

## **FILE: HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF BHAJ BAND: A NEWSPAPER**

**PUBLISHED BY INDIAN LEGION IN GERMANY**

**DURING WORLD WAR SECOND**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Very little objective research has been done on Azad Hind Foj both eastern branch and western branch. Out of this lot, most amount of research so far done is either the outcome of political game or personal interests. Sources have been manipulated to serve the fixed purpose. However there are still vast varieties of archival source which await exploration for genuine history writing. Bhai Band a bilingual newspaper published by Indian Legion, during World War Second, in Germany is one such source which still awaits exploration. Bhai Band had not even found a reference in the annals of Indian freedom struggle studies. However, a proper historical investigation of this newspaper will reveal a lot and will consequently help historians to broaden the historical horizon of Indian Legion, as it sheds light on different aspects of Indian Legion or German version of Azad Hind Foj. Moreover it is not only a great source of information for constructing the history of Indian Legion alone but also of Azad Hind Foj, Eastern Branch and Indian Nationalism abroad. Because it published news about both Western and Eastern Branch of Azad Hind Foj and Indian patriotism, hence it will help in broadening the volume of Indian freedom struggle studies. It also reported on war situations in Europe and Asia and will therefore add information to war studies. Its uniqueness as a historical source for Indian Legion lies in the fact that, unlike other sources it sheds light not only on the military activities of Legion but also on cultural, supports, literary, religious and social activities. In its various issues this newspaper has published jokes that were played on Imperialist British during world war second by Germans and Indians. Hence this source will also help us in writing the history from jokes. Cartoons are also published in many issues of this newspaper. Those will help researchers and historians in writings the history from cartoons and as well assessing the psyche of Legionaries and German soldiers. This newspaper will therefore prove a rich source of historical information for future research.

**KEYWORDS:** Bhai Band, Indian Legion, Indian National Army, and India's Freedom Struggle

### **INTRODUCTION**

Bhai Band literary means united brothers. Bhai Band was an official newspaper of Indian Legion in Germany. Indian Legion an army raised by Subash Chandra Bose with German help for fighting against British during world war second. This army was also expected to be the future army of free India. Bhai Band a bilingual newspaper (Urdu-Hindi) published from Lacanau Ville was a spokesman of Indian Legion.<sup>1</sup> The manifold objectives of its publication were, uniting Indians in Europe, seeking recruitment of Indians for Legion, encouraging legionaries to fight against British, promoting

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<sup>1</sup> Indian National Army Role in India's Struggle for Freedom, 1991 p 100

social, cultural, literary and military activities of Azad Hind Foj, lurching propaganda against British and Allies, supporting Axis war efforts, getting foreign support for India's Independence and sabotaging loyalty of British-Indian forces. Currently a number of copies of this newspaper covering a period from October 6, 1943 to 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1944 are available in Private Section of National Archives of India. Analysis of this newspaper shows that it throws light on various aspects of Indian freedom struggle both abroad and inside India. As a source it is of great historical value. Besides shedding light on Indian National Army and Indian freedom struggle abroad, it also explores various things which are hitherto unexplored. This newspaper reported on war situation in different war theaters of world hence it will substantiate the information on war studies. This document helps in tracing the cultural relations between India and Germany. The role of Urdu literature and language in freedom struggle of India and role of Urdu poetry as a catalyst for inspiring as well as inculcating patriotic feelings among Indians inside and outside India is evident from this document. This historical document naturally illuminates various neglected parts of Indian freedom movement, which therefore is an eye opener for research communities for further exploring the hitherto unexplored sources about freedom struggle of India. The document also speaks a lot about Indo-German Military relations. With a few limitations this newspaper is very useful historical document.

### **Indian Legion**

Indian Legion was an Indian Army formed out of Indian prisoners of war and Indian civilians in Germany by Subash Chandra Bose. Bose started this army with the diplomatic, financial and military support of Axis powers in general and Germany in particular during Second World War. Its two fold aims were to fight for India's Freedom and to be future army of free India. Netaji formed Indian Legion German version of Azad Hind Foj on January 26, 1942 with eight volunteers, five students and three prisoners of war<sup>2</sup>. Gradually thousands of Indians from all walks of life joined the army and it became a big force consisting of approximately 3500 men.

