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ECHOES OF FREEDOM: RADICAL INDIAN THOUGHT AND INTERNATIONAL
SOCIALISM, 1905-1920

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Give flowers to the rebels failed. — Pietro Gori

Whether historical conditions are ever ripe enough to let something happen is always judged after the fact, with hindsight. And it is very hard to say whether, given the extremely complex and often irrational structure of history, things might not have turned out differently for once, and mankind might have been able to raise itself out of the mire. — Adorno

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With hindsight, the choice to write on this dissertation was overdetermined, though I was slow to recognize my own interest in the Ghadar party. Throughout my adolescence, on visits to see relatives in Ludhiana, my uncle Tejbir Singh or “Chota Mamu,” tried in vain to interest me in the tale of a local legend, Kartar Singh Sarabha, who, as an idealistic young member of the Ghadar party, had returned from California to foment a revolution in India, when he was arrested, tried in the First Lahore Conspiracy Case, and then hanged. Squeezed onto the back of a

scooter, I caught almost none of what my uncle was trying to tell me, though his fascination with history left some kind of an impression. Later, though we rarely if ever saw eye to eye on our interpretations of historical events, Chota Mamu remained charitable toward my fascination with the Ghadar party and socialism in India, gathering dust-caked books, clipping out articles of interest, and transporting me to and from archives. I hope I can muster half the verve and enthusiasm with which he narrated his scooter-ride tutorials.

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The title of this dissertation pays homage to *Azadi di goonj* (Echoes of freedom), a compendium of Ghadar poetry, and is a reminder that even more than revolt or revolution, the concern of the Ghadarites was freedom. Unless noted otherwise, all translations from French, German, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu are my own. All the errors in this dissertation, likewise, are mine alone.

PROLOGUE

Ships that pass in the night, and speak [to] each other in passing,
Only a signal shown and a distant voice in the darkness.
— Longfellow, *The Theologian's Tale*

After dusk on March 8, 1915, a steel-hulled tugboat towed the *Annie Larsen* off a dock in southern California into the night sea.¹ The skipper had hastened the launch, lest the same customs officials return who had held the boat at anchor for almost a month, questioning the crew about the cache of weapons in the hold. Daybreak moreover brought about the risk of spies.² A falsified manifest stated that the war munitions on board, which had been freighted in from New York by railroad with an insurance value of three hundred thousand dollars, were intended for an arms merchant representing the constitutionalists in the Mexican Civil War.³ Although British diplomats had repeatedly forewarned that the weapons might be rerouted at sea or transshipped offshore by enemies of the Anglo-French entente, US customs let the *Annie Larsen* clear for Topolobampo, after verifying that the arms sale had been perfectly legal.⁴ Based on the best available intelligence, no belligerent warships or merchantmen were in close waters, nor was the *Annie Larsen*, a decrepit, three-masted schooner, capable of a strenuous ocean voyage.⁵

Out on the open seas, the secretive representative of the company that held the charter instructed the captain of the *Annie Larsen* to alter course.⁶ Instead of girdling Baja California and

¹ "Mystery Shipment of Arms for Mexico," *Los Angeles Herald*, March 9, 1915.

² "Schooner Loading Arms at San Diego," *Los Angeles Herald*, February 8, 1915.

³ The arms merchant turned out to be fictitious. "Schooner Loading Arms at San Diego," *Los Angeles Herald*, February 8, 1915.

⁴ "Schooner Loaded with Arms Clears," *Los Angeles Herald*, February 10, 1915.

⁵ John B. Elliot to Secretary of the Treasury, May, 1, 1915, in General Records of the Department of Justice, Record Group 60, Classified Subject Files 1914-41, File No. 9-10-3, Section 1.

⁶ The supercargo referred to himself as W. H. Page, which was the name of the American ambassador to the UK, but he was in fact the captain of the interned German schooner the *Atlas*. Earl E. Sperry and Willis M. West, *German*

then wrapping north, staying close to the Sinaloa coastline, the boat headed southwest, toward a remote archipelago of volcanic islands (the Revillagigedo Islands). After a voyage of nine days, she reached Braithwaite Inlet on Socorro Island, where the supercargo had instructions to hold out for relief to arrive.

Meanwhile, Frederick Jebsen, a German-American shipping agent on the West Coast, tussled with middlemen to find a suitable steamer to relieve the *Annie Larsen* of her load. It was precisely in trying to disguise the actual objective of the mission that Jebsen had made the mistake of deputing someone else to charter the first boat. Though the *Annie Larsen* was adequate for a short run to Sinaloa, in the opinion of Franz von Papen, the military attaché of the Kaiserreich, who was responsible for supervising Jebsen from Washington DC, she was too puny and slow for a journey to India.⁷

If the munitions on the *Annie Larsen* were ever to reach their rightful destination, a group of revolutionaries in the Punjab who were plotting to overthrow British rule in India, Jebsen first had to deliver them to the port-city of Karachi—a tall order in itself. Jebsen therefore bought the *Maverick*, a tanker once in the service of Standard Oil, but presently in a state of utter disrepair. Undeterred, Jebsen floated American-Asiatic Oil, a shell company, in order to pay for the extensive repairs to the *Maverick*. All the while that she was at dry-dock, an alert revenue-cutter from US customs surveyed the progress. Jebsen had shelled out over eighty-five thousand dollars readying the *Maverick*, which at last left Los Angeles on April 23, after customs made one final

Plots and Intrigues in the United States During the Period of Our Neutrality (Washington, DC: Committee on Public Information, 1918), 44.

⁷ “Die ‘Anna Larsen’ [sic] ist aber für die Fahrt nach Indien zu klein und zu langsam.” Franz von Papen to Auswärtiges Amt, 24 March, 1915, in T. G. Fraser, “The Intrigues of the German Government and the Ghadr Party Against British Rule in India, 1914-1918” (PhD diss., University of London, 1974), 198.

inspection for contraband.⁸ Officials found that the *Maverick* was carrying no more than a load of oil in one of her tanks.⁹

The *Annie Larsen* had by then bobbed about in the cove at Braithwaite for weeks without a sign of respite or rain. Almost a month into their lull, the mariners had to sink wells on Socorro Island in search of fresh water, but everywhere their shovels hit bedrock.¹⁰ Parched, the captain wanted to weigh anchor and fetch water for his restive crew, but the Teutonic supercargo, who had boarded the *Annie Larsen* on the night she left the quay, refused to consider a move.¹¹ The anxious company man at last relented when supplies ran dangerously short, but not before placing notes for their would-be relief, one with a group of sailors stranded on the island, another in a half-buried bottle near the beach.

After a brief shore run at Acapulco, adverse winds made it difficult for the schooner to return to the island, when, unsettled by the sea worthiness of the boat, the crew revolted. The USS *Yorktown*, a cruiser patrolling the waters, caught the distress call from the *Annie Larsen*. Yet, in a rare stroke of luck, the officers who boarded the schooner failed to conduct a search of the hold, which contained 8080 bayoneted Springfield rifles of Spanish-American War vintage, 2400 carbines, 410 Hotchkiss repeating rifles, 500 Colt revolvers, and 3759 cases of .45 caliber cartridges or approximately 4 million rounds of ammunition.¹² The officers from the *Yorktown* instead ordered the mutineers in irons for a night, fined them, and let the distraught captain use their wireless to report what had happened.

⁸ "Search Boat Ok Probe of Contraband Munition," *Los Angeles Herald*, April 23, 1915.

⁹ John B. Elliot to Secretary of the Treasury, May, 1, 1915, General Records of the Department of Justice, Record Group 60, Classified Subject Files 1914-41, File No. 9-10-3, Section 1. Also see "Again to Search Mystery Steamer," *Los Angeles Herald*, April 22, 1915.

¹⁰ Fraser, "The Intrigues of the German Government and the Ghadr Party," 203.

¹¹ Captain of the *Annie Larsen* to Olsen and Mahony, April 18, 1915, in Sperry, *German Plots and Intrigues*, 44.

¹² John B. Elliot to Secretary of the Treasury, May 1, 1915.

The *Maverick* reached Socorro Island in late April. A fortnight into her vigil for the *Annie Larsen*, officers from a British cruiser in close waters sought to make an inspection of the idle tanker, panicking the band of waitstaff. Jehangir, one of the distraught waiters, rushed to incinerate suitcases full of the leaflets by the Ghadar party, headquartered in California, preaching insurrection to Indian soldiers. Though the waiters had burned the evidence of their actual mission, everyone else on board was left shaken, as the *Maverick* set off in search of the *Annie Larsen*, first on the Coronado Islands, then at Hilo, Hawaii. It was there that the steward, John B. Starr-Hunt, whom Jebsen had failed to initiate into all of the details of the journey, was instructed to take the tanker on to the Dutch East Indies. Tired of groping in the dark, Starr-Hunt studied the note Jebsen had asked him to deliver to the supercargo on the *Annie Larsen*, which included step-by-step instructions on transshipping the weapons to the *Maverick*; the arms were to be stored in an empty tank that was then to be flooded with oil. The note included orders to scuttle the *Maverick* rather than risk capture.

Though von Papen, who was in Washington D.C., still believed otherwise, the conspiracy to arm the Indian revolutionaries had foundered. Through newspapers, he had learned that the US and British navies had separately boarded the *Annie Larsen* and *Maverick* off Socorro Island, but he informed Berlin on May 31 that he was confident that the ships had been able to rendezvous, completing the transshipment. Furthermore, von Papen reported to the ÄuSwartiges Amt (German Foreign Office) that another, equally sizable consignment of arms was on schedule to depart from New York in mid-June, on a Holland–America cruise liner headed to the Dutch East Indies via the cape of Good Hope. Based on their own intelligence gathering, British officials in the Dutch East Indies feared that the *Maverick*, now bound for Anjer, had collected the arms from the *Annie Larsen*. Late in June, after giving up on trying to return to Socorro Island, the

Annie Larsen harbored in Washington State, where customs officials confiscated its haul. The secretive supercargo daringly fled in no more than underwear and socks. After his involvement in procuring arms as well as supplying coal to the Reichsmarineamt came to light,¹³ Jebsen was successful in getting himself aboard a submarine, the U-36, which the British sank that summer in the waters off the Bristol Channel, though the consulate in San Francisco tried to dispel the rumors of his death.¹⁵ The crew of the *Maverick* fled in their separate directions near Batavia and the boat itself was sold off at auction. While passing through Singapore in the winter of 1916, Starr-Hunt fell into the British dragnet, providing a full confession that unraveled the mysteries of the *Maverick*'s voyage. Starr-Hunt later featured as one of the star state witnesses when the US tried the German-Hindu conspiracy case at San Francisco in 1917–18.¹⁴ Count Johann von Bernstorff tried to intercede repeatedly with the US State Department in a bid to reclaim the weapons on behalf of the Kaiserreich. The Count insisted that the arms were intended for soldiers in Africa, until he himself was indicted in the US with the members of the Ghadar party (lit. the party of “revolt” or “revolution”), in a failed attempt at a military enterprise to overthrow the British Empire.¹⁵

¹³ “US to Strengthen Neutrality Laws,” *Los Angeles Herald*, September 18, 1915.

¹⁴ *United States v Franz Bopp, Ram Chandra, et al*, District Court of the United States for the Southern District of the Northern District of California, First Division, no. 6133, November 20, 1917 – April 23, 1918. Also see “Statement by Starr-Hunt,” September 28, 1916, General Records of the Department of Justice, Record Group 60, Classified Subject Files 1914-41, File No. 9-10-3, Section 2.

¹⁵ Bernstorff to Secretary of State, July 29, 1916 in Sperry, *German Plots and Intrigues*, 45.

INTRODUCTION

On their various encounters in New York in late 1914, the Indian Muslim radical Muhammad Barkatullah intimated to the Hindu nationalist leader Lala Lajpatrai (often Anglicized as Lajpat Rai) that an audacious scheme to foment a revolution in India was in motion, and that the Ghadar party (lit. the party of “revolt” or “revolution”) in San Francisco was its architect.¹⁶ Barkatullah himself was departing soon for Berlin to coordinate with the German Foreign Office. Meanwhile, the Ghadar firebrand Hardayal (Har Dayal) had reached Constantinople, after skipping bail in New York; a Bengali front man, M. N. Roy, waited in Batavia for a shipment of munitions from California; the head of the Ghadar action committee, P. S. Khankhoje, a Maharashtrian, had ventured to the frontier of Afghanistan to win over the Balochis; and in Kabul, Mahendra Partap tried to coax the emir into joining their fight to overthrow the British in India. It was believed that entire companies of native soldiers in the Punjab were preparing to rise up, and, as the latest newspaper headlines attested, there were thousands of Indians in exodus from as far afield as Argentina, Canada, China, Malaya, and the United States. The whole scenario struck Lajpatrai as an improbable mash-up of anarchist Punjabis and Bengali “Nietzscheans.”¹⁷ Later, he recounted that this wild-eyed faith in the German Empire as the savior of the cause of Indian independence signaled the influence of what he referred to as “Hardayalism,” though the ideological coordinates of that category were difficult to chart. Hardayalism was neither completely nationalist nor internationalist; it was also neither properly socialist nor anarchist.

¹⁶ Since the use of last names is complicated in India, where caste or village names often stand in as surnames, throughout this dissertation I have generally opted to refer to historical actors as they would have been known to their compeers, so Lajpatrai, instead of Lajpat Rai, and Hardayal, rather than Har Dayal. I do, however, refer to them by their formal names when referring to their writings in the footnotes and bibliography. At the risk of further complicating matters, I have retained the original spellings of names when quoting historical sources.

¹⁷ Lajpat Rai, untitled manuscript, June 6, 1919, National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Filled with the ominous sense that the Great Powers were headed for war, the Ghadar party, founded at a gathering of Indian workmen in the spring of 1913 at the Finnish Socialist Hall in Astoria, Oregon, made use of its eponymous newspaper, *Ghadar*, to issue a call to arms. Its readers, as far afield as China and East Africa, were urged to steel themselves for a return to India in the service of the revolution that was to come. At a gathering in Oxnard, California, at the tail-end of July, Ghadarites were predicting that, once Great Britain was forced into war, “revolutions would break out in Egypt, Ireland, South Africa, and elsewhere.”¹⁸ The appearance of the first issue of the *Ghadar*, in October of 1913, was itself intended to be the first salvo of a new revolt. At the outset, the Ghadar party hoped to establish a republic, the United States of India, on a vaguely social-democratic model; its aim was to do this by 1917.¹⁹ The target date would achieve an apt historical symmetry: the Ghadar party hoped to redeem the failed Indian revolt of 1857. Although the Ghadarites had no interest in trying to reinstall the Mughals at Delhi, as the 1857 mutineers had sought to do, the sepoy rebellion continued to be an important touchstone for them, since, in its wake, the British Crown came to assume direct control over almost all of India.²⁰

The head of the Ghadar party, Hardayal, fled bail in New York in March of 1914. This, together with the sudden outbreak of the Great War, short-circuited their best intentions. Hardayal, who was also the editor of the *Ghadar*, skipped bail when authorities in the US, at the behest of British officials, started an investigation into his activities. A member of the radical industrial union, the Industrial Workers of the World, and an anarchist, Hardayal bristled at the

¹⁸ Michael O'Dwyer in “Hatching of Hindoo Plots Described: Activity is Shown on Pacific Coast,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 27, 1916.

¹⁹ See the notes on the conclave that the Ghadarites held at Shawinigan Lake, Vancouver Island, Home Political A, May 1916, file 548, 549.

²⁰ “Our Name and Work,” *Ghadar*, November 1, 1913.

inquiries. The *Ghadar* nevertheless continued without its first editor-in-chief. Its red-letter issue on August 4, 1914, made the case that, with Great Britain locked in war on the Continent, there was an opportunity to “spring like tigers” to overthrow British rule in India.²¹ A clarion call in verse exhorted, “Children of India, make haste/ Return to the homeland to make war... The ones dearest to the revolution/ Are the ones who are ready to lead the revolution./ Such an opportunity will never be in our grasp again, allies/ This is the right time to start battle.”²² Shiploads of would-be revolutionaries, primarily Sikh workingmen who had settled on the western slope of the United States and Canada since 1905, were soon to arrive in Calcutta, Madras, and Colombo.²³ British diplomats in China reported that Canton and Shanghai were proving to be especially fruitful fields for the Ghadar party to find new recruits.²⁴ The party established an underground railroad of sorts from the United States to India that routed rebels via Shanghai to Siam, then across the eastern border into British India. All told, in the early months of the war, the party apparently furnished \$30,000 to smuggle revolutionaries into India in this manner.²⁵ Though the rhetoric of the Ghadar party was filled with talk of martyrdom, this was no suicide mission, as many of those who returned to India from British Columbia left the deeds to their property with the Sikh temple authorities (instead of trying to sell it), and “registered out

²¹ *Ghadar*, August 14, 1914.

²² *Ghadar di goonj* [Echoes of revolt or revolution], vol. 2, (San Francisco: Hindustan Ghadar Party, 1916).

²³ The *Tasu Maru* arrived on October 28, carrying 173 Indians, mostly Sikhs from America Japan, Manila, and Shanghai.

²⁴ The *Ghadar* newspaper was reportedly received by Hindus, Parsees, and Sikhs resident at Canton. C. C. A. Kirke, Consulate General at Canton wrote that “Shanghai especially has been a fruitful recruiting field for the Ghadr movement, and it has been used in the past as a safe rendezvous for parties of conspirators returning to India. . . . It would, in my opinion, be idle to hope that Indians in Shanghai and China generally will be left unmolested after the war by such persons as I have described, who are for the most part rabid irreconcilables.” C. C. A. Kirke, Consulate General at Canton, to Peking, 21 June, 1915, Home Political A, October 1915, file 671-684. Also see “Papers relating to Indian Sedition in China,” September 14, 1918, Home Political B, March 1919, file 165. “The great majority of Sikhs in the Far East, not in the army have been very badly corrupted by the doctrines of the Ghadr party,” noted C. R. Cleveland, in “Notes” from the Criminal Intelligence Office, June 29, 1916, Home Political B, August 1915, file 414-439.

²⁵ Giles Brown, “The Hindu Conspiracy, 1914-1917,” *Pacific Historical Review* 17.3 (August 1948), 301.

signifying they intended to return in one year.”²⁶ Around eight thousand men returned to India by the middle of 1916, a tide that sometimes threatened to overwhelm the authorities in the Punjab tasked with trying to maintain order.²⁷

Far from sparking a revolution, the open declaration of war by the Ghadar party led to a wave of preemptory arrests from New York to Calcutta. Late in 1914, CR Cleveland, the director of the Criminal Intelligence Department in India, wrote that his department had “masses of incontrovertible evidence,” that the Ghadarites, whom he referred to as “anarchical vermin,” had “embarked upon a deliberate enterprise which includes mutiny and revolution in India attended by every kind of outrage and massacre.”²⁸ Throughout late 1914 and the early months of 1915, all over central Punjab, radicals who had returned from the West Coast of the US and Canada committed dacoities, stole arms from *thanas* (constabularies), sabotaged railcars, tried to blow up bridges, manufactured explosives, hid caches of weapons, murdered officials, and looted local treasuries.²⁹ Amidst the disturbances, a rumor surfaced that, when the passengers from the *Komagatu Maru*, the charter full of Sikhs that Canadian officials had refused to let dock in British Columbia, returned to India in the fall of 1914, a man carrying the Granth Sahib had been shot by an Englishman, after which English soldiers had flicked cigarette ash and urinated on the Sikh scriptures. Lieutenant-Governor Michael O’Dwyer wrote “in fact from October, 1914, to September, 1915, there was a constant series of explosions.” O’Dwyer confided privately to a

²⁶ For example, 34 of the 110 men who booked passages from Vancouver and Victoria via San Francisco to Hong Kong, on October 18, 1914, had reported their intention of returning to British Columbia, see Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor of Hong Kong, October 26, 1914, Commerce and Industry: Emigration, January 1915, file 25-27B.

²⁷ Michael O’Dwyer, *India as I Knew It* (London: Constable and Company, 1925), 196. Also see C. R. Cleveland to Home Department, December 5, 1914, in Home Political A, December, 1914, file 188-191.

²⁸ C. R. Cleveland to Home Department, December 30, 1914, Home Political, January, 1915, file 8. Cleveland hypothesized that if the Ghadar party found more recruits, “the situation will become very serious indeed.”

²⁹ Home Political B, December 1915, file 463-466.

colleague that what he feared was the release of more “revolutionary spirits.”³⁰ The fact that British regulars were headed to the Continent, as radicalized Sikh veterans returned to the Punjab, made the Ghadar schemes particularly sinister.³¹ Fond of quoting a couplet by the bard Saadi—“A stream can be stopped at its source by a needle/ Let it flow, and it will drown even an elephant”³²—O’Dwyer wanted the central authorities to craft stricter means to deal with the situation.³³ The Ghadar maelstrom was seen as the most serious attempt at revolt “since the never-to-be-forgotten mutiny of 1857,”³⁴ while a correspondent for *Harper’s* remarked “in nearly every instance the men who were at the head of this revolutionary movement were Indians who either in America or India had become converts to the preaching of the *Ghadar*.”³⁵ Concerned about the seditious views of British Indians in Canada, the authorities in British Columbia held that the Ghadarites “are a danger to British rule in India and a trouble to Canada.” Control, therefore, was a matter of imperial interest; the Canadians even held that the 1858 declaration by Queen Victoria, promising her Indian subjects equal treatment, did not extend outside of India.³⁶

Most of the eight thousand returnees to India were forced by authorities back to their villages. About a hundred conspirators were sentenced in a raft of secretive tribunals held in Lahore, whereas the main party officers were indicted, together with diplomats of the

³⁰ O’Dwyer to R. H. Craddock, January 12, 1915, Home Political B, December 1915, file 463-466.

