

FASCISM AND NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE (1897- ?)

Written by Saumya Bose

Assistant Professor, Sri Ramkrishna Sarada Vidya Mahapitha, Kamarpukur, Hooghly, West Bengal, India

ABSTRACT

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was a burning example of Indian patriotism. His only mission in life was to wrest freedom from the clutches of the British. His legendary escape from India on 1941, the formation of Azad Hind Fauz and his military expedition against the British Imperialism with the help of the Axis powers evokes strong emotions among the Indians even today. He has become a national hero. But at the same time he has also become the object of historical analysis. His act of taking the help of the Fascist powers during the Second World War, his opinion of a synthesis between fascism and communism and some of his other statements in favour of fascism has raised debates among historians. Historians and politicians are divided in their opinions as to whether Subhas was fascist sympathiser? This debate sprang up during the penultimate phase of India's Independence and continues till today. However by examining the contemporary situation and Bose's general approach to Fascism we shall try to reach a conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was a great Indian patriot. His legendary escape from India on 1941, the formation of Azad Hind Fauz and his military expedition against the British Imperialism with the help of the Axis powers evokes strong emotions among the Indians even today. He has become a national hero. But at the same time he has also become the object of historical analysis. His act of taking the help of the Fascist powers during the Second World War, his opinion of a synthesis between fascism and communism and some of his other statements in favour of fascism has raised debates among historians. Historians and politicians are divided in their opinions as to whether Subhas was fascist sympathizer? This debate sprang up during the penultimate phase of India's

Independence and continues till today. However by examining the contemporary situation and Bose's general approach to Fascism we shall try to reach a conclusion.

There is a body of evidence appear to demonstrate that Subhas Bose was an ardent admirer of Fascism and he felt that fascism was best suited to fulfill the interests of an emerging nation like India. Subhas Chandra had studied different forms of Government with a view to find out as to which one would be suitable for India. He was skeptical about the success of parliamentary democracy in India and believed that the working of the democratic institutions in countries like France, England and the United States of America gave the clear impressions that democratic system could not solve the problem of free India. Only a state of authoritarian character could solve India's problems and help her restructuring her socio-economic systems.¹ He was of the view that there would be not democracy in the Mid-Victorian sense of the term, but there would be a government run by a strong party bound together by military discipline, 'as the only means of holding together and preventing a chaos, when Indians are free and thrown entirely on their own resources.'²

To fulfill the above mentioned objectives he wanted, as he mentioned in his book entitled "*The Indian Struggle*", a synthesis between Fascism and Communism. He disagreed with Jawaharlal Nehru that there was no middle road between Fascism and Communism and India had to choose one path between the two. He put forward his opinion in the following words:-

*"Unless we are at the end of the process of evolution or unless we deny evolution altogether, there is no reason to hold that our choice is restricted to two alternatives. Whether one believes in the Hegelian or in the Bergsonian or any other theory of evolution-in no case need we think that creation is at an end. Considering everything, one is inclined to hold that the next phase in world-history will produce a synthesis between Communism and Fascism. And will it be a surprise if that synthesis is produced in India?"*³

Bose also believed that in spite of fundamental differences between the two ideologies there were certain elements common to both. For instance- both communism and Fascism believed in the supremacy of the state over individual, both denounce parliamentary democracy, both

believed in planned industrial reorganization of the country. These common traits, according to Bose, would form the basis of the 'new synthesis' and it would be 'the task of India to work out this synthesis'.⁴ Later on he substituted National Socialism for Fascism. In his Tokyo address of November, 1944, he stated this fact- '...our political philosophy should be the synthesis between National Socialism and Communism. The conflict between thesis and antithesis has to be resolved in a higher synthesis. This is what the law of Dialectic demands.'⁵ However, he put forward his views on the synthesis between Fascism and Communism at a speech which he delivered on 27th September 1930 at a meeting of the Calcutta corporation as a Mayor of the Corporation while explaining C. R. Das's plan of a new corporation. He said-

*'.....if I may put his (Deshbandhu Chittoranjana Das) policy and programme in modern language, I would say that we have here in this policy and program a synthesis of what Modern Europe calls Socialism and Fascism. We have here the justice, the equality, the love, which is the basis of Socialism and combined with that we have the efficiency and discipline of Fascism as it stands in Europe today.'*⁶

This was his first statement about Fascism. So long before his European visit he felt the need of a strong party, strict discipline and dictatorial rule for India.

