

**INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY-**

# ***SECRET SERVICE***



**MOTI LAL BHARGAVA  
AMERICK SINGH GILL**

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## PREFACE

In October 1945 Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru while giving a press interview at Delhi was surprised to learn that a number of Indians were lodged in Delhi jail, sentenced to death, under the Enemy Agent's Ordinance and awaited execution. Some had already been executed, and no one was allowed to say, or publish anything about their trials or sentences under pain of heavy penalties. As the World War had ended he wanted the Government to publish all facts about them and leave secret and hush-hush procedure, when the enemy had ceased to exist.

On October 29, 1945 Mahatma Gandhi also wrote to Sir Evan Jenkins "in fear and trembling", lest he might not be over-stepping his limit; about the members of the corps raised by or under Subhas Chandra Bose. Though he had nothing in common with any defence by force of arms, but he could never be blind to the valour and patriotism displayed by persons in arms. His intercession on behalf of such prisoners, Haridas Mitra and others, led to their sentence of death being commuted to transportation for life and ultimate release.

The saga of such patriots termed as Enemy Agents had not yet been told in detail although over forty years have elapsed since they were released or executed. My meeting with one such patriot in 1980 at Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta, who was sentenced to execution, but was alive to tell his story, inspired me to probe into the whole affair. Thanks to a post-doctoral research project financed by the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, for collection of source-material on Indians in South and East Asia, I came across revealing material on Hind Swaraj Institute, Penang established in 1942 and other such espionage training camps. This naturally led to landing or parachute dropping of some agents by the Japanese on Indian coasts by submarines or on Indian soil by planes; and when arrested they were tried under Enemy Agent's Ordinance (No. 1 of 1943).

While details of curricula, subjects taught and training imparted were available in Indian Independence League papers, further material could be had from the statements of approvers, prosecution witnesses and even persons accused. Out of the mass of such material only selected documents, judgments, and facts worth narrating have been taken to build up their story. Published material about their activities, plans for and need of intelligence operations have also been utilised.

Incidentally one of the active member of such groups, Americk Singh Gill, now living in Malaysia, offered to join me in building up the story. He had sent his own narration, and also material about other such groups landed or trained for transport to India. This had added great importance to the work prepared by me.

As my earlier venture on Indian National Army - Tokyo Cadets has attained unexpected success, I have ventured to prepare this present work and get the same published.

The task was no doubt difficult one as the case files contain so much material and in some so little material, that a balanced account of all cases is impossible. The three Madras cases are a glaring example in this category. The material in three Delhi cases is, however, different from the Madras Cases, as fuller details are missing from the files. The Calcutta Case, or Delhi Case tried at Calcutta, had its own drawbacks. However, details about that have been culled from Haridas Mitra's Memorial submitted to the Viceroy and Governor-General and Americk Singh Gill had himself added his version

The material collected from the National Archives of India, New Delhi, has been supplemented by my research in the National Archives of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, which I visited in July 1983. Their collection under the head B.M.A. (British Military Administration) has given a vivid impression of the activities of the Indian Independence League in Malaysia and of Indians under Japanese occupation in Malaya, Singapore, Burma and Thailand.

In addition to the above material collected by Netaji Research Bureau, Netaji Bhavan, Calcutta and published in the Oracle from time to time has given an idea of Netaji's underground in India. Publication of material on such patriots, termed as Enemy Agents by the British, might goad

other researchers and authors to come out with fuller versions. As out of fifty or sixty such persones, only 13 were executed, some might still be alive to narrate their stories like Americk Singh Gill. If that comes about, the efforts made by me and supplemented by Gill will stand rewarded.

There are already two divergent views about the activities of Indian National Army and th Indian Independence League. Even leaders like Netaji, Subhas Chandra Bose had been depicted in diametrically opposite roles. The Sixth Column authored by Capt. M.K. Durrani is a singal example of this nature. He had criticised Netaji in an unremittingly hostile way. He believed that Bose's ambition was to become Dictator of India (op.cit., p.211). Bose presided over a court-martial on Durrani (op.cit., p.244) and told him that third degree methods would be used to extract a confession (op.cit., p.247). According to Louis Allen, professor at the University of Durham, U.K. the unqualified criticism in his book is in utter contrast to the respect and adoration shown by another Muslim, Shah Nawaz Khan, who regarded him above all communal feelings.