³¹ O’Dwyer, *India as I Knew It*, 197.

³² O’Dwyer, 268, translation amended.

³³ O’Dwyer, 194. The result was the Defense of India Act. British Indian authorities kept up their watch for a “Indo-German Christmas Plot” by the Ghadarites as late as December 1915. The revolt, in broad outline, involved remittances from abroad to fund Indian conspirators, the shipment of arms possibly through German boats in the Far East, and the systematic smuggling of weapons on ordinary vessels. See “Indo-German Christmas Plot,” December 4, 1915, Home Political Deposit, December 1915, file 1.

³⁴ “Hatching of Hindoo Plots Described Activity is Shown on Pacific Coast,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 27, 1916, (reprint of an Associated Press report of October 2).

³⁵ Quoted in Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny: Race, Surveillance, and Anticolonialism in North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 183.

³⁶ H. Clogstoun, Special Commissioner, to Roche, Minister of Interior, Ottawa, Home Political A, May 1916, file 548-549.

Kaiserreich, in the sensational Hindu-German conspiracy case tried in San Francisco in the winter of 1917–18.³⁷ On April 26, 1915, opening arguments were heard in the first Lahore conspiracy trial, in which 82 men were tried, half of whom had returned from the US. At least 150 witnesses from India, Singapore, Shanghai, and Bangkok were called to the stand in the course of the trial. Emboldened by the passage of the Defense of India Act, the authorities tried the conspirators *in camera*, through specially formed tribunals whose verdict could not be contested through appeal. President of the Ghadar party, Sohan Singh Bhakna, was sentenced to death by the first tribunal, though the sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment; Bhakna later became a Communist. After another Ghadar-related trial in Singapore, John B. Starr-Hunt, the steward on the *Maverick* “was snatched before death before a British rifle squad in India by US authorities.”³⁸

Though some remained hopeful up until the arrests and trials, in truth, the scheme to arm the Ghadar party had started to come undone even before the ships, the *Annie Larsen* and the *Maverick*, failed to rendezvous off Socorro Island. The mechanics of the conspiracy were such that, apart from supplying arms, the German Foreign Office was to arrange for drill instructors to raise a crack militia of Ghadar party volunteers, while agents of the Kaiserreich based in the Dutch East Indies built connections with Bengali radicals. The deputy of the Bengali mission to the Dutch East Indies was a young M. N. Roy, then still known as Narendranath Bhattacharya, who worked wittingly or otherwise to undermine the Ghadarites. While in Batavia, Roy met the Helfferichs, important German agents, who informed him of the impending arrival of the *Maverick* with a cargo load of munitions. Von Papen had cunningly worked out details with Ramchandra, the editor of the *Ghadar* newspaper, to disguise Ghadar party members as waiters

³⁷ Details on the returnees in O'Dwyer, *India as I Knew It*, 196.

³⁸ Quoted in Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*, 189.

on the *Maverick*, with the ultimate aim of getting the weapons to Ghadar radicals who were en route from the US and Canada to India. However, Roy was able to coax the Helfferichs to divert the *Maverick* to the Sunderbans on the coast of Bengal, where the arms could be unloaded for use by Bengali nationalists who had an established track record of “terrorist” activities. Years later, after Roy also convinced them to fund the Bengali nationalists, he was to write, “as regards arms, the coveted cargo of the Golden Fleece, it was... a hoax, a veritable swindle.”³⁹ Nonetheless, in June 1915, he returned to India with all due assurance that the arms were set to arrive.

The broad contours of the Ghadar story are well established. Around 1905, British Indian subjects, primarily Sikhs from the Punjab, started to venture to the western shores of Canada and America in search of employment. At first, the United States offered the Indians, as one of them wrote, “an ethical sanitarium,” where there still flourished liberal ideals that Britain, due to imperial ambitions, had seemingly turned its back on. All of the central members of what came to be called the Ghadar party had shared the experience of competing for work on the Pacific slope, on projects such as the Canadian-Pacific Railway, or in the lumber mills and salmon canneries that stretched the coastline from British Columbia to Oregon, or as field laborers in the fertile valleys of California. The industries reshaping the landscape of the West Coast readily absorbed British Indian labor, much as these sectors had employed the multitudes of Chinese, Greek, Irish, and Japanese newcomers who came before them.

³⁹ M.N. Roy, *M.N. Roy's Memoirs* (Bombay: Allied Published, 1964), 3-4.

The apparent idyll was interrupted by a forceful backlash, as a deepening financial crisis fanned anti-Indian sentiments, beginning around 1907. Though the economic downturn was short-lived, white workers sought to stem the “Tide of Turbans” as more Indians streamed in. It is reported that calls to banish cheap labor attended the anti-Indian riots in Bellingham, Washington (1907), Vancouver, British Columbia (1907), Fair Oaks, California (1908), and St. Johns, Oregon (1910). Such experiences reshaped the self-conception of these Indian migrants. The politically fraught struggle to win recognition radicalized some of the men. Indeed, their experience had explicitly masculine shades, and one of their chief demands was to win entry in the New World for their wives and children. Sometime in 1912, Indians established the Hindustan Association of the Pacific Coast that then started its own newspaper called the *Ghadar*, which was led by the charismatic Indian radical Hardayal. The Hindustan Association was gradually eclipsed in importance by the *Ghadar* and thereafter came to be referred to colloquially as the Ghadar party. The *Ghadar* newspaper, as the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab Michael O’Dwyer later recalled, “was used to spread the gospel of revolt among Sikhs in the Punjab and abroad” right through the Great War.⁴⁰ Most significantly, the party is remembered as the chief architect of the conspiracy narrated earlier, an intrepid but ultimately vain attempt to overthrow British rule in India amidst the chaos of the First World War. The revolution, or more properly, the Ghadar of 1915, failed spectacularly.

If not doomed from the start, the Ghadar party had no doubt faltered gravely in their schemes to incite a revolt in India, especially once the would-be revolutionaries had lost the element of surprise. After regrouping, in the late autumn of 1915, the party tried to coordinate another uprising of native soldiers, but this ploy was foiled before the first shot was ever fired—as were

⁴⁰ O’Dwyer, *India as I Knew It*, 190.

the more desperate bids for insurrection that followed. Ghadarites were implicated in mutinies in Meerut, Singapore, and Mandalay. But then, in a deft bit of *Weltpolitik*, emissaries of the Kaiserreich offered a lifeline to the clutch of resolute Ghadar party members that had remained in San Francisco. Hardayal, who had fled the US in 1914, was also approached in Switzerland to lend assistance to the German Foreign Office by joining the Berlin-based Association of the Friends of India that had been formed in September of 1914; its name was changed in mid-1915 to the Berlin Indian Independence Committee. Hardayal was also invited to participate in anti-British intrigues spearheaded by German officials in Constantinople.⁴¹ Confronted by the news that the Tsarist armies had been mobilized, Wilhelm II had remarked, “our consuls in Turkey and India, agents, etc., must [spark] a conflagration throughout the whole Mohammedan world against this hated unscrupulous, dishonest nation of shopkeepers—since[,] if we are going to bleed to death, England must at least lose India.”⁴² General von Moltke, the head of the Imperial Generalstab, reiterated that thought: “If Britain becomes our opponent, attempts will have to be made to instigate a rebellion in India.” The head of the German Foreign Office, Otto Günther von Wesendonk, was tasked with quickly putting forward a strategy that involved the war machine supplying arms and funds to Indian radicals to hinder the military operations of Great Britain, by any means.⁴³

The objectives of the German Foreign Office were always to remain at odds with those of the Ghadar party. For all the talk about prioritizing India, realists at the German Foreign Office

⁴¹ Hardyal was invited to join Oppenheims Inderkomitee. Max Freiherr von Oppenheim was chairman of the Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient (NfO or Information Center for the Orient). The committee disbanded after the armistice in December in 1918. See Heike Liebau, “The German Foreign Office, Indian Emigrants and Propaganda Efforts Among the ‘Sepoys,’” in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings: South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, edited by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2011), 101.

⁴² Moltke in Barooah, *India and Official Germany, 1886-1914*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1977), 168.

⁴³ Eine kurze Zusammenfassung der Pläne des indischen Committees in Berlin, December 1914, GFM 397/00461-00468, Auswärtiges Amt.

ensured that it threw the bulk of its weight where the strength of its own expertise lay, in the Middle East: primarily by propping up their Ottoman allies and rallying Muslims world-wide to the cause of Khilafat. The other major project was to complete the Baghdad–Berlin railway, permanently joining the Continent to the Levant, an accomplishment that had eluded Alexander the Great, Tamerlane, and Nadir Shah.⁴⁴ Franz von Papen, the military attaché in Washington DC who was involved in “the Hindu-German conspiracy,” remarked in his memoirs, “I... endeavored to harass our enemies as much as possible by giving what assistance I could to the Indian and Irish independence movements.” Of these, “the Irish were more important to us” by virtue of their enormous numbers, their well-established connections, and their “fanatical opposition to everything English.”⁴⁵ With ruthless realism, von Papen wrote that, “we did not go so far as to suppose there was any hope of India achieving her independence through our assistance.”⁴⁶ After the Great War, with their aspirations of an anarchistic revolution sobered, the Ghadar party ramified. The cascade of rivalrous nationalisms witnessed in the war had marked the defeat rather than the triumph of the Ghadarites, whose own ambitions were never reducible to nationalism. With hindsight, their schemes would appear to have been follies. A Ghadar veteran reflected after the war that hitherto Indians had looked upon Germany as their champion against British imperialism, but now the cry “Berlin to Baghdad” struck a sinister note. The editor of the *Ghadar* newspaper, Hardayal, partially retreated into a defense of the British Empire, while other party members subordinated themselves politically to mainstream nationalism. Faced with the unpalatable options of either quitting the scene or joining the nationalists, another group staked a claim to the mantle of the Ghadar party and reoriented its

⁴⁴ Statement by General von der Goltz in Barooah, *India and the Official Germany*, 170.

⁴⁵ Von Papen, *Memoirs* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1952), 35.

⁴⁶ Von Papen, *Memoirs*, 40.

vector, projecting the Ghadarites into the orbit of international socialism.⁴⁷ At least until the mid-1920s, the largest group of Indians to study socialism at the University of the Toilers of the East identified themselves as Ghadar communists, who had made the circuitous journey to the U.S.S.R. via the West Coast of the U.S. and Canada.

The Historiographical Impasse: Toward a Different Approach

Failed revolutions are at least as, or possibly even more, susceptible to reinterpretation than those judged to have been historical successes. A revolution in the name of an indeterminate future, which is what the abortive Ghadar of 1915 was, orients itself toward a referent that is difficult to grasp sociologically or as an historical artifact; like an untranslatable word, it can bedevil scholars, who, rooted in the world shaped by its failure, struggle to make sense of it *post festum*. The outcome of the democratic revolutions marked by the dates 1688, 1776, 1789, and 1917 has not yet been settled, despite the success—at least on the surface—of those revolutions. The spectacularly failed revolutions of 1848, 1871, and 1905 elicit even more “what ifs.” It is thus no surprise that the catastrophic sepoy revolt of 1857 in India remains the stuff of endless nationalist speculation: What if British rule had been overthrown in the mid-nineteenth century? Yet in this dissertation I am neither attempting to build a fanciful counter-factual narrative nor am I trying to efface the fact that the Ghadarites, in a meaningful sense, failed to achieve their aim of a United States of India, a secular, social-democratic republic based on formal and economic equality—ideals that might now seem implausibly utopian.

⁴⁷ After the Third International or Comintern was founded in 1919, three different groups of Indians travelled to the Soviet republics, the Muslim *hijratists*, the Berlin based group led by Virendranath Chattopadaya, and the Ghadarites from California.

At one level, the call in the *Ghadar* for a revolution in India can appear hollow, without a clear sense of what a revolution entailed politically. And indeed, the Ghadarites often spoke of the matter only at an abstract level: “Without revolutions no nations are freed.”⁴⁸ The earliest issues of *Ghadar* made frequent references to the 1911 republican revolution in China, the American War of Independence, and the 1905 revolution in the Tsarist empire, while the compendia of folk poetry written by Ghadarites, collected in the series of volumes titled *Ghadar di goonj* (Echoes of the revolt/revolution) and *Azadi di goonj* (Echoes of freedom), unsurprisingly borrowed imagery from the Sikh tradition, rich in its veneration of martyrdom and its faith in a millenarian future. The first issue of *Ghadar di goonj* included the couplet: “We will water the withered roots/ Our spilt blood will sweeten the fruits.” A verse in the June 1914 issue of *Ghadar* exhorted, “Come let us be martyrs/let us wipe out tyranny from Hindustan... Let us throw off the chains of slavery...Brothers, freedom always wins/ Come, let us test this right now... Let us establish a victory garden/then establish the race of the future.”⁴⁹ However heated, the rhetoric about revolution was based on a sober judgment of British rule. For them, a revolution in India, unlike in China or Russia, had to contend with the historical reality of India as a colonial state and the growing instability of the empire. India’s interdependence with the metropole, rather than guaranteeing the social order, had become a threat to it.

The Ghadarites are remembered in the historiography as conspiratorial and anti-democratic revolutionaries, but equally often lauded as radical democrats, who were invested in trying to build their own capacities for mass action, in an era well before the Gandhian Indian National Congress sought other ways to mobilize the Indian masses. Even opinions about the stock members of the party differ. Depending on who retells their tale, the Ghadarites were either

⁴⁸ *Ghadar di goonj*, vol. 7 (San Francisco: Hindustan Ghadar Party, 1931).

⁴⁹ “Ghadar de kabit” (Revolutionary verses), *Ghadar*, June 8, 1914.

illiterate Sikh rustics quixotically plotting a revolution, or capable “organic intellectuals” radicalized by their experiences of racism in the US and Canada. And though the Ghadarites were some of the first Indians to adopt a socialist outlook, mention of them is conspicuously absent from the majority of histories of socialism in India, which tend to be focused on the actual Communist Party of India (formed in 1920 or 1925 depending on who tells its origin myth) or on the later Congress Socialist Party (formed in 1934). The fact that a number of Ghadar socialists chose to remain abroad after completing their studies in the U.S.S.R. instead of going back to India, while others explicitly refrained from joining the ranks of the Communist Party of India (CPI-M), no doubt contributed to their marginalization. That someone like Sohan Singh Bhakna, who led the Ghadar party when it was formed in 1913 and who identified later in life with Naxalism, Indian Maoism, has only further clouded the issue of where the Ghadar party stood politically in the 1910s and 1920s.⁵⁰ For example, the leftist historian, G. Adhikari, who was himself radicalized as a student in Berlin in the 1920s, chalks up the failure of the Ghadar party to its incapacity to build up a broad-based movement that drew in the masses, especially the peasantry and working men, whom the party failed to interest in its “anti-imperialist and anti-feudal demands.”⁵¹ The strength of the Ghadarites, Adhikari surmises, was limited to the “middle peasantry of the Punjab.” Though Adhikari’s criticism is not altogether inaccurate, it merits pointing out that “failure to build a broad-based mass movement” is the retrospective explanation offered for the defeat of *every* left-wing group in the 20th century. It is, then, an explanation that needs explaining. Adhikari resorts to categories that would have been utterly alien to the Ghadarites themselves; in other words, Adhikari does not adequately reckon with the failure of

⁵⁰ Bhakna left behind a rich archive of interviews and written statements, but almost all of these were written or recorded decades after his involvement with Ghadar, indeed most of the sources available date from the 1960s.

⁵¹ Sohan Singh Josh, *Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna: Life of the Founder of the Ghadar Party*, (Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1970), xv.

the Ghadar party in terms of either their own self-understanding, or in terms of the political understanding of the Left of the 1910s and 1920s. Caught up in the tide of celebrations in 2013 to mark the birth of the Ghadar party, the CPI-M, the party to which Adhikari himself belonged, saluted the Ghadarites for their “militant resistance to imperialism,” applauding their efforts to win over workers and the peasantry to the cause of socialism in India. But “militant resistance to imperialism” was not, *per se*, the aim of the Ghadarites themselves. It seems then that the Ghadar party is now open to appropriation by everyone, which, in a sense, means that it belongs nowhere. Both in appreciation and in criticism, judgment of the Ghadarites tends to be based in the concerns of the contemporary Left, such as it exists today. Conspicuously absent is an assessment of the Ghadar party based on the development of its own political understanding and the relationship between the Ghadarites’ own views and the international Left, broadly speaking.

Though almost no one thinks that the Ghadar of 1915 ever had much of a chance, the prevailing assumption of both leftist and nationalist Indian historiography is that the Ghadar party was a success, in spite of all appearances to the contrary. That is, although the revolution itself failed, independence for India was achieved in 1947. The ambition of the Ghadarites, at least on this view, was limited to displacing British rule from India; Ghadar, in short, is seen as another species of anti-colonialism, with all that implies.⁵² Yet what explains the fact that the latter-day Ghadarites stood practically alone on the Left in their ambivalence about independence in 1947?

⁵² On the specificity of imperialism: Imperialism entered into English as a explanation of the challenge that the Second Empire of Louis Napoleon represented in England, wherein Napoleon III subordinated the democratic impluses. The charge that England under Disraeli was itself bewitched by imperial affairs was always tinged with this connection to Napoleon III. See Kobner, Richard and Helmut Dan Schmidt. *Imperialism: The Story and Significance of Political Word, 1840-1960*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 2. Apparently, under the July Monarchy of Louis-Philippe and Adolphe Thiers, imperialism was linked to Bonapartism of the uncle. But more than an overseas empire, the “idées napoléoniennes” that Louis Napoleon sought to revive after the 1848 revolution were of domestic conciliation.

Although, in its contemporary use, anti-colonialism is treated as synonymous with anti-imperialism, but historically this was not the case; indeed, anti-colonial nationalism was frequently counterposed to anti-imperialism.⁵³ The sheer emotive strength of the idea of anti-colonialism shrouds the ambiguities in its construction as a neologism.⁵⁴ Borrowed as it is from the field of medical pathology, anti-colonialism makes literal the notion that native cultures incubate different strains of resistance to colonization, extirpating the invasive colonizer by means of decolonization, if the primary defenses fail. Césaire, Gandhi, JA Hobson, Fanon, Lenin, and Ho Chi Minh, comprise the eclectic group of historical actors who form the anti-colonial canon. The rubric of anti-colonial thought, in other words, is broad enough to accommodate their vast ideological differences. “Anti-colonial” is a descriptive rather than a critical-analytic category, the usefulness of which is limited by its capaciousness.

A rough indication of how muddled the issue of anti-imperialism has become can be seen once more in the example of Adhikari, who first made the analogy, since reiterated by others, that the example of the Ghadar of 1915 was a version in miniature of what Subhas Chandra Bose tried to do with the Indian National Army in World War II.⁵⁵ But the comparison is an invidious one. For one thing, the rise of fascist ideology in the 1930s separates the adventurism of the Ghadarites in the midst of World War I from the involvement of the INA in World War II with the German National Socialists in the 1940s. The Ghadarites, through the medium of the Indian Independence Committee based in Berlin, had sought reassurances from the German Foreign

⁵³ See Eric Stokes, “Late Nineteenth-Century Colonial Expansion and the Attack on the Theory of Economic Imperialism: A Case of Mistaken Identity?,” *Historical Journal*, 12, no. 2 (1969): 285-301.

⁵⁴ A perduring source of consternation to leftists ever since Marx, which is that Marx never spoke of colonialism as separate from capital, nor did he make use of the words decolonization, anti-colonialism, or anti-imperialism—which are in fact neologisms. What he had then was the concept of capital that was itself tied to his critique of prevailing theories of socialism. See A. A. Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism* (London: Routledge, 1980), 27.

⁵⁵ Adhikari, “Foreword,” in Josh, *Bhakna*, xiv.