Long before his European visit he was influenced by the 'Strong Man' theory. In his presidential address at Midnapur Youth Conference held on 29th December 1929, Subhs Bose emphasized that Nietzsche's theory of 'Superman' was formulated for the welfare of human beings. If a nation had any idealism, its great men must dream of a 'Superman'. The nation, which did not have idealism, could not live and that nation could not be the owner of a greatest creation.⁷ His European tour (1933-1936) intensified his belief. His European visit persuaded him that India needed a strong military-type leader in her struggle against the British Imperialism. The strong leaders whom Bose admired and whom he wanted to be an ideal examples were- Hitler Stalin, Mussolini and even Sir Stanley Jackson, a former governor of Bengal.⁸

During Bose's visit to Italy in late 1933 and early 1934 Mussolini left a deep impact on Bose's mind. Mussolini's address at the Asiatic Student Conference on 22nd December 1933,

[Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Review \(AJMRR\)](#)

ISSN 2582 8088

Volume 2 Issue 1 – March 2021

© 2015-2021 All Rights Reserved by [The Law Brigade Publishers](#)

where Bose was invited as a guest. Mussolini's speech greatly impressed Bose.⁹ Unlike Hitler Mussolini in his speech did not formulate 'the race ideology'. Instead he espoused the 'idea of establishing cordial relation between East and West' as a stepping stone towards 'world peace'.¹⁰ This fact impressed Bose. Bose noted that he stayed on after the meetings in Rome for a fortnight, 'in order to explore the ground and make some friends if possible for the cause of India'-

*'.....I think I have been able to create a deeper interest for India in some persons whom I came to know in RomeThe official attitude is extremely favourable now and they want closer contact with the East. If such an official attitude had existed in places like Vienna or even Berlin I am sure that we could have done much useful work there.'*¹¹

Bose wrote to his nephew Asoke Bose, 'I had two meetings with the big boss (Mussolini)'. He also toured the municipality of Rome and planned with professor Tucci to work on an Indian centre in Rome.¹² Later on, to his Berlin host Lothar Frank, Bose reportedly gave details of his conversation with Mussolini:-

*"Mussolini asked Subhas Bose during this conversation: 'Do you really and firmly believe that India will be free soon?' When Bose said 'Yes', Mussolini asked him again: 'Are you for reformist or revolutionary methods for achieving Indian Independence?' Bose said in reply that he preferred revolutionary to reformist methods. Mussolini said, 'Then indeed you have a chance.' Continuing the discussion, Mussolini asked him again: 'Have you got any plan for such a revolution?' As Bose remained silent, Mussolini told him 'You must immediately prepare a plan for such a revolution and must work continuously for its realization.'*¹³

Here we should mention that on 17th August 1929 while delivering a speech at the Rajshahi District Student conference Bose stressed the need for an armed volunteer corps which would be identical with Napoleon's Imperial Guards, Mussolini's Black Shirts, the Russian Red Army and which would wear uniforms, pay obeisance and perform in all manner like a disciplined army. In short he wanted, as he described, 'esprit de corps'.¹⁴ So 5 years before his meeting with Mussolini,

Bose planned for an organized army to use against British imperialism. But it was in Italy that Bose realized the importance of training cadres of the youth to bring about the national awakening of the Indian people. They were to be trained and inspired in such a way that they would be prepared to make maximum sacrifices when they were required to do so for the freedom of Mother India.¹⁵ It may also be possible that Mussolini's advice strengthened his resolution for organizing armed rebellion against the British. But Sugata Bose in his book *His Majesty's Opponent* states the fact that- Bose drew this inspiration from the Czechoslovak and Polish nationalist movements.¹⁶

However, Bose's increasing contacts with Mussolini attracted him more towards Fascism in which he already had found several good points. In an interview in Italy in December 1933 Bose declared how 'greatly he was interested in fascism', although to him fascism and 'hot nationalism' were 'identical'.¹⁷ After meeting with Mussolini he wrote in March 1934 that India should follow a synthesis between Fascism and Communism in her external policy.¹⁸ The same thing he stated in his book "*The Indian Struggle*". In 1935 he was given all the facilities by the Italian government for studying the administration and organisation of the Fascist party.¹⁹ The impression he formed was that 'the Fascist party was out to create a new nation' and taking care to integrate all individuals within the life of the state.²⁰

It can be assumed that, his study of Fascism had created an impression on his mind of the role which the Congress would have to play in future independent India. He was influenced by Mussolini to such an extent that Italy's invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 was downplayed by him. It is true that he condemned Italian aggression and British hypocrisy, but there was mildness in his tone. Rather he drew the lesson from Abyssinia's predicament that in the twentieth century a nation could "hope to be free only if it is strong". For that to happen, it was necessary to harness all the knowledge that modern science could offer. He also tried hard to find something positive in the rather sorry and sordid state of affairs in East Africa. 'Abyssinia will go down fighting', he wrote, 'but she will stir the conscience of the world'. This would happen in two ways:- 'a new awakening among people of colour and a questioning of the legitimacy of colonial conquest in the imperial metropolis. Imperialism could be overthrown through an anti-imperialist struggle of the colonized

or through an internecine conflict among rival imperialists. If the rise of Italian imperialism strengthened the latter tendency then Abyssinia will not have suffered in vain'.²¹ Here the point should be made that Mussolini provided him constant support during the INA campaign.²² The above mention facts no doubt give an impression of his pro-Mussolini or pro-Fascist outlook.

