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Communist Internationalism and Transcolonial Recognition

Kris Manjapra

The 1920s were a decade of internationalism in a new key in Indian anti-colonial thought and action. Communism comprised a transcolonial ecumene between Indians and other anti-colonial groups worldwide thanks to its universalist symbols and its global transport and communication systems. By 'transcolonial' I refer specifically to the ways in which the communist ecumene was utilized in order to create an economy of recognition among the colonized and 'semi-colonized' of the earth – that is, not relationships between powerful centers and their dependencies, but between multiple subordinated groups worldwide.

Interwar communism, in the Indian context, is best conceived as a reconfiguration of a pre-existing network of anti-colonial internationalism in place since the late nineteenth century. Anti-colonial national identities could serve as ways of access to larger realms of commonality, and not as restrictive assignments to bounded in-groups. As Edward Said theorized, it was both filiation to the bounded category of a national community, but also *affiliation* to unbounded, transcolonial communities of value, judgment, taste and political commitment that created the 'worlding' of anti-colonial intellectuals and activists.[1] This dialectic between filiation and affiliation provides the dynamic by which to best understand the development of Indian communism in the early 1920s. The study of transcolonialism can do much to break down the false dichotomy of the global versus the local by showing how these two static heuristic categories do not adequately portray the overlapping scales of political activity among colonial intellectuals.

Standard accounts of Indian communism tell the tale of quarrelsome bands of Indian nationalists acquiring funds, along with new ideology, from the Soviets.[2] The Western writ of communism is shown to travel to India, producing a succession of spokesmen, from the likes

of M.N. Roy and S.A. Dange to that of R.P. Dutt, B.T. Ranadive and P.C. Joshi. Histories of the Indian Communist Party can turn into genealogies of the orthodox and heterodox, of the legitimate and illegitimate offspring.[3] And the presumption of two separate theaters, one for politics at home, and one for politics abroad, informs how the history of Indian communism is staged.[4] As opposed to seeing Indian communism as an experiment in the domestication of foreign doctrines,[5] with more or less successful outcomes, I picture it as an ecumene, a field of symbols that was open to lively interpretations by disparate Indian actors, from different sites worldwide.[6]

The Indian anti-colonial network was long embedded in infrastructures and transport systems of competing imperial states. Systems analysis has been used to study the operation of economic regimes and multinational organizations that produced and sustained empires.[7] But the *responses* to empire among the colonized have been curiously trapped within territorial frames. Methodological territorialism in the study of anti-colonial struggle – the false assumption that efforts to attain sovereignty operate primarily through political action taking place in the colonial territory – has obscured the global systematicity of anti-colonial politics, as well as the global extent of counter-insurgency measures that arose to thwart it.[8]

The desire to study the global systematicity of Indian anti-colonialism brings about its own challenges. The application of an older style of systems analysis to the study of Indian anti-colonialism tends to reinscribe narratives of center and periphery, of home and diaspora and of organism and environment that would portray anticolonial politics as spreading from the political epicenter of British India to distant climes worldwide.[9] But what if the decentralized and contingently arising epicenters of Indian anti-colonialism were located abroad, sending catalytic effects in multiple directions, including towards the site of territorial contestation? This represents a fundamental rethinking of notions of 'territorial' and 'diasporic' politics. To better envision the decentralized, multi-polar, and yet coordinated clusters of political activism that sustained Indian anti-colonialism as a system throughout the world, we must envision orbits and constellations of anti-colonial activity within and across the gambit of different states. Looking for political agencies beyond territorial bounds does not entail denying the importance of states, especially their capacity to project power and transfer political goods beyond their territory.

The cartographic entity of 'colonial India' was always unstable, with the annexation of new areas, the partition and reunification of existing

provinces, the creation of new provinces, and the internal patchwork of princely states. But there were also continually shifting external frontiers, such as the drawing of the Durand Line in 1893 and the MacMohan Line of 1914. So, even speaking of activity outside the 'territory' of India is problematic, since the cognitive topos of India did not correspond to a settled, unchanging cartographic body. Further Indian agencies spread abroad through the migration and return of indentured and free labor, and the circulations of religious pilgrims, elites and intellectuals throughout the nineteenth century. And the rise of radical Indian anti-colonial nationalism in the 1890s can be directly linked to events occurring outside territorial India. Whether we think of Gandhi's political roots in South Africa in the 1890s, Aurobindo's and Dadabhai Naoroji's paths to staunch anti-colonialism in London in these same years, the anti-colonial politics of Punjabi migrants in turn-of-the-century California, or the political significance of hajj pilgrimage from the 1880s onwards, 'foreign' terrains were not merely a backdrop for the main event of Indian 'home' politics, but instead constituted laboratories for the catalysis of anti-colonial struggle.[10]

Pre-existing networks

The roots of the Indian communist ecumene stretch back before the Russian events of November 1917. Communism, for Indian radicals, amounted to a set of symbols and infrastructures for reasserting and reconfiguring the long-standing pursuits of Indian anti-colonial internationalism. In the years leading up the First World War, three main webs of anti-colonial action were already in place: the Khilafat Movement, the Swadeshi Movement and the Ghadar Movement. Each of these represented the interplay between Indian agencies and the vortex of imperial travel routes produced by competing big states. The urban amenities, shipping routes, and the print and financial capital of imperial metropolises in Britain, France, the Ottoman Empire, Germany, Japan, and America facilitated the rise of these clusters of radical politics. Indian revolutionaries leap-frogged between them in the early twentieth century – between Swadeshi, Ghadar and Khilafat centers – creating a larger global system of activism.[11]