Office that, if their revolution were a success, their social-democratic state would be free to conduct its affairs without Austro-German interference.⁵⁶ By stark contrast, Subhas Chandra Bose, though once identifying himself as a leftist, by the mid-1930s had become fascinated with the possibility of a fascist synthesis in India. Disdainful of the half-hearted socialism of Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose wrote, “whether one believe[d] in the Hegelian or Bergsonian theory of evolution,” there was no reason to doubt that creation had come to a halt. Bose hypothesized that the next stage of world-history was sure to entail “a synthesis of Communism and Fascism.” For, in his view, both ideologies subscribed to the supremacy of the state over the individual, disdain of parliamentary democracy, dictatorship of the party, suppression of dissent and minorities, and centralized industrial planning; he hypothesized that the task in India would be to work out this new synthesis, or *samyavada*.⁵⁷

Yet, sometime in the spring of 1939, members of the Ghadar party reflected on what kind of a stance their party ought to take in the midst of another world war. The head of the revived Ghadar party held that, if Britain wanted Indians to fight the fascists, she ought to first cede India her independence, even as other members of the party struggled in sheer bewilderment at the possibility of an alliance between the Soviet Union and Great Britain came into view. Californian Ghadarites asked their Comintern agent Rattan Singh (also known as Isher Singh or Lehna Singh), whom British intelligence reports referred to as an “uncompromising opponent of Hitler and all that Hitler stands for,” whether they should look to Germany or Italy for assistance in the event of war. Creditably, “he replied with an emphatic negative.”⁵⁸ At the risk of rephrasing the

⁵⁶ Statement of Abhinash Chandra Bhattacharya in Josh, *Bhakna*, x.

⁵⁷ Subhas Chandra Bose, “Glimpse of the Future,” in *The Indian Struggle: 1920-34* (London: Wishart, 1935), 346.

⁵⁸ See notes of May 10, 1939 and November 3, 1939, IOR L/PJ/12/285. Though Rattan Singh was reluctant to see Subash Chandra Bose resign as leader of the left bloc within the INC, he held that Gandhi was someone who had repeatedly betrayed Indian radicals, see note of November 3, 1939, L/PJ/12/285. A later report noted that despite “indulg[ing] in cheap abuse of Mahatma Gandhi and his moderate following and repeat[ing] that the opportunity to

obvious, the vicissitudes of the Left, both internationally and in India, have greatly complicated the task of unpacking its history.

A common consensus in the historiography is that, like liberal thought, modern socialism came late to India. It is a claim that stands partly on the assumption that, in the era when the First and then later the Second International took shape, India was still a capitalist backwater; therefore, the central conditions of possibility for the development of socialism were absent, specifically a politically self-aware working-class. Such a view has reinforced a kind of historicist-developmental narrative of the evolution from traditional feudal modes of life to capitalism. Indeed, even well-intentioned scholars frequently subscribe, wittingly or not, to this kind of model of national development, which was once a hallmark of the historiography of modern South Asia. Through the course of the late-1960s and into the 1970s, leftist historians were invested in identifying whether it was the peasantry or the industrial working class that was to lead the struggle for socialism India, and whether India, which had remained primarily agrarian since independence, was “semi-feudal” or genuinely capitalist. Post-colonial scholars have since sought to raise ethical objections to this kind of flawed transition narrative in which non-Western societies are fated to reproduce imperfectly the model of historical development first traced in the West.

A concern that the members of the Subaltern Studies collective held in common was their opposition to the notion that Indian thinkers were fated, at best, to retrace a derivative discourse of nationalism and modernity.⁵⁹ Yet even such historians, who sought to counter this stagi-

achieve independence must be seized with both hands, their personal contribution [that of the Hindustan Ghadar] to this achievement [is] that of a football spectator who applauds from the sideline” see note of January 14, 1941, IOR L/PJ/12/285.

⁵⁹ See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1986]1993).

view of capitalist development, by reconceptualizing the binarized colonizer–versus–colonized distinction, have tended to reproduce this nationalist framework nonetheless. It has been salutary in many respects to displace the emphasis on claims about epistemic or symbolic violence in interpreting colonial discourse, by trying to situate the colonizer and colonized on the same axis, on which both are seen struggling to respond to the contradictions of capitalism in all its reified forms of appearance. However, what typically remains unexamined is the assumption that, if Indians were not drawn to socialism, then this was simply an indication that the conditions in India were not conducive to such a project. That Indian radicals found such a project plausible despite its apparent “untimeliness” is not accorded much consideration. Moreover, the horizon of possibility for Indian radicals is thus drawn, wittingly or not, at the edge of India. The conversation that Indian radicals had with the socialist left both before and after the First World War is then treated in the historiography as a purely instrumental rather than a substantive transformation, a surface-level shift from a national framework to a more sociological one based on class. If what it means to act politically by definition entails parsing the forms of misrecognition that capitalism throws up, then such ideological shifts serve as important indicators of changes in the judgment of historical actors, regarding what is possible, desirable, and necessary. The Ghadarites who turned explicitly toward international socialism lived through radical changes in their own outlook, changes conditioned by and bound up with—but not simply identical or reciprocal to—changes within the outlook of the Socialist International as a whole.

With the commemorations that have recently marked the centenaries of many events related to the First World War, a new wave of historiography has emerged seeking to reexamine the assumptions of earlier leftist and nationalist historians regarding the history of India.

Amongst other things, these new studies have dislocated the story of the Ghadar party from the narrower events and debates within Indian nationalism, pressing other scholars to think more deeply about the experience of the Ghadarites on the western slope of the United States and Canada. A number of scholars have pointedly asked,⁶⁰ What led a group of Indian migrants peacefully settled on the Pacific Coast since about 1905 to attempt such a bold conspiracy in the midst of the First World War? What had Sikhism, with its intense veneration of martyrdom, contributed to their millenarian vision of an independent India? What circumstances led these Indian radicals to collaborate with the German Foreign Office? And in what ways had their association with socialists in the US and Canada inflected the vector of their own ideas about nationalism and internationalism? Did the failure of this revolution alter the course of anti-colonialism and decolonization in India?

A central achievement of the new work on Ghadar has been to complicate the idea that the party was purely secular. The new historiography has rather convincingly shown that Ghadar poetry reframed the mythos that the Sikhs had a religious duty to fight injustice. Tales of lionized Sikh warriors were repurposed to exhort new volunteers to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the nation. Ghadar recruiters made use of the network of Sikh temples stretching across the Far East (mainland China, Hong Kong, the Malay states), Canada, and the US, to win over new adherents to the cause of their revolution. Indeed, the older, leftist-influenced historiography tended to over-emphasize the secular aspects of the Ghadar cause and conflated the socialist critique of religion with the Ghadarites' own variety of anti-clericism. However, the new

⁶⁰ See Seema Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny: Race, Surveillance, & Indian Anticolonialism in North America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Kornel Chang, *Pacific Connections: The Making of the US-Canadian Borderlands*, (U of California Press, 2012); Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire*, (University of California, 2011).

historiography risks overcompensation when it categorizes the outlook of the Ghadar party as specifically Sikh, even going so far as to refer to Ghadar poetry as “a Sikh manifesto.”⁶¹ Without denying that the majority of the Ghadarites were Sikhs, who never intended to attack religious convictions from a crude atheistic standpoint, the Sikh-ness, or what was peculiarly Sikh about the Ghadar party, remains opaque. A number of Ghadarites turned to Sikh nationalism after the failure of the 1915 revolution, joining the Akalis, but the Ghadar party was itself to remain neutral on religion as a matter of individual conscience, despite its steadfast criticism of clericalism. Political freedom for the Ghadarites extended well beyond pursuing religious convictions. The Ghadar party conferred no obvious privileges on orthodox Sikhs, nor were there impediments to disadvantage non-Sikhs in the party. A combination of self-identified Hindus and Muslims—Hardayal, Ramchandra, Barkatullah, and Khankhoje—were not only full and active members of the party, but key leaders. Furthermore, men such as Bhagwan Singh (sometimes referred to as Bhagwan Singh Jakh, after his village), a Sikh cleric who wrote Ghadar poetry under the *nom de plume* Pritam, often forsook their turbans and the symbols of their faith—typically out of anti-clericism, rather than strictly *secular* sentiments.

The Ghadarites unquestionably had a message of ecumenicism. The earliest volume of *Ghadar di goonj* included a verse that exhorted Indians, “You tail behind [other nations] worrying over matters of religion and faith/over spiritual knowledge and thought./ Your fight with one another engulfs thought/ toward the fight of fights of Hindus and Muslims./ Pearl India rolls in the dirt/while those who recite the Vedas and the Quran create a ruckus.” It was indeed unsurprising that the chief spiritual authority of orthodox Sikhs in India (the Khalsa Diwan) condemned the

⁶¹ Darshan Singh Tatla, “A Sikh Manifesto? A Reading of Ghadar Literature,” *Punjab Past and Present*, 44, no. 1 (2013): 61.

Ghadarites as disloyal subjects to the British Empire and fallen Sikhs.⁶² At the same time, instead of predicting that religion was fated to disappear altogether in an emancipated society, the Ghadarites held open the possibility that religion might well play a role on the other side of their revolution; however, there was no doubt in their mind that its institutional role in society first had to be transformed. Without prosecuting afresh the case against the theoretical limitations of the idea of the secular, this dissertation underscores the self-conception of the Ghadarites, prioritizing the fact that they rejected the idea that one faith or one church should constitute the predominating force in a future Indian republic.



Figure I.1 Bhagwan Singh in Yokohama, Japan, January, 1914, photographer and studio unknown, courtesy of S. P. Singh and the South Asian American Digital Archive.

⁶² *Ghadar di goonj*, vol.1 (San Francisco: Hindustan Ghadar Party, 1914).



Figure I.2 Bhagwan Singh in September, 1919, photographer and studio unknown, Library of Congress (LC-F81- 4828).

That the Ghadarites appear to be the sum of antinomies—representatives of diametrically opposite or contradictory views—indicates that there is more to them than meets the eye. Indeed, scholars can marshal evidence that seems to confirm both their vanguardism, their willingness to entertain anarchist conspiracies, and the conservative chauvinism of their views. Yet for each of their anarchist-libertarian statements about the need to overcome the state, there are counter-examples attesting to their statism and authoritarianism.

If, as the new historiography insists, there was more to the Ghadarites than an impracticable scheme to overthrow British rule, then it is high time to reconsider in detail their attempt to link, through revolution, ideas of democracy and freedom. Though all revolutions have sought such a link, each searches in a different way. The Ghadarites held an internationalist worldview that was deeply anti-imperialist but never completely at odds with, or antithetical to, nationalism. The Ghadar radicals were, without a doubt, strongly invested in gaining independence for India, but this aim involved an ideal future for India that was not limited solely to the assertion of its sovereignty as a nation-state. Salient, then, is the antipathy the Ghadar party had for many of their contemporaries, even those motivated by anti-imperialist aims. Even as the Ghadarites criticized the narrow concerns of the middle-class that led the Indian National Congress, they

also rejected the sectarian outlook of the Khilafat Movement that sought to restore the Ottoman Caliphate. Given the deeply nationalist underpinnings of the anti-colonial struggle as it developed in the 20th century and the fraught aftermath of decolonization on the subcontinent, it may be salutary to remember the example of the Ghadarites. In spite of their impractical schemes, they had reached the conclusion that a campaign for independence in a still-developing nation such as India was destined to become politically isolated and ineffectual, if it could not find its complement in a radical change at the heart of the metropole. The Ghadarites came to this realization, even as the Third International was set to reach the opposite conclusion by the mid-1920s, when “socialism in one country” became its official standard. It is this conundrum that forms the literal red-thread of this dissertation: Did the Indians come to socialism only when socialism itself turned nationalist?

The central aim of this dissertation is to do more than retell the story of the Ghadar party. There are already a number of marvelous histories; rather, the objective is to use the shift within Ghadar party, from a form of anarchism to an embrace of Marxist socialism, as a vehicle to explore the complex relationship of Indian nationalism to the international Left in the era before the First World War. What made the switch from anarchism to socialism politically compelling to Indian revolutionaries? What kind of relationship, if any at all, did Indian radicals have to the international socialists before the Great War? Did the failure of the Ghadar of 1915 shape the conditions of possibility for such changes in outlook? Furthermore, in the final analysis, was their conversion to socialism more than a tactical move to achieve Indian independence?

Though it is commonplace to date the origins of socialist thought in India to the era after 1917, when the success of the Bolsheviks inspired Indian anti-imperialists to look to the new Soviet republic as a lodestar in the East, this dissertation uses the case of the Ghadar party to

chart an entirely new prehistory, focused on the deep conversation between Indian radicals and international socialists in the era before World War I. The first chapter shows that, circa 1905, socialism already weighed heavily on the minds of Indian radicals. It tells the story of Lala Lajpatrai, who led a deputation of the Indian National Congress to Britain to rouse the electorate in advance of parliamentary elections that the Liberal party was expected to win. Thereafter, the realization that India's fate was dependent on the extension of a democratic-socialist revolution in England formed the bad conscience of Indian radicals, who nevertheless sided with the established Liberals instead of the socialists or Labour. The Indians, in short, understood that the importance of the question of democracy in Britain hinged on the unresolved issue of socialism. And on this view, *Swadeshi* was partially a response to a judgment about the conditions for radical change *in Britain*, as much as it was the outcome of developments in India *per se*. The subsequent chapter follows the story of Lajpatrai, his return to India, and the split between the Moderates and Extremists within Indian nationalism before the First World War. While British socialists tended to see the Extremists as more radical than the Moderates, the Moderate–Extremist divide did not actually map on to traditional distinctions of left and right. Both the Moderates and the Extremists took their case before the Socialist International, which, in the decades before the Great War, hesitated to consider colonialism separately from the issue of capitalism. If the Moderates were internationalists, even when trying to be properly nationalist, the Extremists, rebuffed by the socialists at the Stuttgart congress of the International in 1907, largely retreated from the international arena; India would only return to the Socialist International more than a decade later, after the Third International, or Comintern, was formed in 1919. The scene then shifts in chapter three to the other side of the Atlantic, with New York quickly giving way in importance to the West Coast of the US and Canada, which formed a new

field of operations for Indian radicals such as Hardayal, Taraknath Das, and Lajpatrai, who fixed their sights on trying to build alliances with other anti-imperialists, such as the Irish, while politicizing the thousands of Indian migrants who had settled on the West Coast. Yet these migrants were not easily won over to the Extremist cause. Instead, they came to see themselves not simply as Indians but as workmen, who wished to make concrete demands for parity in their wages, shorter work shifts, and the right to full US or imperial citizenship. Although generally ostracized by the unions, a small but influential group of these migrants, who went on to play a central role in the Ghadar party, made inroads with the Canadian Socialist Party and the Industrial Workers of the World (the Wobblies) in the Pacific North West and California. After some initial hesitation, these organizations took up their cause. The fourth chapter shows that the socialist left radicalized the Indians on the West Coast in an altogether different direction politically than that of their counterparts in India and Britain, as they were forced to conceive anew the relationship of race and empire, their religious convictions, and a new future for India.⁶³ If there were “echoes of freedom” to be heard in India, the Ghadarites reckoned, this was foremost an indication that the clarion of freedom had sounded its call to arms across the entire world.

⁶³ See Home Political B, May 1916, file 577-80; Home Political B, January 1917, file 270-72; and Home Political B, February 1917, file 552-55. The idea was even floated of dispatching Sikh clerics to combat sedition in Canada and the U.S. but this was put into abeyance till after the war. See note on “Discontent Prevailing among the Indians in the Far East and West Coast of America,” September 10, 1915 and October 29, 1915 in Home Political Deposit, December 1915, file 32 and note by H. S. Seaton, November 29, 1915 in the same.

Chapter 1

Liberalism in Extremis:

The Indian National Congress in Britain and the Election of 1906

Bound for England in the spring of 1905, Lajpatrai studied the sea from the weather deck of an Italian steamer, praying for a new resolve.¹ Five days ago he was guiding relief efforts for the Arya Samaj in the foothills of the Punjab, in districts stricken by the catastrophic earthquake of April 4.² The scale of the devastation and ruin had only started to settle in, when, in accordance with a resolution ratified months earlier at the yearly gathering of the Indian National Congress (INC), the Indian Association of Lahore voted to name Lajpatrai as its delegate on a mission to rouse the British electorate to its responsibilities to India, in anticipation of parliamentary elections.³ Lajpatrai had lobbied personally to be selected for the role, precipitating a contentious nomination fight, in the belief that he was the best man to repair the terrible reputation of the Punjab as the warren of would-be secessionists from the national party.⁴ But that was then. With no fixed date for the dissolution of Parliament at Westminster, INC chiefs in India had seen their own enthusiasm for the deputation wither.

“At first sight, the near future is anything but bright,” Lajpatrai glumly submitted to the thronged crowds that had come to bid him farewell, on the eve of his departure from Lahore. Mother nature seemingly relished subjecting India to countless cruelties, while in an age when

¹Lajpat Rai, “Journey from Bombay to Port Said,” *The Collected Works of Lala Lajpat Rai*, ed. B. R. Nanda, vol. 2, (New Delhi: Manohar, 2003), 76.

²“An Appeal,” *Panjabee*, April 10, 1905; “Earthquake in Kangra Valley,” *Panjabee*, April 17, 1905; “Arya Samaj Relief Work,” *Panjabee*, May 1, 1905.

³“In the Panjab,” *Panjabee*, March 27, 1905; “Punjab Delegate,” *Panjabee*, May 8, 1905.

⁴“Congress Deputation to England,” *Panjabee*, March 20, 1905; “Panjab’s Representative,” *Panjabee*, April 3, 1905; “A Constitutionalist to the Fore!,” *Panjabee*, April 3, 1905. Also see “Congress Deputation to England,” *Tribune*, March 16, 1905.

“steam and electricity have practically obliterated all the differences of time and space and brought the whole world together,” the Governor-General, Lord Curzon, was intent on “put[ting] back the hand of the clock of progress, Lajpatrai remarked extemporaneously.⁵ Added to this, he reported, the traditional cultivator—over-taxed, famished, and dispossessed—“drag[ing] his miserable lot,” somehow found it in himself to curse “neither the Government nor his God but his own fate.”⁶ Loath to affirm this state of affairs, Lajpatrai mounted the case for pressing on with the mission to Britain, even though it had become clear that the INC satellites in Bengal, Madras, and the United Provinces had all withdrawn their own delegates.

If the immediate interests of India were bound up with preserving the supremacy of Britain, as liberal-minded Indians believed, a campaign targeted at the voters there might be more efficacious than appeals to the hardened officials who ruled British India. Yet appeals to the sense of philanthropy of the ideal-typical “benevolent” British elector were bound to fail, Lajpatrai intimated, since Britain, although maybe not common Britons themselves, benefited from the imperialist grip on India. What was to be done then was to make the issue of British rule in India a politically relevant one by strengthening the hand of the radical opposition to the governing Unionists. The objective was to win democracy *for* India by stepping into the battle *of* democracy in Britain.

Of course, in the month before his departure, everyone with an opinion had tried to weigh in with advice for Lajpatrai on what the INC ought to do. Amidst the cacophony of different voices trying to sway him, those closest to his own sensibilities were the ones pressing him to eschew the cautious outlook of moderate INC elders who wanted to maintain an alliance with the

⁵ “The People’s Tribune and his Farewell Address,” *Panjabee*, May 15, 1905.

⁶ “The People’s Tribune and his Farewell Address,” *Panjabee*, May 15, 1905. Lajpatrai held that, under the colonial-era forests acts, traditional cultivators were forbidden from picking wild fruit, gathering fuel for the hearth, grazing animals on common land.

Liberals in Parliament, and instead to build alliances with those sympathetic to the idea of Home Rule for India: the Irish republicans, either the Independent Labour Party or the Labour Representation Committee (LRC), or the socialists of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF). This advice was based on the fact that, more than others in their own party, ascendant radicals within the INC grasped that an architectonic shift was under way in Britain. Although the Liberal party was preparing to reclaim Whitehall, its revitalization depended on a new spirit in British electoral life, enfranchised workingmen, who had formed the Labour Representation Committee, which included social democrats, Fabian socialists, and trade unionists.⁷ Although previously the editors of the *Panjabee* had struck a skeptical note as to whether a Unionist, a Rad-Lib, or even a social-democratic administration had the will to effect meaningful change in India, with Lajpatrai about to depart for Britain, their stance softened. Of the various leftist tendencies, “the truest friends of India in the British Isles,” an editorial in the *Panjabee* held, were the members of the Social Democratic Federation, the party led by H. M. Hyndman, who also happened to be a Marxist. The social democrats, the editorial contended, were particularly eager to find common cause with Indian reformers; moreover, unlike the Liberal party, with the SDF there was no subterfuge or double-talk.⁸ Just how difficult it would be practically to build on this common cause was reiterated repeatedly in the decade that followed; it was also pointedly illustrated while Lajpatrai was in Britain in the summer of 1905. At first, the Indians and the social democrats found themselves on the same side of the tariff reform debate imperiling the grip of

⁷ Until the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) was formed, workingmen were able to dictate certain parliamentary candidates to the Liberal party, who were then referred to as “Lib-Labs.” At its inception in 1900, the LRC consisted of the socialists (represented by the Independent Labour Party [1893], the Social Democratic Federation [1881], and the Fabian Society [1884]) and the trade unionists (members of Trades Union Congress [1868]). Of the twelve seats on the committee, the socialists controlled five, and the Independent Labour Party nominated the only officer of the organization, Ramsay Macdonald, who was to play a fateful role in Indian affairs as the British Prime Minister in the 1930s.