In contrast to his Italian experience, his experience of Nazi Germany (early 1933) was bitter. Subhas visited two times (1933 and 1934) in Germany with the object of achieving Germany's help for the cause of India's independence, but his objectives did not fulfill. Hitler had no sympathy for India's Independence. After Hitler's accession to power, there was continual persecution of the Indians and other black people of Asia and Africa. Although Bose was well aware of the anti-Indian actions of the German government and press under Hitler, he did not align himself with those Indians in Europe and India who began to call for a boycott of German goods as the racist acts continued. Neither did he try to 'white wash' these acts as some other Indians did in Europe. Bose protested the anti-Indian actions, criticized Nazi racism directed against Indians whenever he could, and worked for positive connection between India and Germany. Personally, he may have hated Germany's racism, but he did not want to alienate as powerful a potential ally against the British Empire as Germany. But his mission was not successful.²³ Bose made another visit to Germany in mid-1934. In a lengthy memorandum to the German Foreign office councilor, Dyckhoff, written on April 5, 1934, Bose sharply criticized negative aspects of German-Indian relations since the National Socialist had come to power.²⁴ Bose insisted that relations between Germany and India would only improve if the negative statements were stopped and racial legislation withdrawn. Mrs. Kitty Kurti, a Czech Jewish woman of Berlin, who was a friend of Subhas, did not find any efficacy in Subhas's effort for a friendship between India and Germany. Mrs. Kurti asked Subhas how he could deal with the Nazis, whom she found 'loathsome and repugnant'. Bose replied-

"It is dreadful and it must be done. It is our only way out. India must gain her independence, cost what it may. And it may mean the collapse of Europe...and therefore does concern me surely there are excellent people, here and in England for whom I feel respect and affection; some may perish and die...But

let us not be sentimental. I am doing what I have to do; what must be done. Have you an idea...of the despair, the misery, the humiliation of India? Can you imagine her suffering and indignation? British imperialism there can be just as intolerable as your Nazism here, I assume.''²⁵

Mrs. Kurti felt from this remark of Subhas that political concerns were more important for him than anything else. Sudhi Prodhon in his book *Subhas Chandra, Bharat o Aksha Shakti* also argues that, India's freedom was more vital than that of any other country for Subhas. He did not even consider how far the Nazis could harm the people of other countries'.²⁶ This is also evident from the fact that he was well aware about Nazi Germany's plan,²⁷ but still he did not hesitate to take the help of Nazi Germany during the Second World War.

He even witnessed the sordid condition of Czechoslovakia and Poland, from whom he drew the inspiration to wage an armed struggle for freedom, in the hands of the Nazis. But still he did not hesitate to take the help of Nazi Germany. Even after the failure of the purpose of his two visits to Germany in 1933 and in 1934, he was still prepared to work for an understanding between Germany and India, but only if it was consistent with India's 'national respect'. He had written to Franz Thierfelder, the then director of the Deutsche Akademie of Germany on 25th March 1936 that-

*'When we are fighting the greatest Empire in the world for our freedom and for our rights and when we are confined to our ultimate success we cannot brook any insult from any other nation on any attack on our race or culture.'*²⁸

He was even more blunt during an interaction with the press in Geneva (March, 1936). He stated that-'During the last few weeks my mind has been greatly disturbed at the insulting remarks made by the German Fuhrer about Indian people. This is not the first time that India had been insulted by the outstanding leaders of Nazi Germany. It is quite clear that Germany today is determined to carry favour with England by insulting India. I can have no objection if the German desire to lick the boots of the Britishers, but if they think that in the year an insult hurled at India will be quietly pocketed by us, they are suddenly mistaken...'²⁹

So there is no unanimity between these two views. In spite of all these events and in spite of his awareness of the Nazi imperialistic design and Hitler's antipathy towards India's freedom, Bose tried to seek the German help during the Second World War.

However, his attitude towards Japan, another partner of the Axis power, was a mixture of dichotomy. He adopted two different strands one in India and other in Japan. While he was in India, Bose applauded the concept of *pan-Asianism* which his mentor C. R. Das had already cited in his 1922 Gaya Congress presidential address. Das spoke of formation of a great Asiatic Federation with India's participation and the *Pan-Islamic* movement, which had started on a somehow narrow basis had to be given way in favour of this Federation. India's freedom might be won by Indian themselves but a bond of friendship and love, of sympathy and Co-operation between India and the rest of the people or might be between India and all the liberty-loving people of the world would destined to bring about world peace which according to Das was equivalent to 'freedom of every nationality'.³⁰ Bose although supported the Japanese fight against European domination over Asia, he condemned their attack on China, which, according to him, was a sign of imperialism. In his letter to Mrs. Kurti Bose wrote that-

*"The Japanese, are, in my opinion the 'British of the East'. The Chinese are of course much more likeable as a race- because they are human, kind and ethical."*³¹

Bose believed that Japan's imperialist needs and demands in the Far East could be fulfilled if she could establish her political hegemony over China 'to the exclusion of the white races and by virtually scraping the Open Door Policy'. But at the same time it would be achieve at the cost of other nations' freedoms.³²