In Germany it took Netaji several months to do the spade work and clear the ground for the formation of Indian National Army. Netaji tried very hard to set a free Indian government in Germany but the Germany did not allow the same owing to war situation in Europe.<sup>3</sup> However he had already succeeded in getting permission for forming a Free Indian Centre, whose first meeting took place on 2<sup>th</sup> of November 1941.<sup>4</sup> This centre later became a parental body of Indian Legion. Free Indian Centre was a well structured autonomous administrative body and functioned without any interference from German side. It relied on Germany only for financial and military support. Financial debt was promised by Netaji will be repaid after India get its freedom from British rule. Indian legion had its own radio station and press, both carried out propaganda against British and other Allied Powers during Second World War. It had a separate uniform and separate military code of conduct. However military and espionage training was given by Germany forces.

After analyzing the situation of war in Europe and its serious repercussions on Britain Netaji forecasted the withering of British imperialism and "India's golden opportunity" to gain freedom.<sup>5</sup> He forecasted that if India did not rise to the occasion she will not attain her freedom in the hundred years to come. Having failed to persuade congress of grabbing this opportunity by means of military, Bose rose to the occasion and took whole responsibility of fighting the

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<sup>2</sup>. *Ibid.*, p 56

<sup>3</sup> SUBASD CHANDRA BOSE AND NAZI GERMANY pp 10-16

<sup>4</sup> Indian National Army Role in India's Struggle for Freedom. p 34

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Shridhar charan Sahoo, Orissa Review, August-2007. P 29

British Raj with military might on his own shoulders. With this objective in mind he left India in early forties and organized a huge fighting force with the support of Axis Powers first in Europe and then in Asia with the soul objective of attaining freedom for India. Militarily Netaji and his Azad Hind Fouj may have failed to attain the objective of freedom of India but strategically and morally both succeeded in attaining the goal of freedom. This is clear from a discussion between Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court P. B. Chakrabarthy ( Then Acting Governor of West Bengal) and Lord Attlee. Lord Attlee admitted that it was Bose who made Britain to vacate from India in august 1947, as His activities shook the loyalty of British- Indian forces upon which the whole edifice of British Empire stood.<sup>6</sup>

### **Objectives behind Publication of Bhai Band**

The manifold objectives behind publication of Bhai band were, to gain support of Axis Powers in favor of India's independence, to lurch propaganda against Allies in general and British in particular, to seek cooperation of Indians residing in Europe and secure their recruitment in Indian Legion in Germany and Indian National Army in Singapore, to inculcate patriotic feelings in Indians living in Europe and India, to frame and mobilize public opinion in India against Allied Powers especially British and in favor of Axis Powers as well as Azad Hind Fouj, to counter British and Allied propaganda, to expose the falsification of British sponsored congress propaganda about Japans sponsorship of Azad Hind Fouj and Germanys sponsorship of Indian Legion as well the remorse that in case of Axis victory Germany and Japan will subjugate India, to promote communication, cooperation and solidarity among Indians in European, to make Indians aware about international and national events, to report on the activities of Indian national army on western and eastern war fronts, to work for securing cooperation among various Indian organizations in Europe, to promote secular feelings among Indian soldiers and supersede communalism at a time when India was burning in the fire of communal violence, to develop a feeling of pride in Indians living both in India and rest of the world, to encourage Azad Hind Fouj both in east and west to fight for the just cause of India's independence, to promote friendly feelings with the enemies of England and gain the recognition of India's just cause

### **Analysis of Bhai Band**

*Bhai Band* mainly published its news under following headings, News from battle field, which included reports on war activities of Axis and Allied Powers from all theaters of war especially from European theaters. Here the reports are mostly biased and exaggerated. Germany and her allies are often shown as heroes of the battle field and enemies are always shown suffering from loss of men and material.

News from India, this section reports on Indian affairs both inside India and outside India. News was received from German media as Indian Legion had no direct communication link with India. Coverage was mostly given to political and economic fields. Reports regarding plight of poor, suppression of Indians, imprisonments, lathy charges, arrests, killings, famines, disasters, drain of wealth and the like ones were published in this section. Through this section British Raj was exposed as well as also painted as suppressive one, between the lines Indian armed revolution was justified against the unjust British rule, which needed an immediate end.