In the same manner the role of Indian National Army spy agents either before the arrival of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in Southeast Asia or under him is capable of divergent opinions. Added to this is the confusion created by the statements of some of the accused themselves, who in order to escape punishment either turned approvers or divulged all the secret plans of Indian National Army espionage and designs to infiltrate into India. The common plea taken by the accused was that their main intention to accept Japanese offerfor espionage was to come back to India, come what may. In Madras Case No.1, as many as fourteen were given benefit of doubt due to that and similar other pretexts. But the evaluation of their heroic adventure in undergoing training for espionage, agreeing to be transported by Japanese submarines or being air-dropped, can be made in overall circumstances prevailing in India as well as Southeast Asia.

So far Indian leaders were concerned, Mahatma Gandhi, Pt. Jawahar-lal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel appreciated their valour and got them released. Pandit Nehru was even prepared to get the validity of the Ordinance challenged. But events moved faster, and even appeals to the Privy Council werre dismissed. All that was done secretly and the rela-

tions and counsel were threatened with action under Section 16 of the Enemy Agents' Ordinance in case they talked about the Cases to others.

Despite all the above conundrums when the reins of power were given to Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel, all prisoners sentenced to imprisonment or transportation for life were released. Shri Americk Singh who was also sentenced to execution but has survived to tell his story has joined me in this venture. He has also supplied a vivid narration, of Ram Saroop Singh and his party. In view of all these narrations interspersed by documents the present work should present a readable account of the great patriots, termed as Enemy Agents by the foreign rulers before independence.

Acknowledgements are due to the Director, National Archives of India, New Delhi, Director of National Archives of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, and Director, Nehru Memorial and Library, Teenmurti, New Delhi.

The publisher, S.K. Bhatia, Reliance Publishing House, New Delhi, whose uncle was also at one time in the Indian National Army deserves my utmost gratitude for having brought the book in print in record time.

1 January 1988.

M.L. Bhargava

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## ENEMY AGENTS

On October 21, 1943 the *Statesman* for the first time carried the following headlines - Jap Agents foiled by villagers - Arrest after landing from Submarine - Failure of ambitious Fifth Column Plan. It further announced with full fanfare that out of these four Indians had been executed. The men were Indian civilian nationals resident in Malaya. They were tried under the Enemy Agents Ordinance, 1943. According to the Press Note they had accepted Japanese money and clearly intended to carry on fifth column work in India.<sup>1</sup>

However, fuller details about the accused and their sentences were revealed in an answer to part (c) of the question No.781:Legislative Assembly by Shri Sri Prakasa by the then Home Member Sir John Thorne.<sup>2</sup> According to this there were in all seven such cases, three each were held at Madras and Delhi and one in Calcutta. In all there were 42 accused. Twenty- seven were sentenced to death; one to 5 years' rigorous imprisonment and 14 were acquitted of the death sentences, commuted to transportation for life. Thirteen were hanged - ten in Madras and three in Delhi. The highest number of 19 accused were tried in Madras Case No.1 by Mr. E.E.Mack as a Special Judge. He acquitted 14, sentenced 4 to death and 1 to five years' rigorous imprisonment. In the Madras Cases No.2 and 3, two and four accused were tried and all of them were executed. *Where hanged?* According to Secret Letter No. 5/759-2/46 dated 27-2-46 from RESONABILI, Madras to HOMEIN, New Delhi, the ten enemy agents sentenced to death were hanged in the Penitentiary, Madras and

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1. *Home Department Poll.* (I), K.W. of F.No. 2/7/44.

2. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Vol.III 1946, pp. 2052-2055 also *Home Dept. Poll.* (I) F.No. 22/32/46, 1946.

their bodies buried in the Public Burial Ground at Ottery, Madras.<sup>3</sup> It was further detailed that the bodies of Messers T.P.V. Kumaran Nair and Ramu Thevar, both accused in Madras case No.2 were not buried in the Jail premises, but in the public grounds at Ottery. As no claims for the bodies were received from any relatives or friends of these agents and none were forthcoming, so the question of giving a chance to the relatives did not arise. In accordance with rules 667 and 827 of the Madras Prison and Reformatory Manual Volume II (Pt.I), all Indian prisoners unclaimed had to be buried and not cremated.<sup>4</sup>

As regards Madras Case No. III, it was announced that all had been convicted and sentenced to death. Their conviction and sentence were upheld by the Reviewing Judge and the sentences were executed in March 1945. No communique was issued at the time on grounds of military security.<sup>5</sup>

*Where and why trained?* According to the judgment in the Review case No. 8 of 1943, dated April 26, 1943, the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Wadsworth remarked that most of the accused, except one who was an Engineer in a British Indian Steamer, were employed in Malaya or Singapore itself. Some of them were for a short time prisoners of the Japanese after the invasion. They were all more or less stranded and found it very difficult to maintain themselves in the disturbed conditions resulting from the invasion. In this state of affairs they got into touch with what was known as the Indian Independence League; a *quasi* political organisation which was under Indian's control.<sup>6</sup>

*Institute at Penang.* Wadsworth further added, that under the auspices of this (I.I.L.) organisation, a school known as - The SWARAJ INSTITUTE - was started at Penang and young Indians were recruited for this institute, largely through the agency of one Raghavan,<sup>7</sup> a Barrister of

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3. *Home Deptt. Poll.* (I) F.No. 22/32/46.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Home Deptt. Poll.* (I). F.No.2/1/43 - Correspondence pp. 98-117.

7. The Institute started functioning in the "Free School Building" in Green Line Road, Penang from 3rd August, 1942. N.Raghavan was the Director and had full control of the Institute. He hailed from Guruvayar (South Malabar). Born in Cochin, he was educated at Christian college in Madras. Studied law in England and went to Penang as a lawyer in 1920. *Home Deptt. Poll* (I) F.No. 2/2/43 Appendix to Correspondence pp. 1-44. Statement of P.W.D. Revenue No. 11/44.

Penang, and a well known Indian political leader in the days before the invasion. According to the accused, N.Raghavan and B.D.Gupta, Supervisor explained to them that the object of the Institute, was to train Indians for espionage, so that if and when Indian National Army marched towards India their services could be utilised. The Japanese were to give military and financial assistance for achieving Indian Independence. Admission to the Institute was voluntary. There was no compulsion. In the first batch there were 32 or 33 students.

On the opening ceremony day N. Raghavan addressed the trainees and explained the objects of the Institute. The Japanese instructors and the Japanese Liaison Officer for Penang were also present. The trainees took the oath and signed the pledge. The oath was : *"I dedicate my life for the cause of Indian Independence and will carry out the duties allotted to me from this Institute to the best of my abilities and even at the risk of my life When serving my motherland and India, I would not seek any personal advantage. I will treat every body as brothers and sisters without any caste, creed or religion."*<sup>8</sup> This oath was taken in front of the Indian National Flag. The trainees were trained in revolutionary propaganda, the technique of espionage, physical drill, swimming, the use of rubber boats, and use of fire arms. The duration of the training was only 27 days. After the completion of the short- term training there was graduation ceremony. According to the approver, this ceremony was accompanied by a second solemn oath before the National Flag in which the graduates undertook faithfully to carry out all the duties for which they had been trained, when sent to India.

The Hind Swaraj Institute had well planned curricula of instructions and lectures.<sup>9</sup> There were departments for lectures on world situation and political science; propaganda and intelligence; defence intelligence; drills; wireless and other methods of communication; scouting; photography, mapping and surveying.

Besides the Director of the Institute, N.Raghavan, there were Heads of each Department; and some office staff. Colonel Alagappan headed the Department of special services. Dallal was the head of the department of political science; and Kaueko delivered lectures on the world

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8. Home Deptt. Poll. (I) F.No. 2/1/43 - Correspondence pp.98-117. Judgment in the Review case No. 8 of 1943 dated April 26, 1943.

