go, the 1944 Japanese campaign towards British India. Although the INA saw initial success during the early phases of the operation, they were forced to withdraw during the battle of Imphal and battle of Kohima (Fought on April 4th, 1944) which saw the disastrous defeat for the Japanese Army at the hands of the British.

The INA lost a substantial number of men and materiel in this retreat. A number of units were disbanded or used to feed into new divisions of the now declining Japanese Army Following the Japanese defeat in World War 2, most of the members of the INA were captured by the British. Subash Chandra Bose himself eluded capture and was reported to have died in a plane crash near Taiwan in September 1945.

II: CABINET MISSION PLAN-1946

Cabinet Mission was a high-powered mission sent in February 1946 to India by the Atlee Government (British Prime Minister.) The mission had three British cabinet members – Pethick Lawrence, Stafford Cripps, & and A.V. Alexander. The Cabinet Mission's aim was to discuss the transfer of power from British to Indian leadership.

Objectives of Cabinet Mission

- To obtain an agreement with the Indian leaders as to the framing of a constitution for India.
- To formulate a constitution-making body (the Constituent Assembly of India).
- To establish an Executive Council with the support of the major Indian parties.

Why did the Cabinet Mission fail?

The main reasons for the failure of the Cabinet Mission are given below:

- The Congress Party wanted a strong centre with minimum powers for the provinces.
- The Muslim League wanted strong political safeguards for the Muslims like parity in the legislatures.
- Since both parties had many ideological differences and could not find common ground, the mission came up with its own set of proposals in May 1946.
 - The Dominion of India would be granted independence, without any partition.
 - The provinces would be divided into three groups/sections:
 - Group A: Madras, Central Provinces, UP, Bihar, Bombay and Orissa
 - Group B: Punjab, Sindh, NWFP and Baluchistan
 - Group C: Bengal and Assam
 - The Muslim-majority provinces were grouped into two groups and the remaining Hindu-majority in one of the groups.
 - The central government at Delhi would have powers over the defence, foreign affairs, communications and currency. The rest of the powers would be vested with the provinces.
 - A constituent assembly would be set up for writing a new constitution for the country. An interim government would be established until a new government was formed on the basis of the constitution written by the constituent assembly.
- The Congress was not keen on the idea of the groupings of provinces on the basis of Hindu-Muslim majority and vying for control at the centre. It was also against the idea of a weak centre. The Muslim League did not want any changes to the proposals.
- Since the plan was not accepted, a new plan was proposed by the mission in June 1946. This plan proposed the division of India into a Hindu-majority India and a Muslim-majority India later to be renamed Pakistan. A list of princely states was also made that could either join the union or remain independent.
- The Congress Party under Jawaharlal Nehru did not accept the second plan. Instead, it agreed to be part of the constituent assembly.
- The Viceroy invited 14 men to form the interim government. There were 5 from the Congress, 5 from the League, 1 member each representing the Sikh, Parsee, Indian Christian and scheduled caste communities.
- Both the League and the Congress were given the right to nominate 5 members to the Viceroy's interim council. The Congress nominated Zakir Hussain as one of the members

to which the League objected saying only it represented Indian Muslims and no other party. The Muslim League did not take part in it.

- The Congress leaders entered the viceroy's interim council and thus Nehru headed the interim government. The new government began the task of framing a constitution for the country.
- Congress-led governments were formed in most provinces including the NWFP. In Bengal and Sind, the League formed the governments.
- Jinnah and the League objected to the new central government. He geared to agitate for Pakistan and urged Muslims to demand Pakistan by any means. He called for 'Direct Action Day' on 16 August 1946.
- This call led to widespread communal rioting in the country with 5000 people being killed on the first day in Calcutta. Communal riots spread to many other areas notably Noakhali and Bihar.
- There was a call for the partitioning of the country on account of the riots. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was one of the first Congress leaders to acknowledge the inevitability of the partition as a means to stop the brutal violence.

III: MOUNTBATTEN PLAN

Lord Mountbatten (India's last viceroy) proposed a plan in May 1947 according to which provinces were to be declared independent successor states with the power to choose whether to join the constituent assembly or not.