News from free India, this section reports on provisional government of free India, Indian independence league and Indian national army in East Asia. In this section were published the plans, policies, programmes etc. of Provisional

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<sup>6</sup> Internet source.

Government of Free India which was set up in east by Subash Chandra Bose. The achievements of Azad Hind Fouj in battles were given a wide coverage in this section of newspaper Bhai Band.

News from South East Asia, this section reported on situation of war in south East Asian countries. Mostly the advances of Japan and reversal of Allied Forces were given a wide space. Initially the victories of Japan used to be the major highlight of this section but later Allied advances were also given a sufficient space.

Subash Chandra Bose, this section published things related to Subash Chandra Bose his orders, statements, announcements and discussions vis-à-vis Provisional Government of Free India and Azad Hind Fouj.

Discussion on different topics, this section discussed on a wide range of topics dealing with military, political, economic, literary, cultural aspects not of only India but of other countries also.

The other things in this news paper includes, poems and verses, stories, supports news, special issues on festivals, cartoons, jokes, symbols, principals of war etc. We come to know from this section about the literary and intellectual capacities of Legionaries.

### **Indian Legion in Bhai Band**

The document is relevant to the Indian Legion in the following manner,

Firstly the document provides a lot of information regarding Indian Legion such as its political, military, literary, cultural and religious activities. It also informs us about the organizational structure of Indian Legion, different portfolio's of Free Indian Centre, pattern of work of the organizations, progress and achievements of these organizations, programmes and functions of Azad Hind Radio etc.

Secondly it enlightens us about activities of Subash Chandra Bose in Europe and Asia. Informs us about his visits to different countries of Europe, different cities of Germany, reported on his meetings with various leaders, his meetings with German officials, about his speeches, orders, statements, discussions, about his policies, plans and other things encompassing Bose. Similarly it again reports on activities of Bose in South East Asia.

This document also provides little information about other organizations in Germany like Indian Students Association and Berlin Party. It also gives slight information about Indian Legion established by Sadie in Italy, Sadie's German visit and his meetings with Bose and high profile German officials.<sup>7i</sup>

It also gives us information about policy of Axis Powers regarding India. After making an objective analysis of this newspaper it seems that the Indian Legion was not a sponsored puppet army but respected force supported by Axis Powers .In this newspaper there is no such evidence which can give us a clue that Axis powers had any intention of occupying India if they won the Second World War.

It can help us in understanding the role of Urdu literature and language in motivating and mobilizing Indians in Europe for the cause of Indian freedom. Revolutionary Urdu Poetry and fiery Urdu speeches were often published in its issues. These provoked Indians to sacrifice their lives for the sake of nation. It is because of this extreme nationalism that hundreds of Indians left their lucrative jobs and joined the Indian Legion. It is because of Urdu Poetry that hundreds of

<sup>7</sup> SUBASD CHANDRA BOSE AND NAZI GERMANY, pp 27-32

captured soldiers joined Azad Hind Fouj.

The document helps us in understanding the extent of nationalism outside India before, during and after Second World War. This document throws light on different organizations and movements initiated by Indians in Europe and the activities associated with these movements. This therefore helps us to measure the extent of Indian nationalism abroad. This will naturally substantiate the history of freedom movements abroad.

Information derived from this source will also help researchers in exploring the history of Indo-German relations. The Indo –German relations reached new heights during World War Second. Foundation of Indian Legion with diplomatic, moral, material and political support of Germany, at the time when Germany was in a very critical situation is an evidence of this claim.

### **Azad Hind FOUJ in BHAI Band**

The information derived from the document will substantiate the history of Indian National Army or Azad Hind Fouj Eastern Branch. It will help us in understanding the policy, programmes, structure, aims, objectives, failures, achievements, and so on of the of Indian National Army. This newspaper also reports on achievements of Azad Hind Fouj in battles, their advances and retreat, their strengths and weaknesses.

This document also gives us information about Indian Independence League. Indian Independence League was an Indian organization founded by Sardar Pritam Singh in Thailand.<sup>8</sup> This organization later cooperated with Japan and formed Indian National Army .This League stood for independence of India and also for segueing rights of Indian Diasporas in South East Asia. There are also various reports about the activities of this League in this newspaper that can add to the existing knowledge about Indian Independence League.