⁸ “A Moment Please, Mr. Delegate,” *Panjabee*, May 15, 1905.

the governing Unionists, but this alliance showed itself to be temporary when a controversy over the length of the workday in Indian cotton mills erupted, presenting an occasion for Indian nationalists and British socialists to work hand in hand on a concrete issue. Yet, where Labourites and the SDF saw an opportunity of sorts to throw their weight behind Indian workingmen, while also pummeling the Liberals over their faith in the doctrine of Free Trade, the INC hesitated in politicizing the issue, out of a skepticism toward the motives of British workers pressing for reforms in working-conditions in India. Against the instincts of radicals such as Lajpatrai, the INC chiefs tellingly chose to stick with the Liberals, despite the fact that the party of Cobden, Bright, and Gladstone had shown itself to be deeply riven, especially on matters of empire.

Even when the Liberal party was at the height of its popularity, after its landslide win in the elections of 1880, Hyndman had cautioned Dadabhai Naoroji, the herald of the Indian cause in the metropole, that the fate of India was tied to a revolution in England.⁹ The SDF under Hyndman was the only serious dissenter in an era when “Conservatives, Fabians, and Liberals proudly acknowledged themselves as ‘imperialists.’”¹⁰ “The class which robs and crushes English wage-slaves at home,” Hyndman had written, “makes the very name of England a curse to our wretched dependents abroad.”¹¹ That was not to say that Indians were to observe historical events passively from afar; socialists always left open the idea that the Indians might themselves play a role in sparking revolution: “It is by no means unlikely that the release of our own proletariat may come after all directly or indirectly, from the great dependency [India] which our contemptible middle-class rule has ruined,” Hyndman wrote in 1884. “A rising in or an invasion

⁹ Hyndman to Naoroji, August 7, 1882, Naoroji Papers, National Archives of India. The Liberals reached their height of popularity under William Gladstone (1808-1898), who led the Liberal ministries of 1868-74 and 1880-85, then retired in 1894.

¹⁰ Peter Fraser, *Joseph Chamberlain: Radicalism and Empire, 1868-1914*, xiv.

¹¹ H. M. Hyndman, “The Ruin of India,” *Justice*, August 23, 1884.

of India,” he added, “will necessarily help [bring] on great changes here, and must therefore benefit the workers,”¹² as “the working-classes have not the slightest intention of spending their blood and money in putting down an insurrection or repelling an invasion to the end that the natives may yearly be robbed more and more for the benefit of our upper and middle classes.”¹³ Socialism, then, was the specter that haunted the members of the Indian national party on their 1905 mission to Britain. Thereafter, the realization that India’s fate was dependent on the extension of a democratic-socialist revolution in England formed the bad conscience of Indian radicals, who continued supporting the Liberals instead of joining the socialists. That is, faced with the gnawing recognition that socialism was the only adequate solution to the crisis of imperialism, Indian radicals, in prolonging their identification with the Liberals, had in fact started to internalize a sense of despair about the possibility of radical transformation in either India or Britain.

Well in advance of the INC mission to Britain, Lord Curzon, the viceroy, had sought to caution Whitehall that the Indian nationalists “will coo like sucking doves in London,” but once outside the capital, “their roars will awaken an echo in Hades.”¹⁴ Just at the last minute, the head of the delegation, G. K. Gokhale, was held back against his wishes.¹⁵ The chief Muslim representative, Mohammad Ali Jinnah had already begged off the mission, thus putting the entire venture in jeopardy. Lajpatrai nevertheless felt duty-bound to everyone who had contributed a subscription for his voyage, and elected to depart from Bombay on schedule, on May 13. Though

¹² “India,” *Justice*, December 20, 1884.

¹³ “India and England,” *Justice*, November 29, 1884.

¹⁴ Quoted in B. R. Nanda, *Gokhale: The Indian Moderates and the British Raj* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 189.

¹⁵ The petty animosities of Ferozeshah Metha, who controlled the nationalist party in Bombay, led him to block Gokhale from departing with Lajpatrai. Madras had backed out of the deputation after the regional affiliate of the INC was unable or loath to pay the six thousand rupees to fund a delegate. The United Provinces followed a similar course. Distracted with their own troubles, the Bengalis let their inaction on the resolution speak for itself, pouring their energies into the Swadeshi boycott of English manufactures.

he was booked into a comfortable cabin, he was more restive than ever, overcome with anxieties serious and trivial. Had he brought the right clothes? What was he going to do without vegetarian meals on board? Could he speak English well enough to stir working-class voters? Would he survive the sea voyage? And, above all, what was the likelihood of success in Britain? Desperate for some air, he had walked out to the deck, where he stood alone gazing at the voracious sea as it tried to swallow whole the islands that dot the western coastline of India.

Lajpatrai: The Arya Samajist Swadeshi

Although he was now the de facto head of the Indian delegation to Britain, Lajpatrai had only recently returned to the INC fold, after an extended interlude involved in the affairs of the Punjab as an Arya Samajist. Lajpatrai had retreated politically after a brief cameo on the national stage in the late-1880s, when, as the intrepid, young solicitor he had publicly rebuked the influential Muslim reformer Syed Ahmed Khan of Aligarh for his criticisms of the Indian National Congress. Through a series of open letters, Lajpatrai sought to argue that, in rejecting the INC, Syed Ahmed, the spiritual-intellectual chief of the Muslims of Aligarh, had backtracked from his own liberal views on responsible self-rule for Indians.¹⁶ Lajpatrai travelled to the 1888 session of the INC in Allahabad, where he was heralded for his robust defense of the nationalist party, but all the while, the Arya Samaj, a neo-Hindu reform association, was pulling him in the opposite direction. And when the nationalist party held its convention in Lahore in 1893 and again in 1900, Lajpatrai recalled, the Aryas were reluctant to be too involved. “The cause of my

¹⁶ A.O. Hume had the series translated into English and republished, see Lajpat Rai, *Autobiographical Writings*, ed. VC Joshi (Delhi: University Publishers, 1965), 84-86.

indifference toward the [Indian National] Congress after 1899,” he recalled autobiographically, “was the opinion of my Arya Samajist acquaintances.”¹⁷

Though an ardent devotee of the Arya *dharma* and a steadfast *swadeshi* (someone who had sworn to use indigenously manufactures articles, such as cloth), since joining the ranks of the Arya Samaj as a student in 1882, Lajpatrai had nevertheless continued to think of himself as a radical democrat. That is, Lajpatrai thought of himself as a democrat in the mold of Giuseppe Mazzini, the Italian statesman, whose idea of a civic religion had such a forceful impact on him that he labored to translate an English edition of the *Duties of Man* by Mazzini into Urdu and about whom he wrote a glowing biographical sketch.¹⁸ Freedom was a temple, Lajpatrai reckoned, accessible only to those devotees who had the mettle to make difficult sacrifices at the altar.¹⁹ Absent the polytechnics of actual self-government, the Arya Samaj formed “a sort of government within the government.”²⁰ The Aryas were therefore deeply skeptical of encroachments by the Indian National Congress, which in the Punjab was controlled by the Brahmos. Ahead of the 1901 session of the INC, Lajpatrai likened the yearly gathering of the INC to a festival that was full of mirth and merriment, but short on substance; its achievements to date were of “such doubtful and ephemeral character as to raise serious doubts in the minds of even enthusiasts.”²¹ Frustrated with the INC for more reasons than one, Lajpatrai nonetheless chose not to break entirely from the Congress, in spite of its limitations.

Whatever his misgivings, Lajpatrai was thrust into the role of trying to maintain the unity of the INC, even as regional and ideological differences mounted within the nationalist party. At

¹⁷ Rai, *Autobiographical Writings*, 87-88.

¹⁸ Lajpatrai recounted that he first learned about Mazzini from a volume of speeches by Surendranath Bannerje. See “Preparation for Political Work,” in Rai, *Autobiographical Writings*, 81-83.

¹⁹ “The Russian Revolution,” *Panjabee*, December 4, 1905.

²⁰ Rai, *The Arya Samaj* (London: Longmans Green and Company, 1915), 156.

²¹ Lajpat Rai, “The Coming Indian National Congress—Some Suggestions,” *Kayastha Samachar* 4, no. 5 (November, 1901): 377.

least since 1900, when the INC chose to hold its convention in Lahore, the Punjabis had tried to make certain demands of the INC that were only temporarily taken into consideration. The first of these was that the Congress should apply itself to the “industrial regeneration of the country.” Another was that the INC formalize its constitution as a means of giving some permanency to the organization. The last was that if the INC was going to be genuinely national, the field of selection had to be extended to the masses, “who should first be instructed in its aims and objects,” so as to be able to direct their own representatives.²² Ever since, senior members of the INC felt the Punjabis had made a nuisance of themselves, pitching their “absurd and unfounded criticism” of the organization. “The Punjabis are in my opinion,” Dinshaw Wacha wrote to Naoroji in 1903, “a conceited and worthless lot,” who were “a source of weakness rather than strength.”²³ What was more, Wacha contended, the Punjabis had contemptuously shown only intermittent interest in the work of the institution. At Calcutta, in 1901, the concerns of the Punjab delegates that had been taken under advisement at the last session were completely rebuffed. The Indian Congress Committee folded and the INC refused to endorse the program of industrial development that the Punjabi Aryas wanted. Frustrated Punjabis threatened in 1904 to secede from the INC completely if it failed to restructure itself as an explicitly politically oriented association. A sympathetic contemporary, whose words were repeated on the pages of the *Mahratta*, stated that, unless the demands of the Punjabis to restructure the INC to be more politically active were taken seriously, “there is reason to believe that the best days of the Congress are over and that it has entered upon that first stage of its decadence.”²⁴ Lajpatrai thus sought to return the Punjab to the INC by joining the 1905 deputation to Britain, through which

²² “The Indian National Congress,” *Panjabee*, January 9, 1905.

²³ Wacha to Naoroji, December 19, 1903, in R. P. Patwardhan ed., *Dadabhai Naoroji Correspondence, Correspondence with D. E. Wacha* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1977), 2:590.

²⁴ Editorial from the *Tribune* of Lahore reprinted as “The Congress Camp,” *Mahratta*, May 3, 1903.

he also hoped to politicize the issue of India reform in the heart of the metropole. Bound up with these intraregional rows were political and religious differences, spheres that the Aryas did not treat as strictly separate and distinct. Though apolitical in its self-conception, the Arya Samaj maintained a utilitarian credo, one that showed itself to be amenable to nationalist appropriation: improving the condition of mankind by putting the welfare of the collective above the needs of the individual.²⁵ It functioned practically as an interest group that sought to win sectional advantages for the new, middle class, urban Hindus of the Punjab. The Arya Samajists thus lobbied to obstruct the passage of certain statutes such as the Land Alienation Act of 1900 that restricted the land transfers to non-agriculturalists while individual members such as Lajpatrai ran for municipal-level offices. Yet the Arya Samaj itself was able to maintain an aura of detachment, partly as a result of its ideology, which treated its own formal separation from the task of governing as evidence of its ethical superiority; participating in the administration of British India was seen as potentially polluting and corrupting. Sidney Webb, the Fabian socialist, in his introduction to the book on the Arya Samaj that Lajpatrai wrote in 1914, remarked that, in the 1870s, as thought in England focused on scientific materialism and commercialism, “Dayanand [was preaching] a monotheism of an exalted type.” The outlook of the Samaj in the Punjab, where it had thrust its deepest roots, Webb noted, involved the combination of “a ‘Protestant’ reformation of the secular abuses and legendary accretion of orthodox Hinduism— a reversion from ‘ecclesiasticism’ to the (Vedic) ‘scriptures’—with a Puritan simplification of life, and a ‘Roundhead’ insistence on the development of an independent Indian intellectual life and

²⁵ Lajpat Rai, *The Arya Samaj* (London: Longmans Green and Company, 1915), 102.

thought.”²⁶ The Aryas were, in more sense than one, “spiritualized liberals,”²⁷ whose faith exhibited a “hyper-rationalism” that was an admixture of “rationalist skepticism [pulling] from Voltaire through Tom Paine to the Younger Mill” and “an Indian tradition of rationalism.”²⁸

Dayanand Saraswati, the Hindu ascetic who founded the Arya Samaj in 1875, had left the Shaivite tradition to which he belonged and tasked himself with revivifying the Vedic religion that had supposedly lasted until the epic war of the *Mahabharata*. Like Protestant strains of anti-clericalism, Dayanand railed against idol-worship, the indignities of caste, and Brahmanical or priestly intervention. Dayanand also rejected the harsh mores governing the treatment of widows, what he called “superstition,” and restrictions on travel overseas.²⁹ Theologically, he also weighed in on an intractable schism in Hindu philosophy, the dispute over the nature of the relationship of the self to God and to reality based on different interpretations of the Upanishads. The Arya Samajists followed earlier reformists such as the Brahmos in their aim to clear the morass of Vedantism in the Punjab by giving shape to a rationalist version of Hinduism.

Yet Dayanand refuted the non-dualism or *advaita* Vedanta of the Brahmos as well as the traditional—Vaishnavite and dualist—alternatives. The Brahmos held a cosmopolitan worldview in which rational individuals, once released from the illusions (*maya*) thrown up by the corrupting agencies of the material world (i.e., idol-worship and a priestly caste), had direct access to the absolute. The Vaishnavite alternative, a modified non-dualism (*vishista advaita*),

²⁶ Sidney Webb, “Preface,” Rai, *The Arya Samaj*, xii-xiv.

²⁷ C. A. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 227.

²⁸ Bayly, *Recovering Liberties*, 225.

²⁹ Kenneth Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th-Century Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 33.

stressed the worship of Krishna as an avatar of God. Dayanand rejected both. But rather than embrace dualism, Dayanand, as Lajpatrai tried to explain in his own book on the Arya Samaj, formulated a kind of monism in which God had no avatars and was at once distinct from but also immanent in the world. Lajpatrai reiterated the claims made by his close contemporary in the Lahore Samaj, Guru Datta, who stretched this rationalist strain of monotheism in Dayanand into an almost Kantian-idealist claim, which was that, in their Vedic sense, the *devatas* the Hindus worshiped were not different deities, but rather represented the six “substances” that shape knowledge: time, space, causation, spirit (conscious ego), and the deliberate activities and vital activities of the subject.³⁰ The conclusion that Lajpatrai drew from this was that salvation involved actively trying to overcome ignorance that held the individual soul in chains, while permitting the individual to acquire wealth righteously and to enjoy their desires.

Like their radicalized counterparts in Bengal, young Punjabis such as Lajpatrai and Guru Datta were skeptical of the claim that the Brahmos formed a properly national church. Guru Datta, who had immersed himself in the works of Bentham, sought to show that the Brahmos had overlooked the fact that reason and individual conscience were formed through a specific kind of historical and cultural education. Or, putting the matter negatively, Guru Datta held that, were individuals furnished with an innate reason or conscience, as the Brahmos claimed, “there would have been only one religion, one monotonous state of society, one opinion, and no conflict in this wide world.”³¹ The Brahmos, in other words, had misconstrued the sociocultural foundation of the non-dualism of self and not-self, which was to be found only in the Vedas. The Brahmos moreover had rejected the idea of revelation, questioning the status of the Vedas as infallible,

³⁰ Rai, *Arya Samaj*, 78.

³¹ Guru Datta, “The Nature of Conscience and the Brahmo Samaja,” in *Wisdom of the Rishis or Complete Works of Pandita Guru Datta*, ed. Swami Vedananda Tirtha (Lahore: Arya Pustakalaya, n.d.), 295.

whereas Dayanand wanted Hindus to return to the Vedas as the source of a religion based on timeless truths. The radical Bengali nationalist, Aurobindo, wrote a short tract praising Dayanand for getting beyond the Brahmos, who had stopped short at the Upanishads, by going back all the way to the Vedas themselves for inspiration and for putting forward doctrines that, though they ventured far from tradition, were “profoundly national.” Lajpatrai himself concluded: “Patriotism is the [logical] handmaiden of Vedicism.”³²

Hitched to the Arya Samajist faith from its origin was an emphasis on Swadeshi, or indigenously made articles, which would later take on wider significance when nationalists launched a boycott of British imports in the name of native manufactures. That is, a correlate of their theological concerns was a criticism of the cosmopolitanism of the Brahmos, which focused on individualism and individual emancipation at the expense of attention to the sociological or the level of the social whole. Aryas such as Guru Datta, with whom Lajpatrai was particularly close personally and politically, therefore chastised “the self-styled Hindu reformer who wails over the extreme poverty of [the] country,” but who nevertheless believed that individual wealth was an incentive for material progress, as someone blinded to “the higher duties to truth.”³³ A modish form of worship, wrote Guru Datta, that sneers “at all metaphysics, looks down upon all thoughtful reflection or philosophy, and discards all theology as *speculative, unpractical and absurd*,”³⁴ was the cause of a number of peculiarly modern and fatal types of sickness: indifference, skepticism, infidelity, and materialism.³⁵ Diagnosed with these afflictions, Guru Datta held, “society is [turned into] a whirlpool, wherein are caught all swimmers on the current

³² Rai, *Arya Samaj*, 172.

³³ Guru Datta, “Pecuniomania,” in *The Works of the Late Pandit Guru Datta Vidyarthi* (Lahore: Aryan Publishing, [1897] 1902), 198.

³⁴ Guru Datta, “Pecuniomania,” 203.

³⁵ Guru Datta, “Pecuniomania,” 198.

of life, then tossed with violence hither and thither, now hurled this way, then the other,” a circumstance in which “there can be no morality, no religion, no truth, no philosophy.”³⁶

Concomitant with the Arya criticism of *advaita* Vedanta was a critique of liberal political economy. Aryas such as Guru Datta and Lal Chand were profoundly influenced by the penetrating critique of standard, liberal political economy leveled by the Irish theorist, Thomas Cliffe Leslie, in works such as *The Wealth of Nations and the Slave Power* (1863), a text that was reprinted in the Punjab under the name of J.N. Ghose.³⁷ That self-aware nationalists in Punjab were attracted to the writings of Cliffe Leslie is, in itself, unsurprising, even if the use of a Bengali pseudonym was strange. Chand, paraphrasing the French liberal Benjamin Constant, made the case that, in the modern era, commerce had replaced war. This did not mean that disorder, suffering, and conflict in society simply disappeared; rather, these pathologies appeared in peculiarly modern form, as the result first and foremost of the failure to constitute a truly commercial society. Moreover, whereas “the destruction of war is comparatively instantaneous and visible,” the devastation wrought by short-sighted mercantile policy was often more difficult to notice.³⁸

While he was a student, Cliffe Leslie had attended the lectures of Henry Sumner Maine on the need for historical and comparative legal studies as a means to counter the stream of utilitarianism associated with the likes of John Stuart Mill, guiding policy-making in the

³⁶ Guru Datta, “Pecuniomania,” 201.

³⁷ “The Wealth of Nations and Slave Power” (1863) by Cliffe Leslie was republished in Punjab under the name of J. N. Ghose, *Wealth of Nations* (Lahore: Civil Military Gazette Press, 1889). Guru Datta’s essay “Pecuniomania” itself drew on another 1862 article by Cliffe Leslie entitled “The Love of Money,” in which the latter had laid out the claim that, “the antithesis of modern wealth is not so much poverty as a different kind of wealth,” and the pathology of the transition to modernity was therefore a “change [that] is more remarkable in the quality than in the quantity [of wealth].” See Thomas Edward Cliffe Leslie, *Essays in Political Moral Philosophy*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1879).

³⁸ Lal Chand, *An Essay on the Decline of Native Industries: Its Causes, Evil, and Cure* (Lahore: Anglo-Sanskrit Press, 1894), 3.

colonies. A particularly relevant area with which Leslie took issue was the location of value. Mill had held that, under the system of industrial life, value was an attribute of the sphere of distribution or exchange, where competition, rather than usage or custom was the agency responsible for the distribution of wealth. Leslie argued that, while regulated competition might be the rule in England and in Europe generally, it was more difficult to separate the value created by producing commodities from the distribution of that wealth in the “breadths of Asia, Africa, and America,” where “the laborer is flogged like a beast of burden”; where there was no “profit,” in the strict economic sense, because “labor is not hired, but stolen”; and where the best soil is fast growing fallow “instead of growing in value.”³⁹ Punjabi moderates interested in recuperating the liberal core of the doctrine of political economy were therefore attracted to Leslie’s theories as a means to understand their own situation.

Cliffe Leslie also sought to show that Buckle, the historian of civilization in England, had mischaracterized the liberal doctrines of Adam Smith. *The Wealth of Nations*, Leslie held, was more than a testament to the utilitarian idea that an individual pursuing self-interested action had the unintentional benefit of promoting the interests of others. Smith had held radical views, “even more so than socialism,” Leslie contended, and *The Wealth of Nations* as a “treatise included an inquiry into the cause of poverty as well as the wealth of nations.” With reference to the unsentimental view on abolition in *The Wealth of Nations*, Leslie maintained that slavery is “the system, which is most subversive of the doctrines of political economy, as taught by Adam Smith.” If, as Smith held, labor is the “original foundation of all other property,” whose sacredness is inviolable, then a slave was unable to claim rightfully his own labor as property. The suggestion that Indian radicals wanted to make by publishing Leslie under a Bengali

³⁹ Ghose, J. N. [Thomas Cliffe Leslie]. *Wealth of Nations*, (Lahore: Civil Military Gazette Press, 1889), 8.

pseudonym was clear enough: The indictment of the antebellum slave-owners was equally applicable to the British in India.