He took a totally different stand during Second World War. In spite of his admiration for China's independence and his condemnation of Japan's imperialistic design, Bose sought the help of Japan during the Second World War. At that moment China was fighting desperately against Japan to save her independence. He did not even think of the fact that-if Japan became victorious she might not fulfill her earlier promise of 'India for Indians'. Japan could even put the Indians to bondage after over-throwing the yoke of British imperialism. Nor did he take into consideration

the Second China-Japan war. On the contrary, Bose made a statement over the Azad Hind Radio (Germany) in reply to the historic declaration of Prime Minister of Japan on 6th April 1942, which contradicted his previous opinion. He welcomed Japanese effort to destroy completely the influence of Anglo-American imperialism in the East. Until this is done, Asia will be under a perpetual danger. Asia and particularly India will be forever grateful to the tripartite powers if they can dispose of this menace once for all. He also considered the war as God-sent opportunity for realizing Indians as well as Asians demands and aspiration of wresting Independence from the Western imperialism.³³ Like Rashbehari Bose, who held that in the Second World War Japan in Asia and Germany in Europe were fighting against ‘the aggressor nations’ for the purpose of creating ‘a new world order’ based on ‘the right of every nation’ to exist as an independent unit and to participate in the world’s wealth on a basis of ‘justice and fairness,’³⁴ Subhas also glossed over the differences between the Axis powers and the Allied powers.

It can also be mentioned that, although Bose condemned Hitlerism in 1938-39, his condemnation was confined to his foreign policy only. There were some similarities between Bose’s Forward Bloc and the National Socialist Party of Germany. It is evident from the fact that the Forward Bloc believed in leader principal of the Nazi party, organization of the youth, military discipline, improvement of the economic standards of the workers and the peasants, one party state and many other principles of the Nazi party.³⁵

On the issue of war crisis Bose followed a policy of both opportunism and adventurism with the sole object of winning India’s freedom. On the one hand he had opposed Hitlerism, on the other hand he wanted to turn the opportunity to India’s advantage. This is evident from the fact that during Bose’s tenure of Congress presidentship (1938-39) he expressed his apathy against any decision taken by the Congress against Japan, Germany or Italy or any organised movement against the Axis powers.³⁶ it need to be mention here that, before the formation of the Forward Bloc party (3rd May, 1939) there were continuas dissensions between Nehru along with other members of the Congress Working Committee and Subhas Bose over this issue. A small example of these dissensions can be found in a letter written by Nehru to Subhas on 3rd April 1939-

“The association of vague Leftist slogans with no clear Leftist ideology or principles has in recent years been much in evidence in Europe. It has led to Fascist development and a straying away of large sections of the public. The possibility of such a thing happening in India possessed my mind and disturbed me. The fact that in international affairs you held different views from mine and did not wholly approve our condemnation of Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy added to my discomfort and looking at the picture as a whole, I did not at all fancy the direction in which apparently you wanted to go.”³⁷

In spite of all these dissensions Bose believed that it would be better for India that there should be a dictatorship for a few years at least after the end of the British rule in India. In his own words-

‘For a few years at least after the end of British rule in India there must be a dictatorship. No other constitution can flourish in the country. And it is to India’s good that she should be ruled by a dictator to begin with. None but a dictator can wipe out such dissensions. India does not suffer from one ailment. She suffers from so many political ills that only a ruthless dictator can cure her...’³⁸

But in spite of all efforts Bose did not get the desired help from either Fascist Italy or Nazi Germany in his plan of arm struggle against the British Government during the Second World War. Not only so, although Japan and Italy declared that Italy, Japan and Germany were in favour of Indian independence and it was their military goal on 21st April and 5th May 1942 respectively,³⁹ not any favourable response from Germany Bose received. Even after Italy’s declaration on 5th May Galeazzo Ciano, the Italian foreign minister expressed his doubt – ‘I feel Hitler will not agree to it very willingly’.⁴⁰ Germany although carried out pro-Nazi propaganda in India, Hitler even during the Second World War still not in favour of India’s freedom struggle.

However, all the above mentioned facts appear to demonstrate Bose’s pro-fascist leanings. But a close and detailed reading of the evidence leads us to conclude that Bose was far from being

an admirer of fascism. First, we can mention that-Bose believed that no ideology was acceptable which ignored the historical tradition of the people and their present condition. This is evident from his presidential address delivered at the All Bengal youth conference held on December 1927 at the University institute hall, Calcutta, where he stated that-

*'Today the Western World is overspread with all kinds of active nation building programmes and socio-political ideologies, such as Socialism, Syndicalism, Philosophical Anarchism, Bolshevism, Fascism, Parliamentary Democracy, Aristocracy, Absolute Monarchy, Limited Monarchy, Dictatorship etc...A national institution is the natural result of the history of the people. Concerned- their thoughts and ideas, and the activities of their day to day life. We should, therefore, always bear in mind that we could not build a social or political institution ignoring the history and tradition of the people and their present condition or the prevailing atmosphere of life...'*⁴¹