This source can also provide references about Indo-Japan relations during Second World War. There are reports about various joint statements issued by Subash Chandra Bose and Japanese high officials. Reports regarding meetings and conventions are also there in this newspaper. In the light of these facts and evidences it can be assumed that this newspaper cans help us in understanding Indo-Japan relations in historical context.

The information containing in this source also reflects on Japan's Indian policy during Second World War. Evidences in this newspaper prove that the nature of help provided by Japan to Indian Revolutionaries is somewhat totally different as projected and predicted by British propagandists. From the information containing in this newspaper one can safely conclude that Azad Hind Fouj was neither a brainchild of Axis powers nor a stooge of Japan but a force of self respected Indians who fought for the freedom of their motherland.

### **Possible Contribution of Bhai Band to Freedom Struggle Studies**

By making a careful and an analytical study of the said document it can be concluded that the source can make fallowing contribution to the field of Indian Freedom Struggle Studies.

It can help us in understanding the neglected parts of the Indian independence movement. So far as Indian National Movement is concerned it was not an exclusive effort of one group or one party but continuous effort of various groups and movements. However, credit has so far been given either to Indian National Congress or to Social Movements

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<sup>8</sup> INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY A Documentary Study, Vol. 1. .p 38

but there are other movements which have not received due credit and Azad Hind Fouj is one such movement. Therefore this source can help us to understand this neglected part of Indian freedom struggle.

It can make us to study the Indian national movement beyond national boundaries and broaden the horizon of freedom struggle studies. Again this document shifts attention of researchers towards the movements initiated outside India but played a significant role in freedom movement.

By extracting history from jokes and cartoons, the documents can make us to study the history of Indian nationalism beyond conventional sources. No historical event or historical phenomena can be understood by reading certain categories of sources and neglected other sources. So for a proper understanding of Indian national movement this newspaper must be given a historical attention.

It can help us to explore the role of Urdu language and literature in Indian national movement. The role played by Urdu literature especially Urdu Poetry in mobilizing the Indians abroad for the sake of Indian cause is clearly visible in this source.

It helps us to understand the secular outlook and communal harmony of I.N.A. men abroad while India at that time was in the grip of communal violence. This is evident from the fact that Legionaries soldiers of Azad Hind Fouj belonged to all major religious communities of India.

#### **Limitations of this Newspaper**

This newspaper cannot prove itself on the lines of modern journalism. Because it does not meet all the essential requirements of being a true modern newspapers.

As the newspaper is hand written, we at many places one confronts with spelling mistakes, incorrect words and sentences. The language is not always correct and up to the mark, hence it need a very careful study and has to be compared with, as well as substantiated by other sources also.

Its chronology needs to be compared with other sources, because dates are not always reliable and are sometimes contradictory.

One of the objectives of its publication was to counter as well as launch propaganda against Allied Powers in general and England in particular. Therefore things have been unnecessarily exaggerated sometimes.

As the persons associated with the newspaper were not fully aware of European nomenclatures .Therefore names of the Europeans and places of Europe are not correctly written.

Above all source is also biased and the tilt of bias is towards Axis Powers and Indian Legion. Hence it needs an objective mind while using as a source.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

History of Azad Hind Fouj and its founder Subash Chandra Bose is very controversial one. Historical sources related Azad Hind Fouj are said to be politically manipulated. However, we have a number of archival sources which still await exploration for writing unbiased and objective history of Indian National Army and Indian Freedom Struggle Studies. Bhai Band a bilingual newspaper is one of them. Its uniqueness as a historical source lies in the fact that, unlike other

sources it sheds light not only on the military activities of Legion but also on its cultural, supports, literary, religious and social activities. This newspaper will also help us in writing history from jokes and cartoons. The under reference source also sheds light on Azad Hind Fouj Eastern Branch, Indian Independence League, Indian Patriotism abroad, role played by Urdu language and literature in freedom movement. Hence, this newspaper is a rich source for writing the history of Azad Hind Fouj and Indian Freedom Struggle Studies.

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