9. Indian Independence League Papers.

situation, principles of war and Great East Asia, Military Service. Ichiunna gave instructions on military and physical training, including Art of self-Defence. Five officers of the I.N.A. were appointed for the Military Training, one of them being Col. Sangha. There was strict discipline in the Institute and according to the findings of the learned judges none of the accused at any time made any attempt to escape from the Institute or to dissociate themselves from the courses of study, which clearly pointed to the future performance of revolutionary and espionage work in India.<sup>10</sup>

**Mode of transport :** The accused were despatched to India in three batches. Two parties were put on board the submarine at Penang and given each Rs. 500/- in Indian currency notes along with a set of typed instructions which they were made to commit to memory. They were also equipped before they started out with a rubber bag containing toilet requisites, pen knife, a pencil and some papers and Indian clothes. Each individual was made to choose a false name for himself and his partner knew that false name. According to the conclusion arrived at by the Judge they were to contact with their respective partners at a given rendezvous in India to collect all the information of military importance they could and to make their way back across the Burma frontier in January 1943.

The third party was transported by overland route across the Indo-Burmese border. They were alleged to have been taken first to Rangoon and each was given the sum of Rs.500/- in Indian currency along with instructions as given to the first two parties. All the accused were thus financed from bundle of new notes seized from some treasury by the Japanese.

**Trial and Judgment :** The first party comprising of 10 to 12 persons in two rubber boats landed off a submarine at Tanur on the Malabar coast on the 27th September 1942. The second batch landed on the Baroda Coast, of Okhawadi (Okhamandal - now in Gujarat off Dwarka) on 29th September, 1942. The third party after a noteworthy interval moved up to Akyab and slipped away into "No man's land" on the Indo-Burmese border. They were apprehended in the Girijiana outpost bazar on the 27th October, 1942. They had entered from Mungdow side. The special Judge gave a careful consideration to all cases individually and gave benefit of more than a reasonable doubt as to their intentions of entering India. He felt convinced that they were "mere pawns in a diabolical Japanese

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10. *Home Deptt. Poll (I) F.No. 2/1/43, pp.46-86.*

game, harmless, reference clerks in Government employ and other humble capacities, who went to Malaya recently for employment."<sup>11</sup> So he found all such accused not guilty and acquitted them on both counts viz. being employed by or working for, or acting on instructions received from the enemy and conspired with the other accused of giving aid to enemy's naval, military or air operations an offence punishable under section 121-A of the Indian Penal Code. According to the special judge the second offence of abetting the war against the king and to deprive the king of sovereignty of British India was obviously committed in Malaya, Technically that could not be governed by the I.P.C but they were deemed to have continued committing the offence started in Malaya till the time of their arrest in British India, or in Baroda State. He observed that "Employment in every country occupied by the enemy under conditions of duress or compulsion cannot of course *per se* make a person an enemy agent within the meaning of section of the Ordinance". It was clear to him that no such act in British India was attributed to any of the accused except to one who tried to win over two Moplah brothers to the cause of Indian Independence before the authorities took him and his group over.<sup>12</sup> From Judge's point it was necessary for the prosecution to establish that each of the accused entered India as an enemy agent. He was however constrained to believe the statement of the accused that they entered India with the innocent intention of merely going home; and remarked that no penal legislation could create a grave crime and make it a capital offence with retrospective effect. He also expressed surprise at the legal interpretation of Section 3 of the Ordinance which clearly laid down that "an enemy agent shall be punishable with death", in place of the time-honoured clause used by Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code which used the words "shall be punished with death or transportation for life". In accordance with the above convictions the special Judge acquitted as many as fourteen and sentenced only five to be hanged by the neck till they were dead.<sup>13</sup>

**Conviction confirmed :** The reviewing Judge confirmed the conviction of only four of the five, as the fifth one was a subject of the then Travancore State and was arrested within the limits of Baroda State. So he

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11. *Ibid.*

12. *Judgment*, para 6.