The Aryas were well acquainted with these debates over the legacy of liberal political economy. Chand polemically asked, should native manufacturers remain “confident in the potency of Free Trade?” A nation that is locked into producing primary materials for export while importing British manufactures for consumption, Chand concluded, “must rank the very lowest in the scale of civilization.” Like other nationalists, Chand hoped to “adapt [native] industries to prevailing tastes, then utilize [the] abundant raw materials, utilize the cheap manual labor, extend liberal education, spread technical education, import machinery, [and] unite capital.”⁴⁰ Chand was thus positing an organic relationship between capital and labor that then translated into calls for pooling indigenous capital in order to uplift the state of the nation. Chand called on the French statesman Guizot as much as his own Arya background to stress that, whereas the ancients had valued self-sacrifice on behalf of the nation, in the modern age there was an inordinate stress on individuals producing or attempting to acquire and accumulate wealth through self-interested action.

Chand furthermore found fault with the assumptions of the cotton manufacturers of Manchester. Lancashire merchants, in pressing for the repeal of cotton duties, had tried to argue that the capital withdrawn from the native manufacture of cloth was sure to find new outlets for itself, but Chand, like other nationalists, was skeptical of the assumption that it was beneficial for Indian capital to be forced to find these new outlets. On this view, Chand countered, industrial textile manufacture in England was also supposedly advantageous to India, since the flood of British imports forced traditional weavers to modernize by promoting a more effective allocation

⁴⁰ Chand, *Decline of Native Industries*, 31.

of capital. Such “a cosmopolitan view,” Chand felt, was applicable only to inter-industrial relations, but patently foolish if it resulted in a situation pitting weavers in Lahore in competition against those in Amritsar, or the machine-made textiles of Manchester against the hand-loomed cloth of Punjab. “There is hardly an article of Indian use and manufacture from the household silk wrought cloth to the Cashmere shawl and Benares keemkhab,” Chand remarked, “which has not found its imitation in Europe”; the names Calico and Cashmere on British labels were now but melancholic reminders of the fact that these were once Indian exports. The Aryas thus found themselves promoting the idea of protecting native industries through defensive tariffs on imports while promoting investments in new machines in India. Even before the Swadeshi boycott of 1905, the *Arya Gazette* routinely chastised the reliance on imported “necessaries of life,” pronouncing that Hindus had lost sight of their duties to the nation.⁴¹

These overlapping, but non-identical, disputes in theology and political economy were a crucial aspect of the ideological backdrop to debates in India over the rightful function of the Indian National Congress. Given how hostile the authorities in British India were to the cause of reform, the INC faced the task of politicizing the issue of Indian policy at Westminster, thus posing the issue of what Indian radicals had to do to make the cause of India a party issue in Britain. That is, Indian nationalists, moderates and extremists, understood that they had to look beyond India to find support for their claims. What their activities in Britain highlighted for them was that imperialism was not simply a matter of colonial policy, in the narrow sense. Rather, the

⁴¹ *Arya Gazette*, November 10, 1904, in *Selections from the Native Newspapers Published in the Punjab* (hereafter abbreviated as *SNNPP*), Vol. XVII, No. 46, 268.

brutishness of colonial policy and its regressive characteristics—which appeared to be waxing, not waning—were deeply imbricated into the mounting crisis in the metropole.

The Hope and Illusion of British Democracy: The Indian National Congress in 1904

Aside from the concerns that the Punjabis had raised about the INC as an organization, the build-up to the 1904 session was fraught with concerns about the partitioning of Bengal. Lord Curzon had rationalized the blueprint to cleave Bengal into separate regions in the name of administrative ease, but nationalists saw the move, which created a region “giving Mahomedans a preponderating numerical strength,” as evidence that a policy of “divide and rule” was guiding the counsels of the Indian Empire.⁴² After Whitehall refused to block the move, even moderate India reformers in Britain lost heart, questioning their own liberal faith. A commentator in the *Manchester Guardian* wrote that Lord Curzon held a dangerous conception of India as a satrapy of the crown, despotically ruled over by the viceroy, deploying armed forces that were practically beyond the control of Parliament. Likewise, a Liverpudlian remarked, “It is a little short of a calamity that her [India’s] affairs should be committed to the care of so reactionary and impolitic a statesman.”⁴³ Added to this, a writer in the generally mild-tempered *Tribune* of Lahore stated as a matter of fact that, “one may admit in these days of neo-imperialism there may [still] be a few desiccated, ante-diluvian species specimens of liberalism in England and in India at the very bottoms and depths of whose minds there may lurk some such notion” about preparing India to be self-governing, but to everyone who had the eyes to see or the ears to listen, the notion that Britain was seriously preparing India to be self-governing was “quixotic or hypocritical.”⁴⁴

⁴² “Bengal in Ferment,” *Panjabee*, July 4, 1905.

⁴³ J. M. Maclean in *India*, July 8, 1904, 21. Also see *India*, July 8, 1904, 30.

⁴⁴ “The First Postulate of Indian Independence,” *Tribune*, April 25, 1905.

Several days later, the *Tribune* returned to the issue to declare that ever since “Money!” had become the national watchword in England, “Liberalism is practically dead.”⁴⁵

The *Panjabee* ran a scathingly critical front page editorial on the ineffectiveness of the INC ahead of its yearly gathering, which, in its opinion, was a ritualized *tamasha* (melee).⁴⁶ Burke and Sheridan had made speeches that fired mighty revolutions, whereas the orations of “our Bannerjeas and Dutts will simply be cries in the wilderness[,] though full of sound and fury,” the editorial complained. Liberalism, with its cosmopolitan and universalist outlook, had breathed its last with Lord Macaulay, the same editorial ventured. A new age of darkness had been ushered in—one that was marked by its Darwinist emphasis on “natural selection” as well as its correlate “the survival of the fittest.” It was impossible in this new epoch of competition to remain hopeful that British electors would institute measures to raise Indian industries and commerce to a level equal to their own. And it was foolish for the masses to look to Congress-wallahs as saviors who had climbed off “Mount Kailash to liberate them from their thralldom.”⁴⁷ Mindful of this depth of despair, the head of the British committee of the INC, Wedderburn wrote, “I am told that are some in India, who are preaching the doctrine of despair, who have lost faith in the constitutional methods, and who say that the Congress propaganda in England should be abandoned.” A “frontal attack is repulsed with slaughter,” Wedderburn strategized, but the INC still had a lifeline in the Liberals; it had to move quickly to dispatch a delegation to Britain to campaign for reform, placing the claims of India before the British electorate, parliamentary candidates, and party chiefs.⁴⁸ The members of the British committee, as veterans of the parliamentary fight over Indian reforms, sought to seize on the sustained troubles of the Unionist administration as an

⁴⁵ “The Political Situation in England,” *Tribune*, April 29, 1905.

⁴⁶ Pherozshah Mehta in “Achievements of the Congress,” *Panjabee*, January 2, 1905.

⁴⁷ “The Indian National Congress: A Prospect and Retrospect,” *Panjabee*, December 19, 1904.

⁴⁸ *India*, December 30, 1904, 325.

opportunity for an Indian delegation to make a direct *cri de coeur* to British voters. A retired Indian Civil Service officer wrote in *India* that, with the Balfour administration now seemingly drawing its last breath, the INC had to ensure that Indian reform was turned into a party issue in the next elections. The chance for the INC to make its case to Britons, he reckoned, “is therefore ‘now or never.’”⁴⁹

Wedderburn hoped more generally to dispel the widespread apathy in Britain toward the affairs of the Indian empire.⁵⁰ Ahead of the 1904 caucus of the INC, a retired head judge of the Bombay High Court remarked that the quip Thomas Macaulay had made in 1833 about a broken head at Coldbath Fields, the notorious penitentiary, producing more sensation in England than the fiercest battles in India, was still apposite.⁵¹ Gripped by their own concerns, the electorate had taken almost no notice of the invasion of Colonel Younghusband into the Tibetan capital Lhasa,⁵² the mistreatment of Indian “coolies” in the Transvaal,⁵³ the passage of the Official Secrets Act to muzzle dissent, the enormous pay increases for British soldiers stationed in India, the possibility of partitioning Bengal, or the reappointment of Lord Curzon to the viceroyalty, which both English radicals and Indian reformers found deeply odious.

While presiding over the first session of the 1904 gathering of the INC, Henry Cotton wasted no breath in getting to the task at hand. Cotton stated plainly that the truth was the strategy of the INC to win reforms for India hinged on gaining the support of English voters. “Recall the case of

⁴⁹ Donal Smeaton, “A Warning to the National Congress: Now or Never,” *India*, December 30, 1904, 275.

⁵⁰ William Wedderburn, “The Indian National Congress,” *India*, December 30, 1904, 285.

⁵¹ John Jardine “India and the General Election,” *India*, December 2, 1904, 273. Macaulay, “Government of India,” speech in the House of Commons, July 10, 1833, in *Miscellaneous Works of Lord Macaulay*, 5:143. What India wanted, hypothesized Jardine, himself a Liberal candidate for MP, was to be found in the slogan of the party of Cobden, Bright, and Gladstone: “Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform!”

⁵² Justified by Lord Curzon as a means to fend off the Tsarist menace to India.

⁵³ The London Convention (1884) was supposed to ensure rights of Indian subjects of Britain in the Transvaal. Yet the Boers sought to restrict where Indians could live and to restrict their trading rights. After the Boer War, the British themselves sought to exclude the influx of Indians, preferring indentured Chinese migrants instead. See “Civis Romans Sum,” *India*, July 8, 1904, 15-16.

Ireland,” Cotton chastened the radical sections of the INC, who tended to deprecate the importance of the British committee and its efforts at Westminster. “[I]nternal agitation in Ireland was a stepping-stone to reform, but by itself it accomplished little,” he hastened to add. “And so it is in the case of India.” It was at Parliament, Cotton reminded his audience, where matters related to “the fate of India” had to be resolved.⁵⁴ Wedderburn then introduced a resolution to dispatch a deputation to England before the next elections. B.G. Tilak, as head of the radical section within the INC, lent forceful support to the motion, which was then ratified by acclamation.⁵⁵ Tilak had already reassured Naoroji that, “I am rather sanguine by temperament, and think we must continue pushing our efforts to the logical extreme.” If Indians are to win their rights and privileges, he wrote, “we must agitate in England,” going a step further than the British committee and proposing a mission with some kind of permanency—an overseas office staffed and funded by the INC for at least a decade. Tilak felt compelled to clarify to Naoroji that he did not mean to imply that the work in India was useless, but sought to acknowledge that, without sustained efforts to win over voters in Britain, the annual gathering of the INC in India “would be of no avail.”⁵⁶

Hopeful that Balfour might dissolve Parliament after the winter break, local INC associations from Lahore to Madras tried to settle on their candidates, in accordance with the resolution to dispatch a delegation. The United Provinces and Madras took swift action, while it was all but certain that Surendranath Banerjee would be the choice of Bengal, which left Bombay and the Punjab to decide on their delegates. Through the *Mahratta*, Tilak had thrown his weight behind

⁵⁴ H. E. Cotton, “India as a Nation,” *India*, December 30, 1904, 331-332.

⁵⁵ Other resolutions sought reforms such as the application of a budget surplus to achieve a reduction in land revenue demands on agriculturalists; abolition of the excise duties on cotton items; abatement of the cess on salt; invigorated efforts at industrial education and the like. The INC also of the Tibetan expedition and increases on military expenditure. *India*, December 30, 1904, 330-31.

⁵⁶ Tilak to Naoroji, December 6, 1904, in *Samagra Lokmanya Tilak*, Vol. 7, *Towards Independence* (Poona: Kesari Prakashan, 1975), 676.

the resolution, presenting his own list of suitable delegates, but Maharashtra was always a complex case: the presidency was politically riven with the Tilakite radicals on one side and moderates such as Ferozeshah Mehta and G. K. Gokhale on the other. Left unstated was the issue of appointing a Muslim representative to fend off the criticism that the INC was no more than a Hindu majoritarian group that did not properly represent India. Yet, as the weeks wore on, enthusiasm for the mission to England tempered, as the resolution was left pending well into the spring. At last, on May 3, the Indian Association of Bombay elected Gokhale, a member of the Viceregal Council, and Mohammad Ali Jinnah, a successful though somewhat politically obscure Gujarati advocate at the High Court, with an eye to both men departing for England in the summer.⁵⁷ Agreed for an instant on who should make the sojourn, the members of the presidency association fought over the objective of the Indian mission, specifically whether it should lend succor to the radical section of the Liberal party or remain neutral. The gathering to elect the delegate was marked by a particularly heated exchange between Ferozeshah Metha, who believed the deputation ought to be identified with the Liberals, and Khare, who felt that the Liberal party had become little more than the “champion of aggressive Free Trade and exclusive white labor.”⁵⁸

Although Tilak had blessed the idea of a dispatching a delegation, Indian radicals had a number of reservations about the proximity of some members of the British Committee to the Liberal party, nor were the radicals completely sold on the idea of pleading for reforms for India at Westminster. Old warhorses on the British Committee, which was founded in 1889 as the London agency of the INC, had made no attempts to hide the fact that they wanted the Indians to make common cause with the re-ascendant Liberals. Against the maxim—attributed to Charles

⁵⁷ “Deputation to England,” *Mahratta*, May 7, 1905.

⁵⁸ “Deputation to England,” *Mahratta*. Ibid.

Metcalfe—that India would be lost in Parliament, an editorial in the *Mahratta* landed the quip that, without a serious difference of opinion on matters of colonial policy, “India can no more be lost in the House of Commons, than Waterloo [won] on the cricket fields of Eton.”⁵⁹ The *Indian Sociologist* was unsubtle in pursuing its case to dismantle and replace the British Committee with a new INC agency office in Britain to be headed by Tilak, while Bipin Chandra Pal, the Bengali radical who was once the editor of the Lahore-based *Tribune*, believed it was willful to think that the return of the Liberals might introduce fundamental change in India.⁶⁰ Lal rhetorically called out the names of those on the Liberal front bench—Asquith, Fowler, Morley, Campbell-Bannerman, and Haldane—questioning whether any of them had the will to interfere with imperialist policy or undo what Lord Curzon had already accomplished.⁶¹ Intent on puncturing illusions about the last Liberal viceroys appointed by Gladstone, such as Lord Lytton, who was remembered with reverence by Indian reformers, Lal noted that their administrations were only superficially more liberal than those that had come under Disraeli. Faced with the intransigent refusal to make India a party matter in Britain, a growing number of Indian radicals believed what was required was to redouble their efforts to agitate for reforms in India, since “no amount of petitioning or memorialisings, no number of deputations sent...to England, will change this attitude.”⁶²

At least for a while, even moderate Punjabis tacked back and forth on matters of strategy, questioning whether the English had ever had much concern about India gaining the right to Home Rule. After all, India had no members in Parliament, nor was there an appetite—as was well-known—for Indian affairs in the House of Commons. Jaundiced, an editorial in the

⁵⁹ “India and the British Parliament,” *Mahratta*, August 14, 1904.

⁶⁰ “BG Tilak and Indian Delegates to England,” *Indian Sociologist* 1, no. 6 (June, 1905): 22.

⁶¹ B. C. Pal, “Agitation or Organisation,” *Swadeshi and Swaraj*, 41.

⁶² Pal, ., 43.

Panjabee asked, “Did Sir Cotton think the Indians should ask English constituents in Manchester to vote for members who wished to build industrial factories in India?” “Let us fall back on our own resources,” the same editorial concluded.⁶³ Moreover, the *Mahratta* cautioned, the over-optimistic members of the British committee had spoken at the last session of the INC as if the elections were a millenarian crisis. Wedderburn and Cotton, as members of the Liberal party, might have held the belief that the defeat of the Conservative-Liberal Unionist coalition was going to usher in a Liberal renaissance, but Indians had learned that liberal ideals and the Liberal party were seldom coextensive.⁶⁴ Social democrats, the editorial noted, were alone amidst English well-wishers of India in pointing out this truth. The editors of the *Mahratta* seemingly relished quoting an open letter from a member of the Social Democratic Federation that taunted the members of the British Committee for their roseate view of the Liberal party, critiqued Liberal stalwarts Gladstone and John Morley for their indifference to matters related to India, and repeated the refrain that the best hope for India lay in the development of a working-class party led by Hyndman.⁶⁵

Yet the views of the Indian radicals within the INC, articulated on the pages of newspapers such as the *Mahratta*, were never dominant. The Indian National Congress was still in its incipience when the Liberal party had lost its parliamentary majority, in 1886, over the issue of Home Rule for Ireland. Ever since, the INC had tossed about on an ocean of disappointment, as a succession of Unionist (the new name of the Conservative party) viceroys and secretaries of state thwarted its attempts to introduce even modest democratic reforms into the Indian empire. Buffeted by Unionist rule, and susceptible to a nostalgia for Liberal viceroys, Indian nationalists

⁶³ “The Indian National Congress II: Our Hopes in England,” *Panjabee*, January 16, 1905.

⁶⁴ “Indian Agitation in England,” *Mahratta*, January 22, 1905.

⁶⁵ O’Donnell in “Indian Agitation in England,” *Mahratta*, January 22, 1905.

still welcomed the possibility of the return of a Liberal majority, despite the signs that the Liberals had no intention of trying to reverse the tide of militaristic imperialism that had battered Indian shores for a decade or of doing more than wave the tattered standard of Free Trade in the face of the Unionist ambition to create an imperial tariff union modeled on the German *zollverein*. Still, a forceful editorial in the *Panjabee*, in mid-February of 1905, fired the imagination of its readers by presenting the deputation of Lajpatrai as the mission of all Indian democrats, who were set to make their appeals to a sovereign whose majesty was more awesome than that of Edward VII—the *demos*.⁶⁶ It still remained to be seen in Britain if the social democrats were in fact speaking the truth about the death of the Liberals and the crisis that imperialism had wrought on the home front.

Dangerous Liaisons: Lajpatrai in London

Frustrated that the will in India to dispatch a full delegation had wilted, the chiefs of the British Congress Committee mustered a tepid welcome for Lajpatrai in London, putting out a one-sentence notice in its newspaper *India* that the Punjab delegate had reached his destination. The three members—Dadabhai Naoroji; Douglas Hall, the secretary of the British committee; and William Wedderburn—on whose offices Lajpatrai called in his first week there, made it painfully clear to him that their ambition for the deputation had hinged on the absent Gokhale, whose invaluable stature as a member of the Viceregal Council had lent an air of seriousness to the whole affair. Wedderburn, who had first-hand experience getting short shrift at Westminster, as the convener of the Indian parliamentary committee on Indian affairs from 1893 to 1900, was particularly irked that Gokhale was going to miss the chance to brief MPs in advance of the

⁶⁶ “A Suggestion Congressman,” *Panjabee*, February 13, 1905.

Indian budget debate.⁶⁷ Without a clear explanation from Gokhale as to the reasons for the delay, or so much as a notice about a new departure date, Wedderburn was also forced to choose whether to scratch the ambitious summer schedule of talks to various Liberal–Labour (Lib–Lab) associations or to allow Lajpatrai to stand in for Gokhale at the national conference of the Liberal Federation and at addresses to the suffragettes, the Fabians, and the Labour Representation Committee.⁶⁸ After a series of dispiriting interviews with the British committee, a panicky Lajpatrai rifled off a note imploring Gokhale to consider departing for Britain at once. Until then, he had little choice but to fill the chair Gokhale had left empty.

Lajpatrai made his first visit to Westminster on June 22, accompanying Wedderburn to the Indian budget debate. Seated behind the last bench in the chamber, but nonetheless thrilled, Lajpatrai watched a clamorous debate on the latest scandal to hit the Balfour administration, the suspicious sales of surplus stores after the South African war.⁶⁹ Lajpatrai contrasted the sight of Balfour energetically parrying the Liberals’ attack with the rigidly dull session of the Indian Legislative Council that he had once witnessed. The exhilaration of the tilt wore off quickly, Lajpatrai reported, as MPs on both sides of the aisle hurried to clear the chamber as soon as the speaker turned to the matter of the Indian budget; the effusive zeal of parliamentary debate had vanished when the topic of discussion shifted to India.

Apart from preparing MPs for the budget debate, Lajpatrai was released from formal duties by the British committee that first month and busied himself about London, paying visits to other

⁶⁷ The members of the British Committee had worked hard to see to it that the debate was moved up on the parliamentary calendar in anticipation of Gokhale’s arrival.

⁶⁸ Wedderburn to Labour Representation Committee, May 1, 1905, LRC24/474, Labour Party Archives, Manchester. Also see “On the Urgency of Gokhale’s Visit to England,” *Punjabee*, July 10, 1905. The first major gathering at which Lajpatrai spoke on Indian affairs, together with Abdul Qadir, the editor of the *Observer* of Lahore, was to the suffragettes of the Womens’ Liberal Federation at Reigate. See “English Impressions,” *Punjabee*, July 31, 1905.