Islamic universalism provided perhaps the earliest expression of anti-colonial internationalism. The rise in pro-Caliph sentiment among Indian Muslims after the Crimean War beginning in 1853, the visits of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani to Hyderabad in 1855 and again in 1880–82, the growing size of the hajj pilgrimage by sea by the late nineteenth

century, and the establishment of an elaborate system of Ottoman consulates and missions in India, made Islamic universalism an important transcolonial arena for the expression of Indian anti-colonial sentiment.[12] In addition to Ottoman infrastructures, the Japanese and German governments were playing an increasingly important role as supporters of Islamic universalist activism. Maulana Barakatullah, who taught Hindi at Tokyo University, published his journal *Islamic Fraternity* from there beginning in 1906. Meanwhile, the German emperor's assertion in 1898 that he was the 'friend of all Muslims of the world' led to the rise in German consulates funding Muslim activists in Constantinople, Kabul and Jakarta.[13]

After the declaration of war between the Ottomans and Italy in 1913, the commitment of many Indian Muslims to protect the Caliphate strengthened significantly.[14] Indian *muhajirin* answered the call from Indian leaders to join the Turks in their war against Britain, traveling across Afghanistan and Persia to the Ottoman lands. A second wave of young Indian Muslim pilgrims left across the Northwest Frontier in 1920 in response to the call for *hijrat* – emigration in protest of British colonial oppression. By the end of the Great War, these diasporic anti-colonial travelers formed a network of activism that spread through Central Asia, East Asia, the Middle East and Central Europe.

A second cluster of anti-colonial activity arose beginning in 1905, at the conjuncture of the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese war and the Partition of Bengal. Swadeshi internationalism developed in major cities of India, but also simultaneously in London, Paris, New York, San Francisco and Tokyo. Swadeshi radicals in Calcutta and Dhaka sponsored the travel of Bengali students to Tokyo for technical training.[15] Activists in London, Paris and New York, led by Shyamji Krishnavarma, Bhikaji Cama and Lajpat Rai, respectively, set up centers for anti-colonial agitation and pamphleteering, and they coordinated their efforts with Swadeshi radicalism in India.[16] From 1910 to 1915, Swadeshi revolutionaries attempted to orchestrate the shipment of arms into Bengal from abroad, forging ties with Irish and Russian revolutionaries, American anti-imperial activists, Japanese and Chinese leaders, as well as the German Foreign Office along the way. German consuls throughout Southeast Asia were highly involved in financing the travel of Indian radicals particularly after 1912, as the foreign office adopted the strategy of 'revolutionizing' British colonial possessions.[17]

A third cluster of Indian anti-colonialism developed on the back of Swadeshi internationalism. The Ghadar Movement arose on the

West Coast of the United States among Punjabi immigrants and was in full swing by 1907. They published newspapers and sought support from West Coast American anti-imperialists at Berkeley and Stanford. And leaders of the San Francisco Ghadar Party, such as Hardayal, leap-frogged from the India House in London to Paris and New York, before traveling on to San Francisco. Hardayal, from his seat on the West Coast, also wrote articles that appeared in the Swadeshi press in Lahore and Calcutta. Similarly, Barakatuallah, mentioned earlier in connection with the Khilafat cause, shifted from editing *Islamic Fraternity* in Tokyo to heading up the Ghadar Movement in San Francisco in 1912, before traveling on to Berlin and Constantinople to aid the Khilafat cause. Again, German and Japanese imperial infrastructures provided the most important transport systems. During the *Komagata Maru* incident of April 1914, a Japanese-owned ship carrying German arms and 376 Indian Ghadar revolutionaries left San Francisco for Calcutta with the aim of instigating revolution in territorial India. The boat was intercepted by British authorities in the Bay of Bengal, and a large number of the insurgents were executed.[18] The Lahore Conspiracy Case of 1915 turned the affair into a scandal of international proportions, shedding light on the big state partners of Indian network radicalism.[19]

The infrastructure supporting the various clusters of Indian activists began to break down as British counter-insurgency aggressively spread its tentacles around the world during the Great War. The Defense of India Act, promulgated in 1916, detained hundreds of alleged 'terrorists' in India. In 1917, passports were instituted for all Indians traveling abroad.[20] The Rowlatt Sedition Bill, passed in 1919, enlarged the scope for imprisonment without trial and without appeal.[21] British imperial counter-insurgency also functioned through the proxies of its Western allies, as evidenced by the opening of the German-Hindoo Trial in San Francisco in 1917, in which the leaders of the Ghadar Party and their German consular collaborators were prosecuted.[22]

The arm of the German Foreign Office focused on India, the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient*, for its part, had already begun cutting off assistance to radicals in 1915 as the war turned decisively in favor of the Entente powers on the Eastern front.[23] Meanwhile, Japan officially declared itself an ally of Britain during the war and became increasingly leery of rustling the feathers of the British in Asia. The Japanese were also increasingly preoccupied with acquiring new colonial spoils for themselves in their 'co-prosperity' zone in East Asia.

Economies of recognition

The establishment of the Soviet State in 1917 created a new set of infrastructures, funded by red rubles, to substitute for the broken linkages between Indian radicalism and the infrastructures of competitor imperial states. The earliest leaders of Indian communism came out of the global Indian anti-colonial network. From the Swadeshi milieu came the likes of M.N. Roy, Bhupendranath Datta and Virendranath Chattopadhyaya. From out of the Ghadar Movement came figures such as Santokh Singh and Rattan Singh.[24] And from out of the Khilafat Movement came important early communist intellectuals, such as Mushir Hosain Kidwai, Mohammed Barakatullah, Obeidullah Sindhi, Feroz-ud-Din Mansoor, Mir Abdul Majid and Fazal Ilahi Qurban.[25] All of these figures converged on Moscow after the Russian revolution, believing they would find the support needed to reconstitute Indian network radicalism.