Bose also believed that the foreign policy of India should not be one of hostility towards any power, because of its internal political systems, which may be Fascist, Communist or reactionary. India should try to learn from all systems and should be friendly with all foreign countries that happened to be favourably inclined towards her.⁴²

Secondly, although Bose spoke of a synthesis between Fascism and Communism, he had never relied on either Fascism or Communism. Nema Nag Chowdhury in his book *Subhaschandra and Socialism* comments that- 'The reliance of both Communism and Fascism on the supremacy of the state over individuals, on party rule, on a planned industrial organization and ruthless suppression of all dissenting minorities led him (Subhas) to find a consistency and similarity between the two so called opposite schools of political thought. But he had always decried totalitarianism in any form or shape and had championed the cause of freedom-political, economical, spiritual and social'.⁴³ Moreover, it should also be kept in mind that the dictatorial form of government he wanted only for a temporary period after independence in order to cure India's 'political ills'.⁴⁴ In long run India should have a federal government, although he did not mention about deadline and the method of conversion and that created confusion. However, in

general his preference was for a federal democratic structure to serve the pluralistic cultural fabric of India. In his book *The Indian Struggle*, Bose clearly mentioned his plans and programme for free India. He stated that – ‘It will stand for a Federal Government for India as the ultimate goal, but will believe in strong Central Government with dictatorial powers for some years to come in order to put India on her feet.’⁴⁵

As regards Mussolini’s impact on Bose, Leonard. A. Gordon in his book entitled *Brothers Against The Raj* has pointed out that- Mussolini had a knack for charming visitors whom he saw frequently. Bose felt from his meetings with Mussolini that the former was treated as an important leader of a significant nation struggling for its freedom, and also that Mussolini, in contrast to the Germans, treated him more as an equal and without racial consideration. Gordon also pointed out that when Bose refused to accomplishments of Fascism, he mentioned the efficiency of the fascist state in transforming a ‘languid society’ into a ‘dynamic one’. The focus was on means, and on the role of the forceful leader. These few positive references to Fascism do not specify any particular nation and tend to be vague and general.⁴⁶ Moreover Nanda Mukherjee in his book entitled *Subhas Chandra Bose: The British Press, Intelligence and Parliament* gives a new explanation of Bose’s article entitled “The Secret of Abyssinia and its lesson” which Bose wrote in 1935 after the invasion of Abyssinia by Fascist Italy. Mukherjee argues that- meeting, Mussolini does not indicate that Bose played into his hands. His intention was to divide the imperialist world by setting one against the other on the colonial question Bose believed- ‘Imperialism could be overthrown through an anti-imperialist struggle of the colonized or through an internecine conflict among rival imperialists. If the rise of Italian imperialism strengthened the latter tendency then Abyssinia will not have suffered in vain’.⁴⁷

Here it should also be mentioned that although he was impressed by some good elements of Fascism while he was writing his book *The Indian Struggle*, he latter on changed his opinion to some extent. In an interview with Rajani Palm Dutt in 24th January 1938, almost three years after the publication of the book (17th January 1935), Bose admitted that Fascism as an expression was not a happy one but defended his position by saying that while he was writing Fascism had not started ‘its imperial expedition’ and to him Fascism meant ‘an aggressive form of nationalism’.⁴⁸

Not only so, in his 1938 presidential address at the Haripura session of the Congress he criticized strongly the principal of leadership of the Fascists as it eroded democracy from the party.⁴⁹

As regards Nazi Germany, Bose's outlook towards Nazi philosophy and Hitler was always critical. He wrote to Dr. Franz Thierfelder, the then director of the Deutsche Akademie of Germany on 25th March 1936, that-

*“When I first visited Germany in 1933, I had hopes that the new German nation which had risen to consciousness of its national strength and self-respect, would instinctively feel a deep sympathy for other nations struggling in the same direction. Today, I regret that, I have to return to India with the conviction that the new nationalism of Germany is not only narrow and selfish but arrogant. The new racial philosophy, which has a very weak scientific foundation, stands for the glorification of the white races in general and of the German race in particular.”*⁵⁰

Mihir Bose in his book *The Lost Hero* comments that- ‘There was good will for India among older Germans, but he (Subhas Bose) could not believe Nazi Germany and India could ever be friends’.⁵¹ About Hitler, Bose commented before Mrs. Kurti that- ‘In my mind he is a severe neurotic as well as a dangerous psychopathic personality. Now, I do not believe that we can change a true, a genuine neurotic mentality by analyzing him...They are obsessed by devils and devilry, sometimes evens, as in the case of Hitler, by Satan Himself.’⁵² On another occasion on October 12, 1939, after the formation of the Forward Bloc, he said at Delhi-‘I am opposed to Hitlerism whether in India, within the Congress or any other country, but it appears to me that socialism is the only alternative to Hitlerism’.⁵³