⁶⁹ “The Army Stores Scandal,” *Ten Years of Tory Government, 1895-1905: A Handbook for the Use of Liberals* (London: Liberal Publication Department, 1905), 230-34.

Indians in the area, surveying vocational schools that might serve as models for institutions in India, and dispatching articles for the *Punjabee* back in Lahore. On July 1, he attended a party to celebrate the formal opening of India House, the hostel on Cromwell Avenue, Highgate, where he was staying. At that fateful soirée, Lajpatrai was introduced to the constellation of metropolitan radicals in the galaxy of Shyamaji Krishnavarma, the eccentric owner of the hostel and editor of the *Indian Sociologist*, whose improbable trajectory had taken him from the Arya Samaj in Gujarat, on to Balliol College, Oxford.⁷⁰ Before he was called to the bar at the Inner Temple, Shyamaji was an assistant to the Sanskritist Monier-Williams, and had since transformed himself into an entrepreneur *cum* devotee of Herbert Spencer with sympathies to radicalized Indian nationalism.

Shyamaji had launched the *Indian Sociologist* six months earlier as an independent alternative to *India*, the voice of the British Congress committee, which leaned toward the Liberal party. From the outset, the newspaper was unsurprisingly eclectic, philosophically and politically. The broadsheet blended the criticisms of British rule in India made by Herbert Spencer with those by the Marxist socialist, H. M. Hyndman, although the latter had repeatedly sought to refute Spencer and the fundamental truth-claims of the Positivist school of sociology. The *Indian Sociologist* borrowed for its masthead a statement by Spencer, which stated that resistance to aggression was an ethical imperative, as non-resistance hurt both altruism and egoism. Spencer had pointedly criticized aspects of British rule of India, such as the cunningly “despotic use of native soldiers to maintain and extend native subjugation,” the British monopoly on staple commodities such as salt, and their harsh treatment of the *royts* (cultivators). While giving a speech to endow a slew of scholarships for Indian students in his name, Shyamaji noted

⁷⁰ He was introduced to the head of the SDF, Henry Mayers Hyndman; Henry Quelch, the editor of the SDF organ *Justice*; and the President of the Positivist Society, Shapland Swinny.

that Spencer had been the first to refer to Britain as “sociophagous,” a society-eating nation, an idea that Indian nationalists found compelling. Added to this, the first issue of the *Indian Sociologist*, which had come out in January, hailed the news of the defeat of the Tsarist armies by the Japanese at Port Arthur as portending a new historical era of Asiatic domination.

The July 1 soirée to which Lajpatrai was invited was equally eclectic. Apart from inaugurating the new hostel, Shyamaji was set to announce the creation of a number of scholarships that honored Herbert Spencer, the Victorian polymath, and Dayanand Saraswati, who founded the Arya Samaj. The host had also invited H. M. Hyndman, the head of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), on the same night to dedicate what was to be referred to as the Hyndman Library. Hyndman spoke eloquently on the occasion about the growing impoverishment and illiberalism of British rule in India.⁷¹ Lajpatrai found it in himself to muster an impromptu address at the gathering; speaking plainly, but spiritedly, he apparently impressed Harry Quelch, the editor of *Justice*, the SDF organ, who then solicited an article from him on his impressions of the Indian budget debate. The influence of the introductions made at India House that night altered the vector that Lajpatrai would follow that summer.

Later on, the kind of radicalism that was percolating at India House, the epicenter of a new wave of Indian nationalism, also held a forceful attraction for Hardayal, the future leader of the Ghadar party, who entered Oxford in the autumn of 1905. Dubbed the “Extremists,” the members of this new wave sought to counterbalance “the Moderates” within the INC, even as they held doubts about the effectiveness of its methods. Gandhi also found respite at India House, in October, 1906, as he campaigned at Whitehall against the notorious Black Ordinance in the Transvaal. Although Gandhi later modeled the character of the Extremist editor in *Hind*

⁷¹ “Home Rule for India,” *Justice*, July 1, 1905.

Swaraj on its owner, at the time he wrote glowingly about India House, particularly its fraternal idealism, as a space open to everyone, “whether Hindus, Muslims, or others.” Guided by Shyamaji, India House fostered in Hardayal a skepticism of empire in the tradition of Herbert Spencer based on Positivist sociology, as well as a passing acquaintance with the socialism of the SDF.

The article Lajpatrai submitted to *Justice*—which is strangely absent from his collected works—was an indictment of the apathy of Parliament toward India. Lajpatrai lamented the lack of actual debate on the Indian budget, in spite of the outsize effect that the increases on military spending in it would have on Indian taxpayers, who were already buried under duties levied on staples such as salt. Furthermore, the succession of secretaries of state, Liberal and Conservative, who “talk glibly of Indian prosperity” or “wax eloquent over the expediency of non-interference by Parliament in Indian affairs,”⁷² was condemnable. It was all enough, Lajpatrai stated, for Indians to wonder, why when “we asked for bread were we handed stones instead?”

A contemporaneous editorial in the *Panjabee* of July 31 tasked its readers to fight shoulder-to-shoulder with the English working class and Irish democrats so as to find “common deliverance” for those who were trodden under foot by the same classes that moiled Indians as “beasts of burdens and a race of serfs and helots.”⁷³ The English workman, the editorial explained, had it as bad as the Indian trader in the Transvaal, while the condition of the English peasantry was even more desperate than in France on the eve of the revolution. “Let us, instead, throw in our lot with our fellow sufferers in England,” the editorial exhorted, in order to create “a free brotherhood of nations.” At an address in Northamptonshire, shortly before he left for the Continent, on August 10, Lajpatrai was emphatic: “The class that holds the reigns over India

⁷² “The Debate on the Indian Budget,” reprinted in *Panjabee*, July 31, 1905.

⁷³ “India and British Democracy,” *Panjabee*, July 31, 1905.

derives its authority from [the working-class], it is therefore to [that class] that we look for redress.”⁷⁴ Throughout the course of the summer, Lajpatrai inched closer to the realization that properly politicizing the issue of Indian reform would require the INC to break out of the straight-jacket that bound them up with the Liberal party; it was a conclusion that some others within the nationalist party had reached and one that the socialists, particularly Hyndman, had sought to underscore repeatedly.

A cleft within the INC started to open up, one that was to mirror developments at Westminster throughout the summer and fall of 1905. With the Unionists locked in an intra-party dispute on a major policy shift regarding the idea of giving up Free Trade to implement a tariff union, and Labour struggling to find its feet, the Liberals found themselves well situated to take the reins of state; the Liberals in effect won by default in 1906. While moderate Indian nationalists, on the whole, were thus inclined to misapprehend what a win for the Liberals in the upcoming elections might mean, radicals tried to use the INC delegation to Britain as a means to make sense of what these changes in the metropole meant politically for India and to shape a response. Lajpatrai was one of the Indian radicals who took to openly questioning whether the Liberals were still their best allies. The Liberals had at best continued to waffle on the issue of India, while the Liberal party had seemingly lost its will to deliver Indian reforms. Yet, the growing crisis within the governing Unionist coalition at Westminster had dealt the Liberals a new life line, in spite of the fact that their party was still politically weak. A return to a Liberal administration, as Lajpatrai came to conclude, was never going to mean a return to the full-throated metropolitan liberalism that once plausibly had a lot to offer the colonies. The Liberals

⁷⁴ “An Open Air Meeting at Kittering,” *Panjabee*, September 4, 1905. Lajpatrai was speaking before the parliamentary constituency that had once belonged to Charles Bradlaugh, “the MP for India,” with whom Hyndman had battled over the introduction of the Eight-Hour’s Bill.

were not going to be the ones to lead changes; a win for the Liberals was rather going to be a sign of how the party had changed and adapted to the growing crisis of imperialism evident in cities such as Manchester. That socialists of different varieties were gathering steam in industrial centers was one manifestation of this crisis, as was the call, on the side of the spectrum, for a new imperial tariff union by some in the Unionist administration.

Political Impasse at Westminster: The Crisis of the British Imperial *Zollverein*

Fevered rumors predicting the swift fall of the Balfour administration, a Conservative–Liberal Unionist coalition, had swirled about Whitehall ever since the late spring of 1903, when a dispute over fiscal policy, specifically a scheme to create a *zollverein*, or customs union, had imperiled the Unionist party itself. The social democrats of the SDF and the Liberals alike hoped to stymie the Unionists in their schemes, but while the SDF tried to shift the crisis toward questions of colonial policy reform, the Liberals hoped simply to capitalize on the weakness of the Unionist party by picking up the scraps. Specifically, the Liberals saw an opportunity in the bold moves of Unionist Joseph Chamberlain, minister for the colonies, who had premeditatedly thrust a wedge in his own party. Chamberlain sought a radical break with the established economic policy of Free Trade by proposing high tariff walls to shield British manufacturers from overseas competition. Protectionist tariff reform had been a cherished ideal for conservatives at least since the outbreak of the Great Depression (1873)—the first economic crisis to justify the title. Chamberlain hoped to lead a new charge against the prevailing Free Trade consensus. However, while grandstanding in front of his West Birmingham constituents, Chamberlain was speaking without the sanction of either Prime Minister Arthur Balfour or the cabinet. The scission that resulted, in the words of a Westminster beat reporter, let off “a Babel of

tongues in the country and abroad.” Formed as an alliance to defeat the Liberals in 1895, the Unionist party looked to be imploding, potentially giving the Liberal party, in spite of itself, its best chance in almost a decade of gaining control of Parliament.⁷⁵ Yet “if the opposition are not united and effective,” the same columnist noted, “it is certainly no fault of the ministers.”⁷⁶

Although India figured prominently throughout the electoral crisis brought on by the Chamberlainite tariff reformers, the INC as an organization had neither the resources nor the structure to intervene in the British elections to make its voice heard. The INC was left to look on from the sidelines while the Liberal party lumbered to rise to the occasion. For radicals such as Lajpatrai, the party elders in the INC had resigned themselves politically by placing their faith in the Liberals, instead of developing links to either Labour or the SDF. Meanwhile, the Unionist party, impatient with the impasse at Westminster, sought to reunite the party on the basis of a new political program that would include welfare-state measures.

The Unionist party, its coalition intact, won reelection in the jingo-spirited “khaki” elections of September 1900.⁷⁷ Yet the months that followed the latest Unionist win revealed that the Boer

⁷⁵ “Our India Letter,” *India*, June 5, 1903, 269.

⁷⁶ “Our London Letter,” *India*, May 29, 1903, 257.

⁷⁷ After Balfour took over at the head of the Unionist front bench, replacing the frail Lord Salisbury in the summer of 1902, the Unionist party stumbled from crisis to crisis, on the home front and overseas. It was soon obvious that the defensive alliance that the Conservatives and Liberal–Unionists had struck in 1895 had run its course. Balfour, a supporter of Anglican schools, and Chamberlain, a dissenter, stood on opposite sides of the landmark but politically disastrous achievement of the Unionist administration: the 1902 state education reforms. The measure transferred the functions of school authorities to committees elected at the level of counties and their borough councils. The education bill, which sought to secure the monopoly of state-run denominational schools, was criticized fervently by Liberals and non-conformists. Although Chamberlain had a reputation as the “the father of municipal socialism,” he had fundamental objections to the bill, which, as it happened, had the unintended effect of providing children of the middle classes with an inexpensive high school-level education. If the reforms marked “a social revolution of the first magnitude,” this was so in spite of Balfour, who lamented their expense. But when it came to providing financial assistance to the German-backed Berlin–Baghdad railway, Chamberlain resisted mightily until Balfour was forced to reverse an offer of British cooperation, deepening the diplomatic rift across the North Sea. Faced with the

War was only apparently won; the wartime euphoria for empire was transient, the semi-autonomous colonies were reluctant to contribute to the cause of imperial defense, and Wilhelm II intended to use the industrial might of his unified German empire to challenge English supremacy through trade wars as much as open conflict on the seas. Furthermore, saddled with wartime deficits, the exchequer, Michael Hicks Beach, faced the onerous task of generating more revenue. A host of measures, however unsavory, were implemented to save the administration from the ignominy of reimposing the widely hated corn duty that had been abolished in 1869.⁷⁸ Tea, ale, spirits, and tobacco—in short, the things that British workers lived on—were taxed, while the exchequer took more and more of the workers’ direct income. Nevertheless, circumstances forced Hicks Beach, an ardent advocate of Free Trade and retrenchment, to impose a nominal cess on corn (cereals) in the 1902 state budget. Protectionist types such as Chamberlain were inclined to see the measure not as a necessary compromise of wartime austerity, but rather as a first step toward a new tariff policy that included duties on imported foodstuff and raw materials.

Although aligned with the Conservatives, Chamberlain, who was once himself identified as a “municipal socialist,” was profoundly aware that, although the classes that labored in Britain had won the vote, in substantial measure, as a result of the reform bill of 1867, workers were still grappling with the miseries specific to the industrial-age: the ceaseless threat of unemployment, workplace injuries, sickness and destitution in old age, and hostile combinations. Political

demands of working class voters, Balfour once again showed himself to be more flat-footed than Chamberlain. See H. Zebel, “Joseph Chamberlain and the Genesis of Tariff Reform,” *Journal of British Studies* 7, no. 1 (November 1967): 132 and Elie Halevy, *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*. Vol. 6, *The Rule of Democracy, 1905-1914*, translated by E. I. Watkin, (New York: Peter Smith, 1952), 205.

⁷⁸ A number of unwelcome expedients were adopted: Hicks Beach increased income tax from 8d. to 1s. in the pound, imposed extra duties on beer, spirits, tea, and tobacco, and raised short-term loans. And in 1901 a 1s. per ton duty on coal was introduced and income tax rose a further 2d. The 1902 budget brought another penny on income tax and the revival of the 1s. duty on corn which had been abolished in 1869.

discontent, Chamberlain had cautioned, in an article written in 1892, was manifest in new shapes: “the new radicalism, the new socialism, and the new unionism.”⁷⁹ If the representatives of the workers were to be believed, Chamberlain wrote, a workman considers “himself to be a slave, and regards the whole social system as a scheme for his exploitation.” On this explanation, the new industrial unionism, tinged with the exotic “continental doctrine of ‘collectivism,’” was different from craft unionism, in that its sphere of action and ambitions were, “[in its own] conception national and even international.”⁸⁰ Chamberlain characterized these “collectivists” as socialists in actual existence, but anarchists potentially, disingenuously promising workers that their “redemption is at hand.” Chamberlain identified a state-legislated eight-hour workday and a system for pensioning the elderly as the most significant of their immediate demands. Different classes of workers, he feared, were about to consolidate into a single class with their own party. Doubtless, he kept a close eye on the Independent Labour Party, founded in 1893, which modeled itself on the example of Irish nationalists.

Faced with the rise of organized workmen, employers sharpened their counterattack on unions by putting together their own parliamentary committee in 1898, even as workers were hit hard by a wave of consolidations across different industries, forced by the threat of overseas competition. And workers had another challenge to deal with as, in 1900, an adverse judgment in the Taff Vale case all but eliminated the strike as an effective weapon by permitting employers to sue unions for damages incurred in a strike action. At a conference held on a rain-soaked afternoon in London on February 27, 1900, the frustrated representatives of the Trade Unions Congress voted to combine with the socialist Independent Labour Party and the Marxist Social-Democratic Federation to found a new, mass electoral party, the Labour Representation

⁷⁹ Chamberlain, Joseph. “The Labour Question.” *Nineteenth Century* 32, no. 189 (November 1892): 692.

⁸⁰ Chamberlain, “The Labour Question,” 681.

Committee. What was taken by some to be a sure sign of the things to come, LRC candidates triumphed over their establishment-backed rivals in important elections at Clitheroe (August 1902) and Woolwich (February 1903). Fearful of such developments, Chamberlain had a ready-made blueprint for an imperial customs union, which, in addition to protecting British industries behind high tariff walls and privileging trade with the colonies, might serve as a bulwark against socialism in Britain by paying for subsidized, Bismarck-style state welfare initiatives. Balfour and others in the Unionist party lagged behind events, struggling to douse the fires that sprang up all around them, while preserving the status quo. More clear-sighted than his contemporaries on this score, Chamberlain recognized socialism as the real threat, which is why he made the case for tariff reform—even if it meant permitting the 1895 alliance between the Conservatives and Liberal–Unionists to dissolve.

After a three-month sojourn in South Africa, Chamberlain had returned to England, in the spring of 1903, with a stronger sense than ever that the empire ought to be strengthened. Whatever confidence he had on the eve of his departure had fizzled. Chamberlain had thought the Unionist cabinet shared his view that tariff reforms were the best means to strengthen the empire. However, in his absence, Balfour and a group of ministers had sifted sides on the issue. Mindful of the results of the Clitheroe and Woolwich elections, the first minister, who had previously indicated his willingness to consider new excise duties, now leaned toward repealing the cess on corn. Yet, while Free Trade ministers such as the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, CT Ritchie, celebrated their win, Chamberlain was confident that the voters were not going to fall for the ploy of promising them a cheap loaf. The same afternoon that a group of frustrated

conservatives, representing the interests of British cultivators who favored the corn duties, led a deputation to see Balfour, Chamberlain headed to Birmingham to address his constituents. It was there, on the night of May 15, that Chamberlain made the case for a new kind of tariff policy: a customs union to bind the colonies closer to the metropole.

Demagogical at his speech in Birmingham, Chamberlain portrayed himself as the stalwart advocate of the majority that labored in Britain and as the champion of a robust British imperialism, both at home and overseas. Distance from the House of Commons, he remarked, had forced him to realize that seemingly local issues, such as education, anti-drink campaigns, and financial matters, touched on wider imperial policy, which, in his definition, included “everything which affects their [British subjects in the colonies] interests as well as ours.” Convinced “that the pervading sentiment of imperialism has obtained deep hold on the minds and hearts of our children beyond the seas,” Chamberlain felt that the self-provincializing spirit of Little Englanders, “which taught us to consider ourselves alone,” was an anathema.⁸¹ Though not without merit, Chamberlain’s broadside against the Little Englanders involved a degree of caricature. Chamberlain insisted that Little Englanders were an offshoot of the Manchester Liberals who represented only a small fraction of the electorate. Portraying Little Englanders as provincially minded, Chamberlain elided their main objection to tariff reform, which was never based strictly on isolationism, but on their Free Trade notion that commerce with other countries would be more valuable than that with the colonies. Though the trade imbalance probably was insurmountable and the colonies were reluctant to contribute to imperial defense, what was worse, Chamberlain sought to argue, was that the fundamental assumptions of the Little Englanders, particularly their insistence on the doctrine of Free Trade, were unpatriotic. Britain

⁸¹ “A Demand for Inquiry,” *Chamberlain’s Speeches*, ed. Charles W. Boyd, vol. 2, (London: Constable and Company, 1914), 129.

had centuries of constitutional progress and freedom to fall back on, he insisted, but “the Empire is new.” It now fell to Britons to “decide its future destinies,” that is, whether the empire was to stand as a single “nation” or “whether it is to fall apart into separate states.” Are “[we] to accept our fate as one of the dying empires of the world?” Chamberlain thundered.⁸²

The centerpiece of the Birmingham speech was an attack on the doctrine of Free Trade. The ideas of Cobden and Bright, Chamberlain contended, had been repudiated in the era of international competition. British manufactures faced hostile tariffs in other countries, such as the US, Germany, and, significantly, the semi-autonomous colonies. Britain had to retaliate by imposing duties on imports. But Britons first had to show that “we will not be bound by any purely technical definition of Free Trade.”⁸³ Protectionist tariffs implemented across the empire, modeled on the example of the German *zollverein*, were thus essential to shaping a federal union, Chamberlain claimed. Canada, he noted, somewhat disingenuously, had already offered the British concessions on duties. Preferential trade with the colonies was to be the answer to the Little Englanders. However, as contemporary critics noted, the Chamberlain blueprint conspicuously left out India, the largest of the colonies.

Fiscal reform quickly eclipsed all other controversies within the Unionist party. Leopold Amery, an India-connected tariff reformer, likened the Birmingham address to Martin Luther pinning his ninety-five theses to the church door, whereas Rudyard Kipling memorialized Chamberlain in verse, in “Things and a Man” (1904), comparing him to the biblical Joseph, whose visions were misunderstood in their own time and unjustly held in disdain.⁸⁴ But while rank-and-file members were enthusiastic about the Chamberlain scheme, various ministers, the

⁸² *Chamberlain's Speeches*, 132.

⁸³ *Chamberlain's Speeches*, 139.