The multiple clusters of activism that combined under Indian communism ensured a multiplicity of interpretive styles. The polysemy of Marxist symbols in the writings of early Indian communists registers the diverse imaginaries combining within the new thought zone of communism. Consider three of the earliest texts of Indian communism, all published between 1921 and 1922, but in different sites of the globe: in Bombay, in the town of Comilla, eastern Bengal, and in Berlin. S.A. Dange, an early Indian communist leader writing from Bombay, argued for the compatibility of Leninist and Gandhian politics. 'Gandhism suffers from too much and unwarranted faith in the natural goodness of human nature, while Bolshevism suffers from too much neglect of human interests and sentiments.'[26] Furthermore, he fused communism with Pan-Asianism, a long established discourse among Indian radicals. In an article appearing in October 1921 in his new journal, *The Socialist*, he wrote, 'attacks from without have helped to consolidate the peoples of Asia, as 'Asiatics,' without prejudice to their separate religious and national existence.... It would indeed be a glorious thing for India to take the initiative and summon the first sessions of the Asiatic International in the pandal event of the Gaya session. Angora, Persia, Afghanistan, Asiatic Russia, the Far Eastern Republic of China and Japan would accept the proposal, we think, very gladly and send fraternal delegates to the International.'[27] He even proposed that the Gaya session of the INC be transformed into 'the first session of the Asian International' which could run concurrently with the meeting of the Communist International in that year.

Another expression of early Indian communism came in the writings of Kazi Nazrul Islam at Comilla. Nazrul began publishing his revolutionary Bengali weekly *Dhumketu* (The Comet) in 1921. A young poet and political activist involved in Swadeshi and Khilafat politics, and son of a Muslim religious scholar, Nazrul Islam saw the kernel of communism as a heroic epic of victory of agrarian toilers over landlords. Writing in *Dhumketu*, he drew equivalencies between mythic tales that informed peasant imaginaries, and communist symbols. With reference to the Ramayana, he wrote of the 'capitalist-Raven' and his 'bourgeois-Raksas' who battle the peasant, Hanuman.[28] Elsewhere, invoking portions of the Qu'ran, Nazrul wrote of Abraham, the seeker of truth, intent on offering his life (*atmaprasad*) for righteous struggle against king Nimrod, the oppressor.[29] For Kazi Nazrul Islam, Marxist symbols were tied to the insurgent potentialities of peasant imagination.

The site of Nazrul's articulation of communism differed starkly from that of yet another early Indian communist thinker from this same inaugural period. Manabendranath Roy wrote his *Transition in India* (1921) seated in the Weimar metropolitan milieu of Berlin, ensconced in Spartikist circles of German communism. M.N. Roy had been a Swadeshi revolutionary up until 1915, but had since transformed into a preeminent member of the Comintern. Roy asserted the absolute equivalency between European and Indian social dynamics, just as nineteenth-century Brahmo religious thinkers argued for the equivalency between the 'monotheistic God' of the bible and the 'Brahman' of the Vedas. Stressing this theme of equivalency between East and West, Roy wrote, 'the root cause of all the great movements of human history is to be found in the revolt of the oppressed class against the oppressing class. The history of India, like the history of any other country, is full of such revolts.'[30] For Roy, communism was a way of practicing Brahmo interpretational styles using Marxist concepts. Indeed, in the case of Roy, Nazul and Dange, the 'local' expression of communism involved the modulation of globally circulating symbols using site-specific interpretive styles.

Infrastructures

These polysemous symbols of Marxism created arenas for transcolonial recognition and affiliation between Indian anti-colonial activists and other strands of radical politics worldwide. This web of recognitions was only made possible, however, by the communication systems, as well as legitimizing authority, of the Soviet state. The international

infrastructure of the communist world was organized through the WES, the Western Bureau of the Comintern in Berlin. This was the 'permanent representative of the Communist International in West Europe,' and the liaison point, at least up until the stabilization of the Weimar state in 1924, for the coordination of communist networks worldwide. The bureau oversaw the distribution of funds to multiple groups affiliated with the Comintern, from Iceland to Capetown.[31] And Berlin, as the former capital of the dismantled German empire, quickly became one of the major world centers for transcolonial meetings.

Both anti-colonial and socially radical groups of Korean, Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Cameroon, Egyptian and Persian activists, among many others, received money from the Soviets through the Berlin WES.[32] Over 4000 anticolonial activists from around the world took up residence in the city in the post-war years. And the impresarios of Asian communism such as Tan Malaka, Sen Katayama and M.N. Roy were headquartered there. Paris and London were other major centers for transcolonial communist association, of course. Ho Chi Minh and Zhou Enlai in Paris, and the likes of Rajani Palme Dutt and Shipurji Saklatvala in London, utilized the infrastructures of imperial centers for their own subversive ends. Beginning in 1925, Shanghai and Canton, and eventually Bangkok, became increasingly important infrastructural hubs for Asian communism in the East.