It is true that Bose was impressed by certain aspects of National Socialism as it was able to create national unity and solidarity and to improve the condition of the people. But Bose also criticized the class orientation of National Socialism and its failure to radically reform the prevailing economic system which was built on a capitalistic basis.⁵⁴ Although he leave India and sought the help of Germany, he was very bitter about Hitler's ambivalent policies and his reluctance to proclaim unambiguously that India would be free and independent after the Second

world War. He had no connections with most of the top-ranking Nazi political and military leaders and on the other hand he was actively associated and helped by anti-Nazi elements in the administration. His selection of Germany or Japan as his place of activity was not by choice, but by compulsion. As Walter Harbich and Alexander Werth, two eye-witnesses of the contemporary incidents during the Second World War, stated in their book entitled *Netaji in Germany* that-

“To Netaji personally it probably would have made no difference if he had gone to Moscow instead of to Berlin, provided the political constellation had justified this choice and Moscow had given him some hint while he was on his flight to Moscow via Kabul. This certainly sounds like opportunism, but in the fight for freedom a successful pragmatist is better-even morally-than a pure unsuccessful idealist.”⁵⁵

India’s freedom was his primary concern and for that reason he wanted the help of Germany. He was of the view that an enslaved nation should not indulge in the luxury of ideological controversies. Its first and foremost aim should be to win independence from foreign domination with the help of anti-British forces. N. G. Ganpuly, who was drawn into the Free India centre set up by Bose during his stay in Germany, wrote in his book entitled *Netaji in Germany: A Little Known Chapter* that-

“Bose was in no way a collaborator, in the evil sense which the word has acquired in recent years; rather he was a true Indian patriot with one idea; who was not prepared to do anything simply for Germany’s sake, but anything and everything, includes the harnessing of German interest of India.”⁵⁶

Uttam Chand Malhotra, who gave refuge to Bose in Kabul after Bose’s legendary escape from India, stated that-

“For forty days Bose Babu was with me and not once during this period did I hear one good word for the Axis from his lips. He hated them as much as he British. In Berlin he must have made another attempt to get to Russia

through the Russian Embassy. But the declaration of the Russo-German war must have finally dashed his hopes of reaching Russia.”⁵⁷

So it is clear from this evidence that although Bose tried to seek the help of Germany for India’s freedom, he did not want to become a puppet of Germany.

The same consideration held true in his attitude towards Japan. He took the help of Japan, but he never succumbed to the Japanese. Major General Shah Nawaz Khan, one of the comrades of the I.N.A recapitulated that-

*“He (Subhas Chandra Bose) told us that as far as the Japanese were concerned, they realised that as long as the British held India and could use it as a base of supply and operation against the Japanese, the Japanese empire could never be safe; and that, in their own interests the Japanese must drive the British out of India, otherwise they themselves would be driven out of East Asia. He said that the Japanese, by assisting us were doing no favour to Indians. We were helping them as much as they were helping us. We had a common aim in as much as we both were interested in driving the British out of India, the Japanese for their own safety and we for the independence of our motherland. He said that quite frankly he did not trust the British nor did he trust the Japanese. He went on to say that where it was the question of independence of one’s country one could trust no one, as long as we were weak we would always be exploited.”*⁵⁸

Shah Nawaz Khan’s recollection of Netaji’s comment confirms the fact that Bose never became a puppet of Japan. In spite of Japan’s Prime Minister Tojo’s humble words such as ‘India for Indians’, Bose never considered Japan a true friend of India. For Bose Japan was as much an aggressive state as Britain was. He wanted to take the profit out of the rivalry between Japan and Britain. Shah Nawaz Khan also commented while he was addressing the people at Lahore on 5th January 1946 that-

“I assure you that not for a single moment did Netaji yielded to the pressure of the Japanese on any issue. Once General Tojo at a meeting of military officers in Tokyo said that when India was freed, Mr. Subhas Bose would be her first leader. Netaji extremely resented this remark and hotly replied that General Tojo had no right of the country to choose its leader. He always described himself as a humble servant of his country.”⁵⁹

This statement of Shah Nawaz Khan can be corroborated by that of Mr. S.C.Guha, a well known trader of Singapore. He was appointed as an agent of British Indian Government in Singapore and after the Japanese occupation of Singapore he carried on India’s freedom struggle from Singapore. He stated that- Bose was not a ‘Quisling’, a term used by Soviet Russia to mark Bose as a puppet of the Axis powers. Guha also commented that, although Bose was anti-British, but he was not a pro-fascist. Rather Bose wanted to use Japan as the main base of his operation for wresting India’s freedom. He was not shaken like Gandhi to take extreme measures.⁶⁰

Therefore, after considering all the facts we can say that Subhas Bose was not a pro-fascist. It is true that his European visit (1933-1936) created an impression in his mind in favour of Fascism. But later he moved from his position to a great extent. It is also true that there were some dissensions between Bose on the one hand and Nehru and other members of the Congress Working Committee during Bose’s tenure of Congress Presidentship over the issue of his antipathy towards any measure against the Axis powers. But his only aim was to take advantage of the international crisis to start an armed struggle with the active help of the Axis powers against British Imperialism in order to wrest freedom from for India. And for the sake of India’s freedom he took the help of Germany, Italy and Japan. But he never turned into their puppet. He was well aware of their motives and intensions. His personality was too independent to yield to the demands of the Japanese. He believed that both the Japanese and the Indians were helping each other in the attainment of their respective goals, viz. expulsion of Britain for Japan’s safety and wresting of freedom for India from British for the Indians. It should be admitted that he did not care for the freedom of the people of China, Czechoslovakia, and Poland by taking help from the Axis powers.