13. *Home Deptt. Poll (I) F.No. 2/1/43, Madras Case No.1 correspondence pp. 93-97 and Judgment pp.98-117.*

was not an enemy agent within the definition of the Ordinance and on this ground he was acquitted on the charge under Section 3 of the Ordinance. But the Reviewing Judge, however, confirmed the sentence of 5 years rigorous imprisonment under section 121-A of the Indian Penal Code. The Judge clearly stated that he could not interfere with the order of acquittal in the case of 14 accused, nor was he empowered under the Ordinance to exercise any powers of revision. The amending Ordinance published on 1st May, 1943 could not be operative as the judgment of the Reviewing Judge was delivered on 26th April, 1943. Second review was not possible, the case could not be opened again. So all attempts of the official hierarchy to get the order of acquittal set aside failed. The petition and memorandum of the Public Prosecutor was dismissed.

**Appeal dismissed :** Three of the accused, sentenced to death, filed an appeal in the High Court of Judicature at Madras (Criminal Appeal No. 386 of 1943); and the Chief Justice Sir Alfred Henry Lionel Leach along with Mr. Justice King and Mr. Justice Lakshmana Rao constituted the Appellate Bench. Leading advocates, V.Rajagopalachari and T.H.Kasturi argued on behalf of the accused against the orders of the Reviewing Judge confirming their death sentences. While delivering the judgment on the third day of August 1943, the Chief Justice dismissed the appeal according to which the appellant had no right to appeal.<sup>14</sup>

Even the then Government-General of India to whom Mercy Petition was presented, declined to interfere on behalf of (1) V.M.A. Khadir, (2) S.C. Bardhan, (3) Fauja Singh, and (4) S.A. Anand alias Thanu Pillay convicted under the Enemy Agents Ordinance and under sentence of death in Penitentiary, Madras.<sup>15</sup>

**Madras Case No.2 :** Although twenty six agents, having undergone "Short courses" in espionage, had entered India, only twenty could be tried in Madras Case No.1. One of them turned approver, fourteen were acquitted, four were executed and one sentenced to five years' rigorous imprisonment. Sometime later it was discovered that two viz., Rama Thevar and Sethu had also entered India but their presence in a Bengal

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14. *Ibid.* Deputy Registrar, Appellate side to the Joint Secretary to Government, Home Deptt. and the Superintendent, the Penitentiary, Madras.

15. *Ibid.* Governor-General (Public) letter No.50/6/43 G.G.(B) New Delhi, the 3rd September, 1943.

jail was not disclosed in time to get them tried along with the rest. So the Madras Government proposed that a fresh separate case be started and Mr. Krishna Rao be appointed as a Special Judge, and Mr. Justice Wadsworth may act as Reviewing Judge.<sup>16</sup>

It was alleged by the Prosecution that the two accused who were Indians and were residing in Malaya, entered into a conspiracy to aid the enemy (Japan) and volunteered to be employed as enemy agents to do espionage work for the enemy in India, and in pursuance of this they entered India between the end of November and beginning of December 1942. They had thus committed offence punishable under section of the Ordinance No.1, 1943. They had thus abetted the waging of war against and conspired to deprive his Majesty of Sovereignty of India, offences punishable under section 121, 121-A of the I.P.C.<sup>17</sup> Their trial started on the 13th day of March 1944. Accused No.1 was defended by Shri V.Rajagopalachari of the Madras Bar and No.2 by Sri Kasturi both appointed by the Crown. The Special Judge found both the accused guilty and sentenced them to suffer death. Each of the accused was to undergo rigorous imprisonment for 16 years under section 121-A, and 5 years under Section 123, I.P.C., the sentence being concurrent.

In this way T.P.kamran alias Kun-asan Nair, son of K.Krishna Panikar, formerly clerk in the Bengal Air Force, residing at Nillikoda, Calicut Taluk, Malabar district; aged 38 years, and Ramu Thevar alias Apparoo, son of Ramalingan Ramnad district aged 19 years were sentenced to death. The High Court in its Judgment, dated 28.4.1944 (Review Case No.1 - 1944) confirmed the sentence of death.<sup>18</sup> The two men were hanged in Madras on 7.7.1944.

### Madras Case No.III :

In this case four accused were tried in Madras by a Special Judge appointed under the Enemy Agents Ordinance. These were - N.K.Knanaram alias Unniram alias Gosh; Ratnam alias Murthi; Ramaswamy alias Muthumani and Sethu alis Krishan. They were all convicted and sentenced to death. Their conviction and sentence were upheld by the Reviewing Judge and the sentences were executed in March 1945.<sup>19</sup>

16. *Home Deptt. Poll* (I) F.No. 2/1/43, pp.1-2.