But in the 1920s, the de-centered metropole of Berlin provided perhaps the most important nexus in a globally interlinked system of Indian anti-colonial internationalism. Jawaharlal Nehru, who came to the Berlin on multiple occasions in the 1920s, called it 'a center [attracting] political exiles and radical elements from abroad.'[33] Unsurprisingly, three presidents of the Indian National Congress made it a point to travel to Berlin in the 1920s: Motilal Nehru, Srinivasa Iyengar and Mohammad Ali. Rabindranath Tagore made three trips to the city over the course of the decade.[34] With over 400 Indians streaming to the city between 1920 and 1923, it became a laboratory space for activism that charged the global anti-colonial system, creating new possibilities for the radicalization of politics in the territory of British India in the later 1920s. Not just the distant example or ideal of the Russian Soviets, but the actual transcolonial travels and meetings of Indians in places such as Moscow and Berlin provided inspiration for the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army or the Kirti-Kisan Parties in India in the late 1920s.

While the WES in Berlin played an important role in defining Indian circuits through the communist ecumene, harbors of the Indian Ocean

such as at Colombo, Bombay, Pondicherry, Jakarta and Rangoon also became important points for the transfer of communist funds, literature and operatives to and from India, and they tended to link up with European harbors in Genoa, Marseilles and Hamburg.[35] Communist literature, correspondence and arms were readily conveyed by Indian, British and Soviet communist envoys, but also by sympathetic British and German sailors, and Indian lascars and ship butlers.[36] It was also common for Indian revolutionaries to forge passports and seamen's identity cards, and to masquerade as lascars.[37] The major communist leaders in India, such as S.A. Dange in Bombay, Singaravelu Chettiar in Madras, Muzaffar Ahmad in Calcutta and Ghulam Hussain in Lahore, received literature and funds from the Comintern over the sea routes, but they formulated their own versions of communist political practice. As urban space and hinterland came to be increasingly joined together in the era of Swarajya politics of the 1920s, communism literature also flowed with increasing ease and out of the villages.[38] The establishment of the Workers and Peoples Party in 1925 (WPP), a communist organization led by Kazi Nazrul Islam, arose in Comilla, and went on to become an All-Indian party. There was no monological orthodoxy and top-down dissemination of policies and ideas within the communist ecumene. It was only with the rise of Stalin and the consolidation of the Soviet state in the context of a renewed phase of global imperial competition beginning in the late 1920s, that the Soviets attempted to institute a rigid political order. But the Soviet state could not effectively suppress the plurality that its own global infrastructures had helped bring about, as evidenced by the proliferation of articulations of Marxism in the 1930s and beyond.[39]

Coalition

Indian communism developed in the friction and rub of transcolonial social encounter. As opposed to vertical bonds of patronage that linked colonial peoples to the Muscovite imperial centers, the lateral bonds between diverse anti-colonial nationalist groups came to the fore in the 1920s. The first congress of the Communist International met in Moscow in March 1919. And acts of transcolonial solidarity were continually being performed. For example, M.N. Roy's 1921 'Supplementary Theses on the Colonial Question' inspired Claude McKay's 'Report on the Negro Question' of the same year, which redefined the African American struggle in new anti-colonial terms as that of 'nation within a nation.'[40] In 1921, Ho Chi Minh established the Intercolonial Union of anti-colonial

activists from 'Algerian to Vietnam' in Paris.[41] The Soviets established the University for the Toilers of the East, soon renamed the Sun Yat Sen University, the following year. And the International Workers' Relief was founded in Berlin in 1921, chaired by Willi Münzenberg and Clara Zetkin, and with such internationally renowned signatories as Albert Einstein, Bernard Shaw, Anatole France and Henri Barbusse. Although the organization initially focused on the plight of peasants and workers in Eastern Europe, attention soon shifted to the colonial lands.[42] Out of the Workers' Relief developed the League Against Imperialism, which met in March 1927 and became the most celebrated 'coloured people's international' of the 1920s.[43]

The League Against Imperialism conference of 1927 drew 174 delegates, over 104 of these from the colonial world. Meetings of similar scale, but advancing different universalist principles, also convened around this time: the Pan-Islamic conference in Mecca in 1926, and the Pan-Asiatic Association in Nagasaki in August 1926.[44] While delegates came to the League conference as national representatives, the significance of the gathering was not merely nationalist. The gathering providing an archetype for the Bandung Conference, convened three decades later in 1955, as well as for a series of International Youth Congresses and Peace Conferences along the way.[45] Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohammad Hatta, two figures present at both conferences, were major forces behind the Non-Aligned Movement.[46] Besides Nehru and Hatta, other attendees included Victor Haya de la Torre of Peru, Mohammad Hafiz Bey Ramadan of Egypt, and Soong Ching-ling, the famous Chinese intellectual and wife of Sun Yat Sen.[47] Ho Chi Minh and Manabendranath Roy missed the meeting, as they had already departed for China as envoys to the Chinese Communist Party during the civil war of 1926–27. Yet Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, a family friend of Nehru and a member of both the German and Indian communist parties, served as secretary to the League. The European delegates on hand are equally worthy of note. They constituted leaders of the pacifist fringe of Europe, including renowned German figures such as Albert Einstein, Ernst Toller and Alfons Goldschmitt, members of the anti-colonial British left, such as Fenner Brockway and Harry Pollit, and the French Nobel laureate and pacifist, Romain Rolland.

At the conference, China and India served as 'guide territories' for the deliberations. As Frantz Fanon wrote in a different context about the dynamic of transcolonial recognition, 'the liberation of the new peoples are felt by the other oppressed countries as an invitation, an encouragement, and a promise.'[48] Speakers as diverse as Jose Quijano

of Argentina, Daniel Colraine of South Africa and Lamine Senghor of Senegal all hailed the outbreak of political crises in China and India as the spring in a larger transcolonial struggle, as the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party battled for control of the mainland and Indian insurgency reached an unprecedented peak in British India.