Mountbatten Plan Background

- Lord Mountbatten came to India as the last Viceroy and was assigned the task of a speedy transfer of power by the then British Prime Minister Clement Atlee.
- In May 1947, Mountbatten came up with a plan under which he proposed that the provinces be declared independent successor states and then be allowed to choose whether to join the constituent assembly or not. This plan was called the 'Dickie Bird Plan'.
- Jawaharlal Nehru (Born on November 14, 1889) when apprised of the plan, vehemently opposed it saying it would lead to Balkanisation of the country. Hence, this plan was also called Plan Balkan.
- Then, the viceroy came up with another plan called the June 3 Plan. This plan was the last plan for Indian independence. It is also called the Mountbatten Plan.
- The June 3 Plan included the principles of partition, autonomy, sovereignty to both nations, right to make their own constitution.
- Above all, the Princely States such as Jammu and Kashmir were given a choice to either join India or Pakistan. The consequences of these choices would affect the new nations for decades to come.
- This plan was accepted by both the Congress and the Muslim League. By then, the Congress had also accepted the inevitability of the partition.
- This plan was put into action by the **Indian Independence Act 1947** which was passed in the British Parliament and received the royal assent on 18 July 1947.

Provisions of the Mountbatten Plan

- British India was to be partitioned into two dominions – India and Pakistan.
- The constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly would not be applicable to the Muslim-majority areas (as these would become Pakistan). The question of a separate constituent assembly for the Muslim-majority areas would be decided by these provinces.
- As per the plan, the legislative assemblies of Bengal and Punjab met and voted for the partition. Accordingly, it was decided to partition these two provinces along religious lines.
- The legislative assembly of Sind would decide whether to join the Indian constituent assembly or not. It decided to go to Pakistan.
- A referendum was to be held on NWFP (North-Western Frontier Province) to decide which dominion to join. NWFP decided to join Pakistan while Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan boycotted and rejected the referendum.
- The date for the transfer of power was to be August 15, 1947.
- To fix the international boundaries between the two countries, the Boundary Commission was established chaired by Sir Cyril Radcliffe. The commission was to demarcate Bengal and Punjab into the two new countries.
- The princely states were given the choice to either remain independent or accede to India or Pakistan. The British suzerainty over these kingdoms was terminated.
- The British monarch would no longer use the title ‘Emperor of India’.
- After the dominions were created, the British Parliament could not enact any law in the territories of the new dominions.
- Until the time the new constitutions came into existence, the Governor-General would assent any law passed by the constituent assemblies of the dominions in His Majesty’s name. The Governor-General was made a constitutional head.

On the midnight of 14th and 15th August 1947, the dominions of Pakistan and India respectively came into existence. Lord Mountbatten was appointed the first Governor-General of independent India and M .A. Jinnah became the Governor-General of Pakistan.

IV: INDIAN INDEPENDENCE ACT OF 1947

The Indian Independence Act was based upon the Mountbatten plan of 3rd June 1947 and was passed by the British parliament on July 5, 1947. It received royal assent on July 18, 1947.

Salient features

1. It provided for two dominion states : India and Pakistan
2. The boundaries between the two dominion states were to be determined by a Boundary Commission which was headed by Sir Cyril Radcliff.
3. It provided for partition of Punjab & Bengal and separate boundary commissions to demarcate the boundaries between them.
4. Pakistan was to comprise the West Punjab, East Bengal, Territories of the Sind, North West frontier provinces, Syllhat divisions of Assam, Bhawalpur, khairpur, Baluchistan and 8 other princely states of Baluchistan.
5. The authority of the British Crown over the princely states ceased and they were free to join either India or Pakistan or remain independent.

6. Both the dominions of India and Pakistan were to have Governor Generals to be appointed by the British King. The act also provided for a common Governor general if both of them agreed.
 7. The constituent assemblies of both the states were free to make constitutions of their respective countries.
 8. For the time being till the constitution was made, both of them would be governed in accordance with the Government of India act 1935.
 9. Any modification or omission could be done by the Governor General.
 10. British Government would not continue any control on any dominion.
 11. The Governor general was invested with adequate powers until March 1948 to issue orders for effective implementation of the provisions of the Indian independence act 1947.
 12. Those civil servants who had been appointed before the August 15, 1947, will continue in service with same privileges.
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