17. *Ibid.* Charge sheet and Police Report pp.1-34 Appendix to correspondence.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 1 to 3, printed after Special Judge's Judgment.

19. *Home Deptt. Poll.* (I), F.No. 22/32-46, 1946.

**Release question :**

The question of release of all Enemy Agents undergoing sentences under the Ordinance was taken up at the Weekly Home Department and War Department I.B.M.I. meeting held on June 21, 1946.

The U.P. Government had asked for the release of two such persons detained in the Agra Jail on the ground that they were political prisoners, whom it was their policy to release. Although the discussion was inconclusive, the Home Department decided to initiate an examination of the question, in the light of the impending formation of Interim Government at the Centre.<sup>20</sup> Out of the Madras Case No.1, 2 and 3, there was only one accused viz., B.B.Pereira, a Travancore Christian serving five years' rigorous imprisonment. Out of the acquitted ones of Madras case No.1, two had been detained for the duration of the war, but had been released in November 1945. So only one case was left to be disposed off. However, with the release of all such prisoners in the three Delhi Cases and one Calcutta case, the remaining accused of Madras Case No.1 was also released.

**Conclusion :** It is evident from the trial proceedings of the cases tried by Special Judge at Madras, that strictly speaking the accused could not be tried for an offence which originated or started in Malaya. Just as benefit of doubt was given to a subject of Travancore State, arrested in Baroda State, so the agents transported from Malaya either by submarine or by overland route could not be punished, to the extent of death sentence. The Government of India also realised the lacuna and amended the Ordinance. Besides this legal flaw, the findings of the Special Judges, and their confirmation by Reviewing Judges, establishes beyond doubt that the sole intention of the agents was *patriotic*. As recorded by K.S.Giani, in his work on Indian Independence Movement in East Asia, Part I, pp.142-144, the Japanese decided to send these young patriots of their own for sabotage and propaganda work, and did not take N.Raghavan into confidence. The memoirs of Lt. General Fujiwara, F.Kikan (English version published in 1983) confirms that the Hind Swaraj Institute, Penang was undoubtedly the creation of the Japanese, but it was run by N.Raghavan and his associates. Under the circumstances dubbing the young products of such an Institute merely as Enemy Agents is unjustified.

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20. Home Deptt. Poll (I) F.No. 2/5/46 - 1946.



## INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS

According to the reminiscences of Lieutenant-General Fujiwara Iwai-chi, Col. Tamura's first contacts with Baba Amar Singh, the leader of the Indian Independence League in Bangkok revealed to him that the I.I.L. was a secret society working for the liberation of India and her independence.<sup>1</sup> It had a network of members at several places in Thailand and Malaya. After conversations with Pritam Singh, the Secretary-General of the League, Tamura convinced them of Japan's sincerity. As a result, the I.I.L. and the Japanese Army became linked by friendly ties.

Pritam Singh had been working for the independence of India since 1939, when he had to flee from India for personal safety to Singapore and then to Bangkok. He continued his secret parleys with Tamura and Fujiwara. When Japan was heading for hostilities in the Pacific, Tamura and Pritam Singh were signing a memoranda of agreement of 1 December to collaborate against the British. The time was opportune for Pritam Singh to send his men to join *F Kikan* agents in Bangkok to leave for the battle front. In the words of Fujiwara, 'The primary task of the *F.Kikan* was to assist the I.I.L. movement'.<sup>2</sup> The former was to despatch its agents to the field armies in order to take charge of Indian prisoners of war and assist the I.I.L.'s activities. This brought the Japanese in contact with Capt. Mohan Singh.

While surrendering Indian soldiers flocked to Capt. Mohan Singh's camp, responsibilities of *F Kikan* increased without limit. By 25 December the Japanese Army had reached Penang and Fujiwara attended the forma-

1. *F Kikan*, Japanese Army Intelligence Operations in Southeast Asia during World War II. pp.5-6.

2. *Ibid.*, p.65.