In his speech to the League that year, Nehru assured, 'Our problem [in India] naturally concern us greatly, but I come to tell you, regardless of whether you come from China, Egypt or other far away lands, that your concerns are similar to ours and that the Indian problem is also of interest and importance to you.'[49] There was a definite sense among the participants that solidarity was a feat of the imagination: the various colonial struggles worldwide had to labor towards common cause, and had to explain to each other wherein lay their commonality. Since imperialism was a global phenomenon, Mohammed Hafiz Bey Ramadan argued that the only adequate response had to be of global, not just national, proportions. 'The hour has now come to close ranks and to battle policies that are leading to the common oppression of us all.'[50] The League was a transcolonial performance of collective autonomy from imperial domination.

The League met for a second time in Frankfurt in 1929. The historical consequences of the League meetings are noteworthy. In 1936, when the First World Peace Conference was held in Brussels, Nehru wrote about the inaugural League Against Imperialism meeting in the same city a decade earlier, 'ideas of some common action between oppressed nations *inter se*...were very much in the air. It was felt more and more that the struggle for freedom was a common one against the thing that was imperialism, and joint deliberation and, where possible, joint action were desirable.'[51] In 1927, he joined the League's executive committee.[52] The All-India Congress Committee announced unanimous approval of Nehru's involvement that year and even made a financial contribution to the League's operation.[53] In 1928, the Indian National Congress, announcing its commitment to anticolonialism in a transcolonial frame, declared, 'the struggle of the Indian people for freedom is a part of the general world struggle against Imperialism and its manifestations.'[54]

The League Against Imperialism meetings had direct bearing on politics in India in the late 1920s. An article by in the *Modern Review* of 1927, published from Calcutta, declared that the greatest achievement of the League Against Imperialism meeting was expanding intergroup recognition. 'Whether the voices raised were those of Negroes from Africa or America, or from struggling China, whether the cry was from Mexico or the plains of Korea, it had the same bitterness, the same

pain and pathos, and with modifications, had the same sad tale to tell. All had had their 1857's and their Amritsars – many times over....All had their Ordinance Laws and Penal Codes, their suppression of speech and assembly....All had their opium and their 'law and order.' In short – symptoms and results of the same disease – slavery enforced by Imperialism – everywhere.'[55] In contrast to Hegel's old rendition of the liberation struggle in which the slave seeks to wrest recognition from the master, the League delegates felt that the development of recognition among the subjugated was itself a step towards freedom.[56]

An Indian brigade was sent to Shanghai in 1927 during the Chinese civil war, although it did not obtain the official support of the Congress.[57] An Indian Youth League of China was formed in 1928.[58] China figured prominently in the Congress session of 1928, and two attempts were made to bring Soong Ching-ling, Sun Yat-sen's wife, to speak at the Congress annual session.[59] The Congress even planned on realizing S.A. Dange's old dream of becoming a center for Asian internationalism, and planned to hold a Pan-Asiatic Federation Conference in 1930.[60]

Counter-insurgency

A global campaign of British counter-insurgency sought to eliminate the improvisations of Indian anti-colonial radicalism, especially as it operated through Soviet global infrastructures.[61] The British campaign of the 1920s functioned in two broad ways, and recalled similar measures in the context of the German and Ottoman threats of the First World War. First, the British maintained a worldwide surveillance apparatus using spies, passport control systems and newly established research organs to map and suppress the channels of Indian anti-colonial radicalism. The Indian Emigration Act of 1922 sought to limit ability of Indians to travel abroad, and a 'Black List' was drawn up of Indians who were believed to be living in Continental Europe and possibly entering alliances with the Soviets. Immigration of Indians to Britain was restricted in 1922, and anti-Asian immigration laws followed in the United States in 1923. From 1922 to 1927, the Interdepartmental Committee on Eastern Unrest was established to keep track of the specific threats from communism and underground resistance movements, especially in terms of the role of lascars.[62] This committee commissioned major surveillance reports, such as Cecil Kaye's *Communism in India* of 1926 and David Petrie's 1927 report by the same title. British spies, Somerset Maugham among their ranks, were commissioned to track the Indian activists in Central Europe and Russia.[63]

The second strategy involved the exercise of coercive power through conspiracy trials, policing, the passage of emergency laws, and the extension of proxy counter-insurgency through the coercive apparatus of allied states. A succession of conspiracy cases sprung forth in the years after the Great War, such as the Peshawar conspiracy cases of 1922 and 1923, the larger Kanpur conspiracy case of 1923 and finally the monumental Meerut Conspiracy trials of 1928–1933, during which time the majority of Indian communists were handed lengthy prison terms.[64] B.C. Kennedy, a district judge in India, did not mince words in his autumnal *Lost Dominion* of 1922: 'If you agitate, you will be punished; if you preach sedition, you will be imprisoned; if you assassinate, you will be hanged; if you rise, you will be shot down.'[65] These years also saw a rise in floggings and in the use of 'novel punishments' by British wardens.[66]

In the mid-1920s, the British government re-commenced proxy counter-insurgency by requesting the suppression of Indian activists in Berlin and Paris. After being presented with the findings of the British Colonial Intelligence Department in 1925, the French government imprisoned Indian radicals in Paris in 1925. Similar actions followed in Amsterdam. In 1925, with the implementation of the Dawes Plan for German economic stabilization, the British dangled a carrot on a stick: if Germany cooperated in supplanting Indian anti-colonial radicals in Berlin, it would be allowed renewed access to trade in India.[67] The German government responded swiftly, and at least twenty high-profile Indian agitators were expelled in 1925 and the anti-colonial bases in the city were dismantled.[68] The Germans hoped that good-faith efforts to expel anti-colonial activists would appease Britain.[69] As a result, the Berlin hub of anti-colonialism fractured, at least until it achieved a strange rebirth during the Nazi years.[70]