⁸⁴ L. S. Amery, *My Political Life* (London: Hutchinson, 1953), 1:234.

last three Unionist chancellors of the exchequer, and all of the ex-viceroy of India—Northbrook, Ripon, Elgin, and Lansdowne—lined up against it.⁸⁵ The immediate effect of the Birmingham address, remarked the Westminster correspondent for *India*, had been to stoke rumors about the dissolution of the Unionist coalition and the possibility of fresh elections.⁸⁶

Moderate Indian nationalists were also inclined to be skeptical about Chamberlain's idea for a *zollverein*. Dinshaw Wacha, a Bombayite member of the Indian National Congress, an editor at the *Kaiser-i-Hind*, and a manager-investor in Indian cotton mills, was quick to discern that "the Chamberlain manifesto informs us that the elections are now on the tapis." Concerned about what parliamentary elections in Britain might mean for the 1903 INC session in Madras,⁸⁷ he wrote to Dadabhai Naoroji, who was in London already preparing for another run as the Rad-Lib candidate for North Lambeth, about the "disquieting" news that Chamberlain had a "new fetish of Preferential Tariffs."⁸⁸ It was incumbent, Wacha felt, that the British working classes, whom he characterized as under the thumb of the Unionists—and venal to boot—ought to raise their standard of revolt, as the mischievous measure for tariff reform ran counter to their own interests. But, with the bait of state funded retirements for workmen on the table, Wacha remarked, it was impossible to tell what might occur at the election booth. From the vantage point of India, he concluded, she was sure to be caught in the middle of a tariff war between "Great and Greater Britain, on the one side, and the Protectionist countries, who are certain to retaliate, on the other."

⁸⁵ "Our Indian Letter," *India*, July 17, 1903, 29.

⁸⁶ "Our London Letter," *India*, May 22, 1903, 245.

⁸⁷ Wacha to Naoroji, May 23, 1903, *Naoroji Correspondence*, 838.

⁸⁸ Wacha to Naoroji, May 30, 1903, *Naoroji Correspondence*, 839.

Absent the charismatic Gladstone, who had retired, or the head of the parliamentary party, Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who still wore the stain of his reproach of British cruelties in South Africa, it fell to the ex-premier Lord Rosebery to lead a forceful counter-attack against Chamberlain on behalf of the Liberals. Yet his address to the chamber of commerce at Burnley (Lancashire) on May 19 was anything but. A member of the coterie of Liberal imperialists, the group that had rebuffed Gladstone on Irish Home Rule, Lord Rosebery referred only elliptically to the Chamberlain scheme and instead emphasized meekly that the task of unifying the empire transcended party differences. And, in series of concessions to the other side, he remarked that Free Trade had turned entire classes off the land, shrunk the total area under cultivation in Britain, and reduced the supply of food. Even more damagingly, Lord Rosebery made an off-the-cuff remark to the effect that he was never someone who believed Free Trade was an axiom handed down in the Sermon on the Mount, thus implying that Liberals were questioning their own shibboleths.⁸⁹

Such remarks on Free Trade by the head of their party caught other Liberals unawares. The editor of a Liberal newspaper publishing a transcript of the Burnley speech had to assure readers that, back in 1897, at Manchester, Lord Rosebery had made “an eloquent and weighty eulogy of Free Trade,” in which he had sharply criticized the idea of a federated customs union as “impracticable.” Quoting from the earlier address, the editorial rehearsed the Liberal case for Free Trade, pointing out that a tariff union which restricted food imports was sure to make the empire “odious” to the English working classes. It highlighted that Lord Rosebery had on that occasion remarked that an imperial customs union would be tantamount to an empire of war—a menace to all other nations.⁹⁰ Yellow newspapers, on the other hand, were merciless in pillorying

⁸⁹ “Reciprocity and Foreign Relations,” *Manchester Guardian*, May 20, 1903.

⁹⁰ Editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, May 20, 1903.

Lord Rosebery for his equivocations. A couple of days after Burnley, when asked to clarify his comments, Lord Rosebery feigned disbelief that anyone might have interpreted him to be anything but critical of the zollverein idea, even as he reiterated that the Liberals as much as anyone else wished to bind the colonies closer to the metropole.⁹¹ The Liberal party, possibly startled at its own luck, had flubbed its first chance to reclaim its mantle as the party of Free Trade and to portray the Chamberlainites as out-of-date mercantilists.

India and the Imperial *Zollverein*

Disappointed in the Liberal riposte, Wacha privately lamented the decline of the party, complaining to Naoroji that “the opposition is worse [than the Unionist administration].” Giants such as Bright, Cobden, and Gladstone were no more, Wacha wrote, “while the pigmies remain.”⁹² Lord Rosebery, in his judgment, was so mercurial as to be unable to lead. Yet the decline of the Liberals, Wacha believed, was not simply the result of bad leaders; rather, the lack of robust leadership was itself a symptom of a decaying empire, and of British democracy fast giving way to mob rule. Although privately Wacha emphasized his sense that Naoroji probably stood a better chance with Labour voters than with the Free Trade party (i.e., the Liberals), at the risk of disappointing Dadabhai, he resisted getting the *Kasier-i-Hind* or the INC to publicly endorse Labour or socialist candidates such as Hyndman. Wacha was partly fearful of the kind of reprisals by the authorities in India that such a politically bold stance might invite.⁹³

⁹¹ Letter to William Austin of May 21, 1903, reprinted as “The Chamberlain Scheme: An Explanation by Lord Rosebery,” *Manchester Guardian*, May 22, 1903.

⁹² Wacha to Naoroji, 12 June, 1903, *Naoroji Correspondence*, pg. 840-41.

⁹³ Letters on Hyndman: Wacha to Naoroji, 13 February, 1903, and February 20, 1903, *Naoroji Correspondence*, 855-56; 856-857.

Almost a fortnight after Chamberlain outlined his blueprint for a customs union, Charles Dilke, Liberal MP for Gloucestershire, made clever use of the motion to adjourn Parliament for its Whitsuntide recess to oblige the members of the Unionist front bench to declare their intentions on fiscal reform. “It is, I think, impossible for the House [of Commons] to adjourn for the recess without some consideration of the topics [at hand],” Dilke interjected when the motion came up for debate. Dilke rekindled the row over Free Trade versus Free Food in order to bait Balfour into picking a side. Specifically, Dilke charged, the Chamberlain scheme hinged on placing duties on foodstuffs and raw materials imported from beyond the union, which were sure to make it more expensive to feed the nation and sate the voracious appetite of its industries. If the Unionist party intended to deliver on its latest electoral pledge, promising state welfare for seniors, there had to be a substantial source of revenue, which again had to mean new imposts.

Protectionist tariff reform, Dilke held, together with David Lloyd George, was a dangerously heterodox, if not downright heretical idea. The Chamberlain scheme for a *zollverein* marked a departure from the established British policy of promoting Free Trade globally. Had the administration, Dilke wondered, properly weighed the consequences of such a union? Adam Smith, Dilke lectured the chamber, had persuasively refuted mercantilist ideas that favored monopoly trade with the colonies. Benjamin Franklin had entertained the notion of a federal union, as late as 1767, Dilke remarked, but had failed to win others over; New England had shown itself to be as hostile to the idea of such a union then as Australia was to it now. Dilke sharply made the case that while Australia supplied Britain with half of its wool, the other half came from South America, which was also the main source of the beef that fed the miners and navies of Britain. Chamberlain, in his own calculations, had estimated that Britain shipped £20,000,000 worth of British and Irish commodities to the United States, £22,000,000 to the

Latin republics, and only £8,000,000 to British colonies. Tariff walls on cotton imported from the American South risked the lifeblood of Manchester. Dilke cautioned, “we are jeopardizing our exports of £42,000,000, which is more under British incidence and more under the influence of British capital than even our colonial trade.” Did the tariff reformers, he asked, really intend to take responsibility for spurring on Australian beef and Egyptian, West Indian, or Indian cotton?

All rhetoric aside, Dilke and Lloyd George underscored a difficult truth: The scale and profitability of trade with the colonies was no match for the volume of commerce and return on investments that Britain made in countries beyond its territorial empire. Though Dilke and Lloyd George were themselves Liberal imperialists, as Free Traders they calculated that, in spite of their industrial rivalries, the United States and Continental countries were still more suitable outlets for British capital and manufactures than the colonies. To recognize fully the political implications of such facts, however, would have meant squarely questioning whether the British Empire as such had not become obsolescent, an obstacle in itself to prosperity, rather than a vehicle for it. Dilke and Lloyd George consequentially arrested their own train of thought before it could arrive at such a contentious and impolitic destination.

A steadfast member of the Indian parliamentary committee, Dilke seized on the fact India was absent from the Birmingham manifesto. Indeed, Chamberlain had invoked India only to say, “I am not going tonight to speak of those hundreds of millions of our Indian and native fellow-subjects for whom we have become responsible,” preferring to limit his address to “our relations to our own kinsfolk,” the “10,000,000 of our white fellow subjects in the self-governing colonies,” such as Australia and Canada. Dilke charged that Australia, which saw itself in competition with the metropole and the other colonies, had erected tariff walls “against our manufactures and against India [or at least] against the cheap labour of India.” That the colonial

secretary had, in effect, written off three hundred million British Indian subjects, Dilke claimed, robbed the scheme to create a customs union of its right to be called a properly imperial policy. As it was, India, unlike the self-governing colonies, was paying more than her share for imperial defense; she therefore warranted consideration in any imperial union. The British electors, Dilke stated, were not going to allow the masses in India to suffer such “a monstrous injustice.”

Balfour refused to endorse the Chamberlain scheme in Parliament; nevertheless, he tipped his hand by openly permitting himself to criticize the merits of Free Trade. Meanwhile, under intense questioning, Chamberlain faced the uphill task of proving that, in exchange for more prosperity, the workers would readily relinquish their cheap loaf of bread. Furthermore, he was forced to admit that putting duties on raw materials was inexpedient for growing commerce. The only, albeit politically unpalatable, option to compensate for the lost revenues was to raise a new cess on food.⁹⁴ “Therefore the balance shall be adjusted by a tempting dole to one class,” was the barbed opinion of the reporter for *India*, who then continued: “How far the working-classes will be misled is the question of chief interest.”⁹⁵ The reporter added that as Chamberlain spoke, “the Ministerialist benches below the gangway no longer resounded with cheers for the prophet of Birmingham ‘imperialism.’ Even the zealous followers, or hacks, behind the Treasury Bench listened in grim apathy.”⁹⁶

Throughout the summer of 1905, the Tilakite *Mahratta* ran a series of editorials, each one picking apart some aspect of the Chamberlain scheme. Chamberlain, who had turned a blind eye to the treatment of Indians in the Transvaal, was a ready-made villain in Indian eyes even before

⁹⁴ House of Commons debates May 28, 1903, *Hansard*, Vol. 123, 141-198.

⁹⁵ “Our London Letter,” *India*, June 5, 1903, pg. 269. The reporter also remarked: “Tories who represent urban constituencies will think twice before they go to the poll on dearer food.... Since the days of Cobden and Bright they have undoubtedly heard much false doctrine, and been duped by false analogies with America and the Continent. Mr. Chamberlain no doubt counts upon his chief support from this quarter, as the nature his ‘inducement’ shows.”

⁹⁶ “Our India Letter,” *India*, June 5, 1903, 269.

he outlined his scheme for a customs union. It was a commonplace in Britain and in India that Chamberlain, whose imperialist ambitions were well known, was responsible for the Boer War. Such accusations had led the *Mahratta* to be equally distrustful of his motives on tariff reform. Its first editorial saw through tariff reform as a means to coerce the colonies to contribute to the cause of imperial defense. It was no coincidence, the editor implied, that Chamberlain had hit on the idea of a customs union to bind the colonies into a closer, defensive union. Though the nationalists were themselves eager to establish tariff walls to nurture Indian manufactures, radicals such as Tilak felt confirmed in their suspicions about Chamberlain, when, that same summer, he sought to station an additional thirty thousand British soldiers in South Africa, half of whose salaries India, spuriously held to be the most volatile of colonies in the empire, was to shoulder the onus of paying.⁹⁷

A week after the first, another editorial in the *Mahratta* sought to show, with characteristic incisiveness, that it was invidious to model a would-be British imperial union on the German example. The editorial noted that the creation of an imperial *zollverein*, as a means protecting wages and industries in the metropole from without, had fascinated theorists of political economy since the late 1820s, singling out “Frederick List, the author of the celebrated *National System of [Political] Economy*,” as the “guiding soul” behind the idea.⁹⁸ A German-American liberal, List had favored a German *zollverein* to foster national unification and industrial development in an era of worldwide British domination, the editorial noted. List had greatly influenced Indian nationalists, who had naturalized the Listian notion that the nation-state was

⁹⁷ “The Burden of Military Charges,” *Mahratta*, July 26, 1903.

⁹⁸ Friedrich List, *Das Nationale System der Politischen Ökonomie* (Leipzig: L. Ehlermann, [1841]1908).

the ideal vehicle for the accumulation of capital.⁹⁹ Indian nationalists had found resonances in List for their own critiques of the rootless cosmopolitanism and vampirism of Free Trade. Yet, even so, radical nationalists were clear that the Chamberlain scheme was politically retrograde.

The actual objective of Chamberlain's designs, ran the thought of the *Mahratta*, was to allow Britain to recapture markets threatened by America and Germany, even as it locked the colonies more securely into their role as sites for the extraction of raw materials and the production of food. Within the framework of this new imperial union, Britain was to retain its industrial supremacy, protecting English industries behind high tariff walls, while still supplying its manufactures across the empire. "England has already reached its highest development in manufacturers and arts, while the colonies are largely agricultural," the *Mahratta* noted.¹⁰⁰ Another editorial in the *Mahratta* reiterated this claim by pointing out that Britain imported at least three-fold more from countries that were not its own colonies.¹⁰¹ For India, which relied on exports to pay its Home Charges to England, the abolition of Free Trade was simply going to make it more difficult to find new markets for her exports. The *Mahratta*, whose radical sympathies were captured in its slogan, "*malo mori quam de morari*," concluded that a change in tariff policy was worse than meaningless; it entailed another sacrifice of Indian interests to those of Manchester and Lancashire.

All summer Balfour resisted giving a definitive answer on tariff reform, permitting an internecine war to consume the warren of rivalrous ministers that made up his cabinet. Balfour was explicitly asked about where India fit into the scheme for an imperial *zollverein* in

⁹⁹ "What the advocates of a national political economy failed to grasp was the multi scalar and multi temporal dynamic of capitalism," argues Manu Goswami in *Producing India: From Colonial Political Economy to National Space*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 219.

¹⁰⁰ "A Customs Union for the British Empire," Pt. 2, *Mahratttha*, June 28, 1903

¹⁰¹ "A Customs Union for the British Empire," Pt. 3, *Mahratttha*, July 5, 1904.

Parliament on June 24. “Of course it will be impossible to exclude India,” was his cryptic reply, which satisfied no one. At last, Balfour fixed a date in mid-September for a final cabinet vote to decide whether to adopt the Chamberlain scheme wholesale, imposing high tariff walls offset by new imposts on foodstuffs, or, as he favored, a policy of “retaliation” by which a system of counter-tariff would be levied on countries “dumping” their wares in Britain while promoting inducements to build up trade with the colonies. Balfour had hoped in vain that, in presenting “retaliation” as an alternative to the arch-protectionism of the Chamberlain kind, he might fend off a rebellion by the ardent Free Traders within his party. But retaliation was plainly a desperate half-measure. Balfour learned that a gang of Unionist ministers, which included George Hamilton, secretary of state for India, intended to revolt.¹⁰² Balfour had to rid himself of the dissenters, a task that became easier when, on September 9, Chamberlain privately volunteered to resign. A modern Machiavel, Balfour kept this development to himself, in order to have the freest hand to redraw his cabinet. On the afternoon of the final vote, which predictably settled on retaliation, Balfour relieved Ritchie and another minister of his duties, which then left the other Free Trade conspirators, Hamilton and the Duke of Devonshire, no choice but to surrender their own ministries. Balfour had reshuffled the chairs on the cabinet, but there was plainly a gaping hole in the hull of the Unionist party, compromising its seaworthiness. Chamberlain was now campaigning full-time for tariff reform, promising that it “means work for all,” while the Free Traders who had left the cabinet formed the Unionist Free Food League.

¹⁰² The four ministers involved were the Duke of Devonshire, Ritchie (exchequer), Lord Balfour of Burleigh (secretary for Scotland), and Lord Hamilton.

If India was to be remade as a party matter in Britain the socialists were the best suited to make it so. And no socialist was more attuned and sympathetic to the Indian cause than Hyndman. At least until the First World War, Hyndman was the English socialist with whom Indian nationalists were in conversation. And, in return, Hyndman constantly sought to impress on them the importance of a socialist revolution in Britain to the future of India. British social democrats lent their articulate voice to ask where India fit into politically charged debates on fiscal policy that had come to dominate British electoral life. The idea Joseph Chamberlain floated in 1903 to create an imperial *zollverein* or customs union was the first occasion on which Indian nationalists sought to ally themselves with British socialists. Articles and excerpts from *Justice*, the organ of the Social Democratic Federation, were featured regularly in nationalist newspapers, such as *India*, the *Mahratta*, and (once it was founded in fall of 1904) the *Panjabee*, though no Indians of this era identified themselves as socialists. Even Wacha, a moderate, confessed to republishing excerpts from *Justice* for the *Kaiser-i-Hind*.¹⁰³ At least since the 1880s, when Hyndman had first befriended Naoroji, the social-democrats had reiterated the claims of Indian nationalists to the effect that the official policy of Free Trade in British India had contributed to deindustrialization and impoverishment. For British socialists, the fact that Indian nationalists subscribed to a Listian model of capitalist development was not in itself an obstacle to a tactical alliance, since, on their own view, capitalist development in India, while objectionable on its own, was responsible for proletarianizing Indian workers and giving rise to a politically aware class of men. Socialists were never sanguine about the idea of trying to nurture incipient Indian industries behind high tariff walls, but nevertheless hoped that a new class of radical democrats, who might serve as comrades in revivifying the interrupted socialist

¹⁰³ Wacha to Naoroji, September 17, 1907, in Patwardhan, R. P. ed., *Dadabhai Naoroji Correspondence*. Vol. 2, *Correspondence with D. E. Wacha*, (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1977), 872.

revolution, might arise out of industrial development in India. The editor of the SDF organ, Quelch, mocked reports that, fearful of an influx of “democratic workmen” into India, some Indian administrators had blocked three major iron and steel projects.¹⁰⁴

Quelch explained the socialist stance on the Free Trade–Protectionist debate. Quoting from a speech Marx had made at the Democratic Association in Brussels in January of 1848, Quelch highlighted the case for Free Trade insofar as it hastened the socialist revolution by destroying nationalities and sharpening the antagonism between workers and capitalists. Quelch elaborated in another editorial that social democrats, unlike the Liberal party, “do not make a fetish of Free Trade.”¹⁰⁵ The policy of Free Trade had not brought prosperity to British workers; rather, it marked the “betrayal of the working class,” in that, as the Liberals willingly admitted, “Free Trade killed Chartism.”¹⁰⁶ Hyndman meanwhile characterized Chamberlain as the incarnation of “unscrupulous, ambitious reactionism,” and noted that the colonial secretary had somehow omitted the largest British colony from his scheme. Tariff reform, Hyndman held, was a crude bid for votes by the ablest advocate of “brutal and bestial” capitalism. Hyndman then struck a melancholic note, despairing that enfranchised British workmen, who as recently as the American Civil War had shown themselves to be politically astute warriors in the “crusade of property against labor,” had come to be satisfied to vote for their masters.¹⁰⁷ Generations in the future, he wrote, “will marvel at the stupidity and contemptuous apathy of the workers of Great Britain, who allowed themselves to be made the mere tools of incompetent capitalists at home, and were utterly indifferent to the well-being of 300,000,000 of their fellow-citizens abroad [in

¹⁰⁴ “No Democrats Wanted in India,” *Justice*, March 28, 1903.

¹⁰⁵ Harry Quelch, “Socialism and Free Trade,” *Justice*, June 27, 1903.

¹⁰⁶ H. M. Hyndman, “Chartism and Free Trade,” *Justice*, November 14, 1903.

¹⁰⁷ Although thousands of mill-hands in Lancashire were forced out of work as a consequence of the Civil War, English workmen resisted efforts by Palmerston to lift the sanctions on cotton imports from the blockaded southern states. The war fueled a short-lived boom for Indian cotton.

India], whose prosperity would greatly benefit them.”¹⁰⁸ Hyndman reiterated this message about the duties of the English working class to India throughout the campaign against tariff reform—even carrying the message across the Channel in an address at the Hôtel des Sociétés Savantes chaired by Jean Jaurès. Social democrats, in short, made their case to politically aware Indians that socialism had inherited the mantle of the Liberal party in carrying forward the struggle for emancipation. The SDF offered the only means to check the re-election of the Unionist party, on the one hand, and the advance of Liberal imperialists, on the other.¹⁰⁹

While the debates over tariff reform marked a wider crisis of empire, it seemed everyone except Hyndman and the socialists wanted to shunt the “India Question” off to the side. Lajpatrai and other Indian nationalists tried to grasp what these developments in Britain might mean for India, in order to strategize how best to intervene on behalf of their cause. Where in Britain might Indian reform find support? Who were their allies? And on what kind of shared foundation? While puzzling over these matters, Lajpatrai ventured beyond London and headed north for Manchester, where the socialists were gaining strength.

Manchester: The “Cottonopolis” and Center of the India Trade

A month into his sojourn, Lajpatrai abruptly left London to make a pilgrimage to Lancashire, the center of “the India trade,” which was an object of reverence as well as ire for Swadeshists. Though he believed that the Indian administration had bowed to the interests of the merchants in Manchester on matters of tariff policy in the name of Free Trade, often at the expense of Indian manufacturers, Lajpatrai hoped to see for himself the workshops on which the British empire of cotton was built. Yet the suddenness of the departure to the mill-towns of the industrial north,

¹⁰⁸ “The Colonies and India!” *Justice*, July 4, 1903.

¹⁰⁹ “Liberalism and Socialism,” *Justice*, July 25, 1903.

which Lajpatrai hadn't mentioned as stops on his original schedule, led a correspondent for the *Bengalee* to speculate that Wedderburn had spirited Lajpatrai from London to separate him from the influence of Shyamaji at India House.¹¹⁰ Lajpatrai himself never hinted at anything to that effect. And, judging from the kind of company Lajpatrai kept in Lancashire, in all likelihood either Naoroji, who over the decades had lobbied Lancashire on the subject of trade, or Hyndman, whose SDF was active in some of the mill-towns of the industrial north, were the ones who facilitated his journey.

Lajpatrai was taken aback when he first laid eyes on Manchester. The “ghastly black outlook” of the industrial cityscape, filled as it was with tall smokestacks and “mountains of coal dust and ashes,” made him recoil. The scenes at Albert Square, where Manchester trade unionists and socialists were rallying for a new trades dispute bill to undo Taff-Vale and pushing for state assistance on behalf of the thousands unable to find work, also caught Lajpatrai unawares. The “cottonopolis” was a lot more dystopian than Lajpatrai had ever imagined.

Still, beneath the carbon clouds, Lajpatrai found a vibrant metropolis. All of Lancashire seemingly was en fête, preparing to welcome the royals, who were to arrive soon at Victoria station. On his first full day in Manchester, Lajpatrai watched in awe as enormous crowds lined the streets to welcome Edward VII, who had come in the uniform of a field marshal to dedicate a statue to the local men who had fought in defense of the empire in the South African war.¹¹¹ A reporter for the *Guardian* newspaper estimated that another 20,000 loyal subjects waited in the sun for a chance to see the royal party dedicate a new dock on the Manchester Canal that same afternoon.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Quoted in the *Tribune*, August 31, 1905.

¹¹¹ Letter written on July 14, 1905, which ran in the *Punjabee*, August 7, 1905.

¹¹² “Royal Visit to Manchester,” *Manchester Guardian*, July 14, 1905.

Despite the show of crowds highlighting the popularity of the royals, Lajpatrai quickly realized that Manchester, which was in a state of crisis over unemployment, was the center of class conflict in England. Joblessness in excess of the typical winter-into-spring slowdown had hit the industrial metropolis hard. Bullish speculators in the US were pushing up the value of raw cotton such that the spinners in Lancashire feared, justifiably, the possibility of reduced wages and work-hours.¹¹³ Unions and socialist organizations protesting Prime Minister Balfour, who had first tabled then tried dropping altogether a relief bill in Parliament, had held regular demonstrations in Albert Square. The demonstrators, more than once, threatened to light Balfour in effigy, though the typical British summer rains had apparently foiled them.¹¹⁴ The socialists hoped to see a bill in which the state took some measure of responsibility to find or create work for the able-bodied but unemployed, without the taint of destitution or the threat of disenfranchisement.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, their ideal version of such a bill would call for the state to fund relief works, instead of relying on charities, and to enumerate and register everyone without employment, as there were no reliable statistics. But neither Liberals nor the Conservatives were about to willingly concede that “citizenship involved the right to labor for a livelihood.”¹¹⁶ The specter of the French experiment, with guaranteed employment through a system of national workshops, at the height of the 1848 revolutions, still frightened them.¹¹⁷

Frustrated, the organizers sought more attention for their cause by promoting a series of rallies, which were to culminate in a march on Parliament with organizations from Salford, Liverpool, Leeds, and Glasgow joining in.¹¹⁸ But while the march on London was still in the

¹¹³ “A Cotton Boycott,” *Manchester Guardian*, August 1, 1905.

¹¹⁴ “Manchester Unemployed: To Burn the Prime Minister in Effigy,” *Manchester Guardian*, July 10, 1905.

¹¹⁵ The Poor Laws had mandated the stripping of these citizenship rights. “The Unemployed,” *Manchester Guardian*, July 3, 1905.

¹¹⁶ “The Obstruction of the Bill,” *Manchester Guardian*, July 3, 1905.

¹¹⁷ Editorial, *Manchester Guardian*, August 5, 1905.

¹¹⁸ “Manchester Unemployed: The Proposed March to London,” *Manchester Guardian*, July 20, 1905.

planning stages, the issue of unemployment quickly turned into a national scandal when some of the more riotous demonstrators in Manchester tried to block traffic on Market Street one afternoon and were baton-charged. The news forced Balfour to reserve himself on his opposition to the relief bill for the unemployed, which was then quickly marshaled through Parliament in August, albeit in a watered-down version that the socialists found completely objectionable.¹¹⁹ “It is illogical and incomplete,” the head of the Independent Labour Party, Keir Hardie, remarked at Westminster.¹²⁰

The whole episode had nevertheless made an indelible impression on Lajpatrai, who recounted the example of the socialists, in their campaign to secure the rights of the unemployed, when asked about his travels on his return to India: “Where are the political[ly trained] *sannyasis* whose sole work in life should be the preaching of the gospel of freedom [and] who will raise [the] agitation for rights and liberty [in India] to the dignity of a church?”¹²¹

Lajpatrai toured a number of technical institutions in Manchester over the course of a fortnight. All the while he tried polling the opinions of common Britons, specifically about their attitudes on permitting Indians some first-hand experience in British workshops and mills and imparting a vocational education to them, when a local merchant lent a sympathetic ear. “I regard every Indian as a comrade of the Empire, entitled to all its rights and privileges,” Harry Birtwell reassuringly wrote in reply to a letter from Lajpatrai, promising to take up the issue of

¹¹⁹ The *Manchester Guardian* was to remark: “[T]he amended Bill which was hurried through its second reading yesterday bears all the marks of compromise. It creates a machine of relief that it does not endow. It excites by Act of Parliament an expectation of assistance which the charitable are left to supply at their discretion.” Editorial, *Manchester Guardian* August 5, 1905.

¹²⁰ “The Ministry and the Unemployed,” *Manchester Guardian*, August 5, 1905.

¹²¹ Lajpat Rai, “Our Struggle for Freedom: How to Carry it On,” *Hindustan Review*, (October-November, 1905), 354.

industrial education for Indians in Lancashire in his address to the Indian Association slated for August. Although no capitalist willingly seeks competition, Birtwell admitted, Lancastrians felt no serious racism toward the Indians. Furthermore, the establishment of new industries in India, Birtwell remarked, was purely a matter of access to capital.¹²² Pressed by Lajpatrai, Birtwell was apparently won over to the idea that the Manchester Indian Association ought to sponsor a gathering for the INC delegate, which was held on July 27 at the Stockport Labour Church. Birtwell, speaking as the presiding chair, referred to the historical significance of the occasion, as the first in Lancashire, possibly in the whole of England, at which a native of India had sought to address a gathering of socialists.¹²³

At a rare midweek service of the Stockport Labour Church, which involved a union of the Socialist Democratic Federation (SDF) and the Independent Labour Party under a Unitarian umbrella, Lajpatrai, rose to address the flock regarding the bond that held Lancashire and India together. Almost a thousand local millworkers were on hand and the gathering overflowed outdoors.¹²⁴ Lajpatrai marveled at the size of the audience interested in the subject, which marked a contrast with the scene he had witnessed in the House of Commons some weeks earlier, when the debate on the Indian budget had emptied the chamber. A strange and inscrutable Providence, Lajpatrai remarked, had brought Lancashire so near to India; the vicissitudes in fortune of one were inseparable from those of the other. Yet while Lancashire was represented in almost every Indian homestead, through the commodities manufactured there, those who lived in Lancashire, Lajpatrai hazarded, were able to go to bed without once pausing to think of the Indians, either as their best customers or as the suppliers of the raw materials on which their

¹²² Birtwell to Lajpatrai, July 24, 1905, letter republished in the *Punjabee*, August 28, 1905.

¹²³ "Speech of the Chairman at the Stockport Meeting held on the 27th of July, 1905," *Punjabee*, August 28, 1905.

¹²⁴ The *Manchester Guardian* and *India* reported that the gathering was then held at the Stockport Armory.

livelihood depended. Political trouble in India, nevertheless, threatened to affect and dislocate trade in Britain, Lajpatrai contended, which was reason enough that one “should not see the growing discontent and poverty in India with indifference.” The British were attempting to modernize India, he noted, but they “forget that civilization, without the means of enjoying the fruits of the same, is surely not worth much.” Against the classic liberal view of Adam Smith, Lajpatrai contended that, without the means to afford the necessities and conveniences of life, a modicum of liberal education was of no consolation to the Indians.¹²⁵ The advances in British India—the railways, the telegraph, the schools, the universities, and the docksides—moreover had lent British rule a veneer of civilization, but these developments, Lajpatrai sought to argue, masked the glittering misery that lies underneath.

Still fresh in Lajpatrai’s mind were the images of workmen in Lancashire, protesting for the right to work. Lajpatrai hypothesized that, if steps were taken to increase the purchasing capacity of the Indian masses, the issue of unemployment in Britain itself might disappear. Instead, Indians had no chance of growing rich as cultivators, merchants, and manufactures, while the British Indian administration was crippling them with the onus of its ever-growing military expenditure. Indians were sure to repay amply the generosity of Lancashire in the future were it to hold its candidates in the upcoming elections responsible for supporting specific reforms for India. If English electors were unamenable to supporting reforms, Lajpatrai intimated, some within the Indian nationalist party favored a national boycott in India of all English manufactures, a caution that included a threat, which Gokhale reiterated when he arrived in October.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Smith remarked in the *Wealth of Nations* that an expansion of the capacities for consumption when supplemented with a liberal education offset the miseries of work in the age of manufacture.

¹²⁶ “Lancashire and its Relation with India,” *Panjabee*, August 21, 1905.

The direct appeal by Lajpatrai to the industrial workers in Lancashire was calculated for effect. Late nineteenth-century India accounted for two-fifths of their cloth exports by bulk; when India was stricken by acute food shortages in 1897 and 1900, the workers of Lancashire had raised large sums for relief works.¹²⁷ The direct appeal to the working class also harkened back to the strategy that abolitionists had tried in the course of the American Civil War.¹²⁸ Although thousands of mill-hands in Lancashire had been forced out of work as a consequence of that war, the workmen had stood firm against the attempts by the Palmerston ministry to break the blockade on slave-cultivated cotton exports from the South. On the occasion, the International Workingmen's Association (the First International), under Marx, hailed the workers in Lancashire who "understood at once... that the slave-holders' rebellion was to sound the tocsin for a general holy crusade of property against labor," while praising Lincoln as "the single-minded son of the working class" destined "to lead the country through the matchless struggle for the rescue of an enchained race and the reconstruction of the social world."¹²⁹ Moreover, in that earlier epoch, a noble confluence of enlightened self-interests was also evident in the example of the British India Society, an organization founded in 1836 by a motley group of abolitionists, comprising of Quakers, Irish nationalists, and Lancashire cotton manufacturers, who sought to undermine the slave economies of the southern states in the US by developing an alternative Indian source of cotton. The group, whose center of gravity was located in Manchester, entered into a formal alliance with the Anti-Corn Law League in 1841 and counted the apostles of Free Trade, Richard Cobden and John Bright, as its members. George Thompson,

¹²⁷ P. F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 79.

¹²⁸ Of course, the Civil War in the US had temporarily interrupted the supply of slave-cultivated raw cotton to Britain, which benefited the speculators who had bet on Indian cotton as a temporary replacement.

¹²⁹ Quoted in Julius Braunthal, *History of the International*, translated by Henry Collins and Kenneth Mitchell (New York: Praeger, 1967), 2:305.

secretary of the society, who had made the bold declaration that India was the chief battleground in the fight for freedom globally, traveled to the subcontinent with Dwarkanath Tagore in 1843, where he enlisted others in his campaign for reform, which included pressing for the abolition of the East India Company (EIC) charter.¹³⁰ But in prioritizing its war on “the bread monopoly” over its Indian causes, the organization fell into decline as radicalism in Britain itself ebbed, once corn duties were abolished in 1846. Still, a number of Lancashire manufacturers, carrying forward their criticism of the EIC as an obstacle to the development of commerce, invested in ventures promoting cotton cultivation and railroad construction in India. A lot of them lost their appetite for spurring development in India, however, particularly after 1857, when domestic concerns came to seem more pressing. Since then, the cotton interests in Lancashire had come to differ sharply from Indian interests over the issue of tariffs, a fact that was not lost on Wedderburn, who studied the example of the collapse of the short-lived Indian Reform Society (1853–57) made up of Lancashire MPs.

Though it surely evoked the history of radical internationalism outlined above, Lajpatrai’s address to the workers at the Stockport Labour Church drew upon more than nostalgia. Recent developments had underscored the need for a renewed alliance between the laborers of Britain and of the colonies, as troubles with fiscal policy in India had hounded the last Liberal administration (1892–95). Faced with a budget deficit of three and a half crore rupees (30.5 million) in 1894, due partly to the fall of the Indian rupee, overzealous investments in the railways, and increases in military spending, authorities in India levied new duties on imports to cover the shortfall.¹³¹ The move made the Liberals, who lacked a parliamentary majority,

¹³⁰ S. R. Mehrotra, “The British India Society and its Bengal Branch, 1839–46,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 4, no. 2 (June 1967): 143.

¹³¹ Bipin Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India* (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1966), 226–231.

vulnerable to opportunistic attacks. But more importantly, the tariffs led to a revolt by their own supporters in the industrial heartland of Lancashire, the center of British cotton manufacturers that were vital to the robust India trade. Lancashire mill-owners lobbied hard for exemptions for their wares, but their efforts were only partially fruitful.¹³² Gains in Lancashire, where there was widespread dissatisfaction with the Liberals, the party once synonymous with Free Trade, were vital to the Unionist campaign strategy in 1894–95. Out stumping on the election trail, Lord George Hamilton, later appointed secretary of state for India, intimated altogether disingenuously that the Unionists intended to abolish the duties on British cotton exports to India. Faced with this kind of opposition, the Liberals, split over Irish Home Rule, crumbled in Lancashire in 1895.

At the same time, the Unionist coupe in the 1890s took advantage of inroads that the Conservative party had already made into the industrial heartland of Lancashire. Conservatives had struck a chord in the elections of 1868 and 1874 by exploiting the growing anxieties that England was headed toward industrial stagnation, possibly even decline. The Tories traded on the antagonism of Anglican workmen toward the Catholic Irish in their midst, which Marx had characterized in 1870, as “the secret of the impotence of the English working class,” despite their organization. Like the impoverished whites who were resentful of the ex-slaves in the South, Marx noted, “the ordinary English worker, [who] hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life,” had willingly let himself be turned “into a tool of English aristocrats and capitalists.”¹³³

¹³² Indian officials imposed a duty on British cottons, giving in partially to Indian nationalists, who believed that the exemptions were prejudicial to the development of the Indian cotton industries. Yet, in order to satisfy Manchester, an excise tariff was also imposed.

¹³³ Marx to Sigfried Meyer and August Vogt, April 9, 1870, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *On Britain* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), 552.

Wedderburn had once cautioned that the majority of Englishmen “are Conservative by instinct,” as the so-called Tory Democrats had risen in Manchester—but, *contra* Wedderburn, so too had the Social Democratic Federation.¹³⁴ The SDF, which had a mere foothold in the 1880s, had sprouted twenty-two branches in the Lancashire District Council by 1893 (when it held its annual conference in Burnley). At the ILP conference in 1893, 32 delegates out of 120, and in 1895, 73 branches out of 305, were accounted for by Lancashire and Cheshire. The Fabians, Sidney and Beatrice Webb had moreover calculated that 102,000 of the 132,000 members of the United Textile Factory Workers Association in 1895, which included women who lacked the vote, lived in or near nine constituencies in Lancashire. Lajpatrai had thus hoped to impress on the workers of Lancashire that, if they failed to support the cause of India, they had a lot more to lose than their chains.

The INC at Crossroads: Lajpatrai and Gokhale

Although Lajpatrai had won a measure of confidence in leftist circles, the summer 1905 convention season in England came to a close without the mainstream Liberals, who were the likeliest to lead a new administration, pledging themselves to specific Indian reforms.¹³⁵ The congress of the Metropolitan Radical Federation and the National Democratic League, which Lajpatrai had returned from Manchester to attend, had adopted a series of liberal-minded

¹³⁴ W. Wedderburn, “India and English Party Politics,” *India*, October 27, 1905, 197.

¹³⁵ Lajpatrai returned to London at the tail end of July to attend the electoral congress of the Metropolitan Radical Federation and the National Democratic League. The gathering of metropolitan radicals, held at Holborn Town Hall, adopted a series of liberal-minded resolutions that called for state resources to pay MPs and to fund their campaigns, adult suffrage, one voter one vote, national registration of electors, and pensioning retirees. The chair then introduced a resolution on Home Rule for Ireland and India. Without Gokhale or Wedderburn there to moderate his rhetoric, Lajpatrai followed Shyamji Krishnavarma in speaking out for Home Rule for India, which the editors of *India* sought to tamp down. “English Democrats for Home Rule for India,” *India*, August 4, 1905, 54-55. See also “Notes,” *Indian Sociologist* 1, no. 6 (September 1905), 1.

resolutions that called for state resources to pay MPs and to fund their campaigns, adult suffrage (one voter one vote), national registration of electors, and pensioning retirees, but only a vague resolution on Home Rule for India. A despondent Lajpatrai left for the US, where, in his words, Wedderburn was dispatching him to continue performing the arduous toil of “sappers and miners.”¹³⁶

Political turmoil in India in the months of August and September, however, brought a new sense of urgency for Lajpatrai to return from his whirlwind journey in the US and to resume the English campaign that autumn. A wave of nationalist discontent had crested on the news that Lord Curzon was proceeding apace with his intention to divide Bengal into different eastern and western administrative zones.¹³⁷ Justified publicly in the name of administrative ease, Lord Curzon openly hoped to disrupt the growing importance of Calcutta as a nationalist center by partitioning Bengal, an idea earlier viceroys had also toyed with. The spate of demonstrations in Calcutta, a correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* reported, had culminated one night in September in a massive gathering at the Kalighat temple, where the clerics had led the 50,000 assembled to recite: “Worship your country above all other duties. Give up sectarianism, religious differences, animosity, and selfishness.”¹³⁸ The idea of a national boycott of British-made manufactures was also quickly growing, inspired, at least partly, by the example of the Chinese protesting their treatment stateside with a boycott of American imports.¹³⁹ The Arya

¹³⁶ Lajpat Rai to Duni Chand, written sometime after August 30, 1905, run in the *Punjabee*, October 2, 1905. That autumn, Lala Lajpat ventured across the Atlantic without the remainder of the delegation, speaking at venues in Boston such as the Anti-Imperialist League in Boston and the Twentieth Century Club. See “Lala Lajpat Rai’s Work in America,” *Punjabee*, October 30, 1905.

¹³⁷ The idea to cleave Bengal had originated with Lord Elgin in 1903. Yet the scheme was tabled when the High Court of Judicature of Bengal ruled that partitioning the region marked a “retrograde and mischievous departure.” The INC had also signaled its disapproval, passing a deprecatory resolution, at its 1903 session held in Madras. “Partition of Bengal,” *India*, July 14, 1905, 16-17.

¹³⁸ “The Bengalees: A Solemn Oath to Support the Boycott,” *Manchester Guardian*, September 30, 1905.

¹³⁹ “The Boycott,” *Punjabee*, September 11, 1905.

Samaj organ, the *Arya Gazette*, ran editorial after editorial deploring the reliance on imported “necessaries of life,” paving the route for the boycott. A common refrain, which had a lot of resonance in “martial” Punjab, was that British rule emasculated Indians. Effete and bestial, the *Arya Gazette* continued, Hindus had lost sight of their duties to the nation: Swadeshi was to be their new religion.¹⁴⁰

The other major development, in the midst of the storm in Bengal, was that Lord Curzon tendered his resignation, after he had lost a war of wills with Lord Kitchener, the commander-in-chief of the British-Indian army, over civilian control of the sprawling military machine. Yet the secretary of state, St. John Brodrick, who, in addition to supporting the scheme to divide Bengal, also backed the Chamberlain scheme for a tariff union, tried to suppress news of the resignation until he was able to find someone more amenable to his own views than Lord Curzon was. Indians, particularly in Bengal, cheered the news when it leaked out in August, though they feared the unchecked militarism of Lord Kitchener and the imperialist ambitions that would presumably be held by the next viceroy. “The appointment of Lord Minto, a Protectionist and Chamberlainite,” remarked the author of an editorial in *India*, “indicates...the desire of the Home Government to evict a Free Trade Viceroy and to install a Protectionist in view of the representation of India at the Imperial Conference on Imperial Tariffs.” