

NEWSPAPER BHAI BAND: A SOURCE MATERIAL FOR AZAD HIND FOUJ

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ABSTRACT

The tragedy with Indian history writing has been its imperialistic as well as political sponsorship and the consequent killing of objective historical professionalism. Sources have been manipulated, events misinterpreted or deliberately neglected, to serve the desired goals. History of Azad Hind Fouj is one such manipulated area of Indian's freedom movement. Although, there are various archival source for writing genuine history of Azad Hind Fouj but they still awaits exploration. Bhai Band a bilingual newspaper published by Indian Legion in Germany, during II World War is one such unexplored source. Bhai Band an official newspaper of Azad Hind Fouj had not yet been explored and investigated by the historians who wrote on this area. Whereas, a proper historical investigation of this newspaper will reveal a lot of first hand information about azad hind fouj and will consequently broaden the scope of Indian freedom struggle studies. Moreover, it is not only a great source of information for constructing the history of Azad Hind Fouj but also of Indian Nationalism abroad. Unlike other sources it not only sheds light on the military activities of Indian National Army but also on its social, cultural, religious, literary, and supports activities, which speaks of its uniqueness as a source.

KEYWORDS: *Freedom Struggle, Indian National Army, Indian Legion and Bhai Band.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Azad Hind Fouj or Indian National Army (1942-1946) a brain child of Subash Chandra Bose was formed at two fronts viz. Western Front i.e. Germany and Eastern Front i.e. Japan, with the financial, diplomatic and military assistance of Axis Powers during II World War. Its two major aims were to fight for India's Freedom and to be future army of free India. Western Branch was called Indian Legion, German version of Azad Hind Fouj and the Eastern Branch was called Indian National Army. While the Western Branch of this army was raised by

Subash Chandra Bose with German help on January 26, 1942, the eastern branch of this army was established by General Mohan Singh with Japanese help on 17 February, 1942. While Western Branch was an armed wing of Free India Center, the Eastern Branch worked as an armed wing of Indian Independence League.

Bhai Band which literary means “united brothers” was an official newspaper of Indian Legion i.e. Western Branch of azad hind fuj. This bilingual (Urdu-Hindi) newspaper was published from Lacanau Ville. The main objectives of its publication were, recruiting Indians for Legion, encouraging legionaries to fight against British, uniting Indians in Europe, lurching propaganda against British and Allies, supporting Axis war efforts, promoting social, cultural, literary and military activities of Azad Hind Fouj, getting foreign support for India’s Independence and sabotaging loyalty of British-Indian forces in west and in east.

We have hundreds of copies of this newspaper covering a period from October 6, 1943 to 6th of august 1944 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 outside and inside India. As a source it is of great historical value as it explores various hitherto unexplored areas of freedom struggle. This newspaper reported about different war theaters of world War second; 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 Indians as well as inculcating patriotic feelings among Indians both 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 scholars and researchers for further exploring the hitherto unexplored sources about freedom struggle of India. The document also speaks a lot about Indo-German Military relations. Despite having some limitations this newspaper is very useful historical document.

2. WHY WAS BHAI BAND PUBLISHED

The various 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.

3. ANALYTICAL OPERATION OF BHAI BAND

Bhai Band mainly published its news under following headings:

3.1 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 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 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.

3.4 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.

3.5 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.

3.6 *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.

3.7 *The other events*; 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.

4. INDIAN LEGION

Indian Legion Indian's Liberation Army was founded by Subash Chandra Bose in Germany out of Indian prisoners of war and Indian civilians during II World War. Bose started this army with the diplomatic, financial and military support of Axis powers in general and Germany in particular. Its two fold aims were to fight for India's Freedom and to be future army of free India. Netaji formed Indian Legion on January 26, 1942 with eight volunteers, five students and three prisoners of war. 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 Bose worked day and night for getting permission for setting a Free Indian Centre parental body of Indian Legion, whose first meeting took place on 2th of November 1941. In Germany it took Netaji several months to do the spade work and make political environment congenial for the formation of Indian National Army. Netaji even 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. Free Indian Centre was a well structured autonomous administrative body and functioned without any interference from German Government. It relied on Germany only for moral, military, diplomatic and financial support. Financial debt was promised by Netaji will be repaid after India get its freedom from British rule. As a government Indian Legion enjoyed all things except land. The Legion had its own radio station and press that carried out propoganda against British and other Allied Powers. It had separate military and civil departments, separate military code of conduct and uniform.

Having dream of free India in mind Bose 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 sole objective of attaining freedom for India. After analyzing the situation of war in Europe and its serious repercussions on Britain, Netaji forecasted about withering power of British imperialism and "India's golden opportunity" to attain freedom. He forecasted that if India did not rose 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 British Raj with military might on his own shoulders. Militarily Netaji and his

Azad Hind Fouj may have failed to enjoy freedom of India but strategically and morally this force succeeded in attaining the goal of freedom. This is clear from a Lord Attlee's statement who 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.

5. AZAD HIND FOUJ IN BHAI BAND

5.1 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.

5.2 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.

5.3 This source will also help us in constructing the history from jokes as in various issues the newspaper has published jokes that were played on British Imperialists. Cartoons are also published in many issues of this newspaper. Those will help the historians in writings the history from cartoons. Inferences can be also drawn about the psyche of Legionaries and German soldiers from this source. This newspaper will therefore prove a great source of historical information for future research on the subject.

5.4 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.¹

5.5 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.

5.6 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 captured soldiers joined Azad Hind Fouj.

5.7 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.

5.8 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.

5.9 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, programmers, 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.

5.10 This document also gives us information about Indian Independence League. Indian Independence League was an Indian organization founded by Sardar Pritam Singh in Thailand. This organization later cooperated with Japan and formed Indian National Army .This League stood for independence of India and also for sequeing 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.

5.11 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.

5.12 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 propandists. 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.

6. UTILITY AS A SOURCE

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 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.

7. SHORT COMMINGS AS SOURCE

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 other sources, as well as substantiated by other sources also. This newspaper cannot prove itself on the principles of modern journalism, because, it does not meet all the requirements for being a true modern newspapers. Its chronology needs to be compared with other sources, because dates are sometimes contradictory and confusing. Sometimes things have been unnecessarily exaggerated as, one of the objectives of its publication was to counter as well as launch propaganda against Allied Powers in general and England in particular. Again names of the Europeans and places of Europe are not correctly written because the persons associated with the newspaper were not fully aware of European nomenclatures and places. Hence using it as a historical source, it

needs an unbiased mind so that an objective and genuine history of Azad Hind Fouj and freedom struggle of India can be written.

CONCLUSION

Like death of Subash Chandra Bose, the contribution of Azad Hind Fouj is also controversial one. The sources related to Azad Hind Fouj and its leader Bose 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 among them. The fact that makes this document unique is that 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. This 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 firsthand source for writing the history of Azad Hind Fouj and Indian Freedom Struggle Studies.

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