This new era of aggressive imperial competition by the late 1920s, marked by the renewed effort of the established imperials power, especially England and France, to assert authoritarian control over the totality of their global infrastructures, was matched by the rise of neo-imperialist states in Germany, Italy, Japan, as well as the Soviet Union itself. The Soviet state, now firmly under Stalin's dictatorship, established the policy of 'socialism in one country' in 1928. The Soviet government began to pull away from their support of communist laboratories of transcolonial interchange, ending international meetings of the Communist International until 1935.[71] Communist intellectuals of various dispositions, thinkers who did not ascribe to the Bolshevik orthodoxy, were increasingly seen with suspicion and expelled by the

Moscow center. The Stalinist regime used the pretext of disciplining and centralizing communist activities to eliminate and purge threats to Soviet state authority.[72]

Yet, this rising era of renewed imperial state authoritarianism led to a subsequent reconfiguration and reassertion of Indian anti-colonial internationalism, instead of its demise. The creation of the Indian Independence League (ILL) in 1928, for example, sought to connect Ghadar, Pan-Islamic and Swadeshi global networks in ways that relied neither on British nor Soviet infrastructures. Leaders of the ILL, such as Vithalbhai Javerbhai Patel and Subhas Chandra Bose, and the estwhile Ghadar revolutionary settled in Rome, Mohammed Shedai, began to seek support from the big competitor states such as Germany and Italy, but also from the 'small nations' such as Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria and Ireland in the early 1930s to achieve this goal of reconfiguration.[73] Despite the Soviet seven-year proroguing of the Communist International between 1928 and 1935, a number of international conferences of the Left, often convened jointly by communists and socialists, continued to meet, attracting Indian delegates. The Conference of War Resisters, held in Paris in 1931, was attended by ILL leader Vithalbhai Patel, the Ghadar leaders Gurmukh Singh and Rattan Singh, and by the Indian communists Shapurji Saklatvala and Clemens Palme Dutt.[74] A series of 'anti-Fascism' conferences met in the following years, in Amsterdam, London and Paris, and Saklatvala was elected to the executive committee.[75] And in June 1935, the International Conference of Writers in Defense of Culture convened in Paris, attended by Indian writers Mulk Raj Anand and Sajjad Zaheer. The two returned to London and forged the Indian Progressive Writers' Association the following year, which grew into one of the most important cultural movements in India during the 1940s.[76] Always enmeshed within the vortex of imperial infrastructures, Indian anti-colonial internationalism would continue to reorient and restructure itself. Even as arenas for transcolonial recognition were closed down in one global center, they arose in others. The rise of the 'socialist global ecumene' in the late 1940s, with its anchors in the Global South – in cities such as New Delhi, Lahore, Hanoi, Bandung, and Beijing – can thus be seen as carrying forward the lineage of transcolonial ecumenism, but now ensconced, often problematically, in the territorial apparatuses of postcolonial nations-states.[77] The communist ecumene of the 1920s was a phase in the longer iterative history of South Asian accession to communities of belonging that were broader than the bounds of a state.

In the colonial era, there was a particular form of anti-colonial internationalism that must be distinguished from nation-state internationalism. It tended to prioritize cross-cutting categories of identification, such as 'oppressed people of the world,' 'youth of the world,' 'toilers and laborers,' 'the colonized,' as opposed to state identities. This was an internationalism aimed at coalition-building and transcolonial solidarity. The communist ecumene of the 1920s galvanized an ethos of internationalism that continued through to the 1940s and beyond, even as it had to increasingly contend with state imperatives. Understood in this way, the significance of communism in South Asia, and in the colonial world more generally, is dissociated from a discussion of ideological orthodoxy or heterodoxy, or of local experiential lifeworlds contrasted to abstract global forces, and placed rather in the context of institutions and symbols for sustaining economies of recognition outside the territorial priority of the nation-state.

Notes

1. Edward Said (1983), *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), p. 15.
2. The Cold War inspired American interest in Indian communism. The classic work in this mode is Overstreet & Windmiller (1959) *Communism in India* (Berkeley: University of Los Angeles). Also Charles McLane (1966) *Soviet Strategies in Southeast Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
3. See, for example, the standard account by the Communist Party of India in Gangadhar Adhikari, (1971) *Documents of the History of the Communist Party* (Delhi: People's Publishing House). Sobhanlal Datta Gupta (1980), *Comintern, India and the Colonial Question* (Navana: Calcutta).
4. Muzaffar Ahmed (1962) *The Communist Party of India and its Formation Abroad* (Calcutta: National Book Agency).
5. Dipesh Chakrabarty (1989) *Rethinking Working Class History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press); Sanjay Seth (1995) *Marxist Theory and Nationalist Politics* (Delhi: Sage).
6. Chris Bayly (1996) *Empire and Information* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
7. Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) *The Modern World System* (New York: Academic Press); K.N. Chaudhuri (1965) *The English East India Company* (London: F. Cass); Charles Maier (2006) *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and its Predecessors* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).
8. See an early, commendable attempt to consider the systematicity of Indian anti-colonialism in T.R. Sareen (1979) *Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers).
9. Manuel Castells (1996) *The Rise of the Network Society* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers); Niklas Luhmann (2002) *Einführung in die Systemtheorie* (Heidelberg: Carl Auer Verlag).

10. Deleuze & Guattari (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).
11. Figures such as Hardayal, Mohammad Barakatullah, M.P.T. Acharya and many others participated in many of these networks.
12. Michael Christopher Low (2008) 'Empire and the Hajj: Pilgrims, Plagues, and Pan-Islam under British Surveillance, 1865–1908', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 40: 277–80.
13. Jan Stefan Richter (1996) *Die Orientreise Kaiser Wilhelm II. 1898.* (Hamburg: Kovac), pp. 4–10.
14. Gail Minault (1982) *Khilafat Movement* (New York: Columbia), 169ff.
15. 'Education Abroad,' *Bengalee*, March 6, 1906.
16. Harald Fischer-Tiné (2007), 'Indian Nationalism and the 'world forces': transcolonial and diasporic dimensions of the Indian freedom movement on the eve of the First World War,' *Journal of Global History*, 2: 330ff.
17. Fritz Fischer (2002, orig. 1962) *Griff nach der Weltmacht* (Düsseldorf: Droste), p. 110.
18. Sareen, op. cit., 76–97. Nearly twenty Indians were killed in the fighting.
19. Public Records Office: FO/228/2700, 1915. The Lahore Conspiracy Case of 1915 followed in which 81 Indians were tried, and 42 executed.
20. Radhika Singha, 'A 'proper passport' for the colony: border crossing in British India, 1882–1920', unpublished manuscript.
21. The *Seditions Committee*'s recommendations of 1918 were made in response to James Campbell Ker (1917) *Political Trouble in India 1907–1917* (Delhi: Oriental Publishers), that positioned India on the chessboard of the World War and emphasized German and Japanese collaboration with various diasporic Indian networks.
22. See Motilal Nehru's Congress presidential speech of 1919, in A.M. Zaidi (ed 1985) *Congress Presidential Addresses* (Delhi: Indian Institute of Applied Research), 3: 412.
23. Kris Manjapra (2006) 'The Illusions of Encounter: Muslim 'minds' and Hindu revolutionaries in First World War Germany and after' 1:3, p. 365.
24. Sohal Singh Josh (1976) *My Meetings with Bhagat Singh and Other Early Revolutionaries* (Delhi: Communist Party Publications). Sohan Singh Josh (1978) *Hindustan Gadar Party*, vol. 2: 199.
25. The Khilafat network proved particularly important in peopling the space of emerging Indian communism. In the intermediary cities through which *muhajjirin* traveled, young Indian Muslim youth with strong anti-British sentiment were recruited as communist emissaries. Muzaffar Ahmad (1962) *Communist Party in India and its Formation Abroad* (Calcutta: National Book Agency). About eighty percent of the young men, such as Shaukat Usmani, who served as the colporters of communist literature to India, were Muslim. 'Communism in India' L/PJ/12/48, 2 November, 1923, 163; Ayesha Jalal (2000) *Self and Sovereignty* (London: Routledge), 239ff.
26. S.A. Dange (1921) *Lenin and Gandhi*, reproduced in Bani Deshpande (ed 1974), *Selected Writings of S.A. Dange* (Bombay: Lok Vangmaya Griha), 96.
27. S.A. Dange (1922) 'The Asiatic International,' *Socialist*, October 7.
28. *Dhumketu*, (1922) 41.
29. *Dhumketu* (1922) 3.
30. M.N. Roy (1923) *Vanguard*, 2: 9, 15 June, in: *M.N. Roy Selected Works*, 2: p. 117.

31. The reference 'Iceland to Capetown' comes in a description by contemporary observer Robert Krebs, quoted in Günther Nollau (1962) *International Communism and World Revolution* (New York: Frederick Praeger), 143.
32. 'Die koloniale Bewegung in Berlin' in *Rote Fahne*, 4 Feburary, 1926.
33. Nehru, *Autobiography*, p.161.
34. He visited in 1921, 1926 and 1930. See Martin Kämpchen, *Rabindranath Tagore in Germany: A Documentation* (Calcutta: Goethe Institut, 1991).
35. Durba Ghosh (2005) 'Terrorism in Bengal: Political Violence in the Interwar Years' in Durba Ghosh and Dane Kennedy (eds) *Decentering Empire: Britain, India and the Transcolonial World* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman), pp. 270–92.
36. Sailors, the classic symbol of infection, were a transient population that alarmed British colonial authorities in this period of heightened policing. On the importance of Dutch, German and British sailors in carrying the literature and correspondence of the Indian communist ecumene see the statement by Nalini Gupta to British authorities, 24 December 1923, National Archives of India NAI: Home Department Po. 1924, File 21/1. On Indian lascars see Muzaffar Ahmad, *Communist Party*, op. cit., p. 50.
37. Durba Ghosh, op. cit., 288.
38. Rajat Ray (1984) *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal* (Delhi: Oxford), p. 162.
39. See Hannah Arendt (1951) *Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt).
40. Bill Mullen (2003) 'Du Bois, *Dark Princess*, and the Afro-Asian International', *Positions*, 11:1.
41. See M. Seekonk (1981) *Ho Chi Minh. Ein Leben fur Vietnam* (Berlin: Neues Leben), 55.
42. Willi Münzenberg (1931) *Solidarität: Zehn Jahre Internationale Arbeiterhilfe 1921–31* (Berlin: Neuer Deutscher Verlag).
43. Fenner Brockway, 'The Coloured People's International,' *New Leader*, 26 August, 1927.
44. See report on the 'Khilafat delegation to the Hedjaz', OIOC: L/PJ/12/113.
45. For example, the 1929 Youth Conference in Amsterdam, the War Resister's Internationals of 1931 and 1932, and the Peace Congress of 1936. See Vijay Prakash (2007), *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press), pp. 16–50.
46. The Bandung 'Asian-African Conference' was held in April 1955.
47. See League Against Imperialism (10 February 1927) file 1–130, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam. See the reminiscences of an American delegate to the Congress, Charles Shipman, *It Had to be Revolution*, op. cit., pp. 162–63.
48. Fanon, Frantz (1958) 'The Algerian War and Man's Liberation' reproduced in Haakon Chevalier (ed.) (1964) *Toward the African Revolution* (New York: Monthly Review Press), p. 145.
49. Jawaharlal Nehru (1927) 'Der Britische Imperialismus in Indien, Persien und Mesopotamien', *Das Flammenzeichen vom Palais Egmont: Offizielles Protokoll des Kongresses gegen Koloniale Unterdrückung, Brüssel, 10.–15. Februar 1927* (Berlin: Neuer Deutscher Verlag), pp. 55–61; Jean Jones (1996) *The League against Imperialism.* (Preston: Socialist History Society), p. 5; Hans Piazza (ed.) (1987) *Die Liga gegen Imperialismus und für nationale Unabhängingkeit.* (Leipzig: Karl Marx Universität).

50. *Ibid.*,78.
51. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Autobiography,* op. cit., p. 161.
52. January 1929, OIOC, L/PJ/12/223, 89.
53. See Nehru to A.C.N. Nambiar (March 20, 1929) NMML.
54. Indian National Congress (1928) Report of the Proceedings of the Forty-third Session of the Indian National Congress (Calcutta), p. 97.
55. Bakar Ali Mirz (pseudonym of Vivendranath Chattopadhyaya) 'The Congress Against Imperialism', *The Modern Review,* ed. Ramananda Chatterjee, vol. 41, no. 5, 558.
56. Regarding Hegel's notion of recognition, see Alexandre Kojève (1969) *Introduction to the reading of Hegel* (New York: Basic Books).
57. OIOC (March 22, 1928) 'Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Program and Condition of India During the Year 1926, 1927' L/PJ/12/62.
58. Public Records Office, Foreign Office 228/4136.
59. Soong Ching-ling's visa was refused twice by the British colonial government. B.R. Nanda *Socialism in India,* op. cit.., p. 150.
60. Report of the Proceedings of the Forty-third Session of the Indian National Congress, op. cit., p. 92.
61. Martin Thomas (2008) *Empires of Intelligence* (Berkeley: University of California Press) provides the important insight that the development of British intelligence strategies and conspiracy trials dates back at least to the rebellion of 1857.
62. Durba Ghosh, op. cit., p. 283.
63. See Maugham's stories in *Ashenden* for a roman à clef of his years a British spy in Central Europe. Also see Priya Satia (2008) *Spies in Arabia: the Great War and the cultural foundations of Britain's cover empire in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 24–58.
64. On the Peshawar cases which put messengers and emissaries on trial, see Sibnarayan Ray (2002) *In Freedom's Quest,* vol. 2 (India: Minerva Associates), p. 31. The Kanpur Case focused communist activists denizen in Indian cities. Charges were brought against about a dozen Indian communists. Cecil Kaye (1971 [1925]) *Communism in India* Edited and reprinted by Subodh Roy (ed.) (Calcutta: Editions Indian), p. 94.
65. Al. Carthill (pseudonym, a.k.a. B.C. Kennedy) (1924) *Lost Dominion* (London: Blackwood and Sons), p. 237. The need for a strong hand in the colonies was a favorite theme among British imperialists writers of the day. See Charles Gwynn (1934) *Imperial Policing* (London: Macmillan and Co.).
66. The stripping and flogging of men in front of women, forced touching of the forehead on the ground, forced crawling on the ground, the use of torture devices were all recorded as increasingly used by colonial prison wardens. See Motilal Nehru, Presidential Address, op. cit., p. 412.
67. Memorandum, von Collenberg, January 17, 1925, Auswärtiges Amt, III, No. 2.
68. I.B. (3 September 1923) 'Orientals in Berlin', OIOC, L/PJ/12/102.
69. See Richthofen Report (17 October 1924) Reichskommissariat für Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung, Bundesarchiv, R1507/67299/650, 11,12.
70. See files in the Préfecture de Policier, Paris. GA C3, 'Communiste Internationale', record efforts of Paris Police to eliminate Indian communist activity in the city in 1925.

71. Jane Degras, *The Communist International 1919–1943* (London: Oxford, 1960).
72. E.H. Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, 1964, 3: ch. 31. Carr systematically explores the impact of Soviet policies on communist parties worldwide, especially the German, French, British and Italian.
73. Leonard Gordon (199) *Brothers Against the Raj*: 271–275. V.J. Patel traveled to Ireland the the United States in 1932–33. See OIOC: L/PJ/12/437.
74. See OIOC: L/PJ/12/288.
75. At the International Committee Against War, Amsterdam, August 1932, Saklatvala was elected to the International Committee. See OIOC: L/PJ/12/457. The Second World Congress Against War, was held in Paris, December 1932. The Anti-War Congress was held in London in March 1933.
76. See Sudhi Pradhan ed., (1979) *Marxist Cultural Movement in India: Chronicles and Documents (1936–1947)* (Calcutta: Santi Pradhan).
77. In March 1947, the Asian Relations Conference met in New Delhi with representatives from over thirty countries. It was followed by a second conference in Delhi in January 1949. See Nicholas Tarling (1998) *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 268. An International Progressive Writers' Congress was held in Lahore in November 1949. See OIOC, L/PJ/7/14674. The Urdu poet and intellectual, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, was a leading force in the Pakistan Progressive Writers' Movement.