But we should not forget that to achieve a noble goal one has to sacrifice a lot. At that moment Subha's prime concern was India's freedom and nothing else. So he was not overly concerned about the means. But unlike Rashbehari Bose, Subhas did not extol the Axis powers against the British imperialism. For him both the blocs were imperialistic. So he was very pragmatic in his approach towards the Axis powers.

NOTES AND REFERENCE

- 1) Subhas Chandra Bose "The Fundamental Problems of India" (Also known as Tokyo theses, delivered at Tokyo, 1944), published in Subhas Chandra Bose, *Fundamental Questions of Indian Revolution*, Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta, 1959, pp-81-82.
- 2) Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle, 1920-1942*, compiled by the Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta, Asia Publishing House, Calcutta, 1964, p-312.
- 3) *Ibid*, pp-313-314.
- 4) *Ibid*, p-314.
- 5) Subhas Chandra Bose "The Fundamental Problems of India" (Also known as Tokyo theses, delivered at Tokyo, 1944), published in Subhas Chandra Bose, *Fundamental Questions of Indian Revolution*, op cit, p-87.
- 6) Subhas Chandra Bose, *Collected Works*, Vol-6, edited by Sisir Kumar Bose and Sugata Bose, Calcutta, 1987, p-128.
- 7) Subhas Chandra Bose, *Samagra Rachonaboli*, Vol-3, edited by Sisir Kumar Bose, Ananda Publisher Private limited, Kolkata, 2000, p-208.
- 8) Leonard A.Gordon, *Brothers Against the Raj: a biography of Sarat and Subhas Chandra Bose*, First Published by Penguin Books (India) Limited, New Delhi, 1990, p-288.
- 9) Subhas Chandra Bose to Mrs. Naomi Vetter, January 12 ,1934, *Netaji Collected Works*, Vol-8, edited by Sisir Kumar Bose and Sugata Bose, Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta, 1994, p-45.
- 10) Bidyut Chakrabarty, *Subhas Chandra Bose and Middle Class Radicalism: A Study in Indian Nationalism, 1928-1940*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1990, p-36.
- 11) Subhas Chandra Bose to Mrs. Naomi Vetter, op cit, p-45.
- 12) Asoke Nath Bose, *My Uncle Netaji*, ESEM Publication, Calcutta, 1977, p-91.
- 13) Lothar Frank, "India's Ambassador Abroad,1933-1936", Published in *A Beacon Across Asia*, Edited by Sisir Kumar Bose, Alexander Werth, S.A. Ayer, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1973, p-60.

- 14) Home (Poll) Confidential File, File No-474/29 (Notes), Year-1929, Sub- Policy of Government with regard to the flying of tri coloured or Swaraj flags (Rajshahi Student Conference).
- 15) Hari Hara Das, *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: The Great War For Political Emancipation*, National Publishing House, Jaipur, 2002, p-137.
- 16) Sugata Bose, *His Majesty's Opponents: Subhas Chandra Bose and India's Struggle Against Empire*, First Published in India in Allen Lane by Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 2011, p-91.
- 17) Bidyut Chakrabarty, *Subhas Chandra Bose and Middle Class Radicalism*, op cit, p-36.
- 18) "Subhas Chandra Bose's View", *The Modern Review*, Vol-60, No-3, March, 1934, Notes, p-376.
- 19) Subhas Chandra Bose, "Italy", *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 11th March, 1935.
- 20) *Ibid.*
- 21) Subhas Chandra Bose, "The Secret Of Abyssinia and its Lesson", *The Modern Review*, Vol-61, No-5, November, 1935, p-309.
- 22) Bidyut Chakrabarty, *Subhas Chandra Bose and Middle Class Radicalism*, op cit, p-36.
- 23) Leonard A. Gordon, *Brothers Against the Raj*, op cit, p-276.
- 24) *Ibid*, pp-281-282.
- 25) Kitty Kurti, *Subhas Chandra Bose: As I Knew Him*, Firma KLM Private Limited, Calcutta, 2000, p-11.
- 26) Sudhi Prodhana, *Subhas Chandra Bose, Bharat O Aksha Shakti*, People's Book Society, Kolkata, August, 1994, pp-50-51.
- 27) Subhas Chandra Bose, "Europe Today and Tomorrow", *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 5th September, 1937.
- 28) Subhas Chandra Bose to Dr. Thierfelder, 25th March, 1936, *Netaji Collected Works*, Vol-8, *Ibid*, p-165-168.
- 29) "Meeting the press: Situation in India, India And Germany, League Of Nations", Geneva, March-2, 1936, *Ibid*, pp-345-347.
- 30) C. R. Das, "Non-Co-Operation and Council Entry," (Presidential Address delivered at the Session of the Congress held at Gaya in December, 1922), published in Rajen Sen and B. K. Sen, *Deshabandhu Chitta Ranjan*, 1926, this document was downloaded from N-List Programme, http://www.southasiarchive.com/content/Sarf_on_5th_January_2018, at 1:40:23, pp-210-211.
- 31) Kitty Kurti, *Subhas Chandra Bose: As I Knew Him*, op cit, p-59.
- 32) Subhas Chandra Bose, "Japan's Role in the Far East", *The Modern Review*, Vol-63, No-4, September, 1937, p-429.

- 33) "India For Indians", Broadcast, 6th April, 1942, Subhas Chandra Bose, *Azad Hind: Writings and Speeches, 1941-1943*, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Collected Works, Vol-11, edited by Sisir Kumar Bose and Sugata Bose, Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta, 2002, pp-87-88.
- 34) *Rashbehari Bose: Collected Works, Autobiography, Writings and Speeches*, edited by Asitabha Das, Kishaloy Prakashan, Kolkata, 2005, p-248.
- 35) Hari Hara Das, *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose*, op cit, p-26.
- 36) Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, The Signet Press, Calcutta, 1946, p-508.
- 37) Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1958, p-347.
- 38) *Hindustan Times*, 8th March, 1946.
- 39) *The Ciano Diary*, edited by Hugh Gibson and introduction by Sumner Welles, Simon publication, Safety Harbor, First published-1945, this edition published – 2001, pp-474-482.
- 40) *Ibid*, p-482.
- 41) Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Mission of Life*, Thacker, Spink and Co, Private Ltd, Calcutta, 1965, p-177.
- 42) Hari Hara Das, *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose*, op cit, p-22.
- 43) Nemai Nag Chowdhury, *Subhas Chandra Bose And Socialism*, J. N. Basu and Co, Calcutta, 1965, p-33.
- 44) *Hindustan Times*, 8th March, 1946, op cit.
- 45) Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, op cit p-312.
- 46) Leonard A.Gordon, *Brothers Against the Raj*, op cit, p-278.
- 47) Nanda Mookerjee, *Subhas Chandra Bose: The British Press, Intelligence and Parliament*, Jayasree Prakashan, Calcutta, 1981, pp-45-46.
- 48) "Report of a London Interview, Published in *Crossroads, being the work of Subhas Chandra Bose, 1938-1940*, Compiled by Netaji Research Bureau, Published by Asia Publishing House, Calcutta, 1962, p-30.
- 49) The Haripura Address, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Collected Works, Vol-9, edited by Sisir Kumar Bose and Sugata Bose, Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta, 1995, pp-3-30.
- 50) Subhas Chandra Bose to Franz Thierfelder, op cit, pp-165-168.
- 51) Mihir Bose, *The Lost Hero: A Biography of Subhas Chandra Bose*, Quartet Books Limited, First Published-1982, London, p-108.
- 52) Kitty Kurti, *Subhas Chandra Bose: As I Knew Him*, op cit, p-42.
- 53) Hari Hara Das, *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose*, op cit, p-27.

- 54) Subhas Chandra Bose, "The Fundamental Problems of India", (An Address to Faculty and Students of Tokyo University, November, 1944), in Subhas Chandra Bose, *Chalo Delhi: Writings and Speeches, 1943-1945*, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Collected Works, Vol-12, edited by Sisir Kumar Bose and Sugata Bose, Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta, 2007, p-298.
- 55) Alexander Werth and Walter Harbich, *Netaji in Germany: An Eye Witness Account of Indian Freedom Struggle in Europe During World War-II*, edited by Sisir Kumar Bose, Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta, First Published in 23rd January, 1970, p-18.
- 56) N.G. Ganpuley, *Netaji in Germany: A Little-Known Chapter*, edited by K.M.Munshi and R.R. Diwakar, Published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, First Edition, November, 1959, p-182.
- 57) Dilip kumar Roy, *Netaji-The Man: Reminiscences*, edited by K.M.Munshi and R.R. Diwakar, Published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1966, p-150.
- 58) Maj. General Shah Nawaz Khan, "Netaji", published in *Netaji: His Life and Work*, edited by Shri Ram Sharma, Shiva Lal Agarwala and Co, ltd, Agra, First Published-January-23, 1948, p-X.
- 59) *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, January-7, 1946.
- 60) *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, September-22, 1945.



Asian Journal of
Multidisciplinary
Research & Review

[Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Review \(AJMRR\)](#)

ISSN 2582 8088

Volume 2 Issue 1 – March 2021

© 2015-2021 All Rights Reserved by [The Law Brigade Publishers](#)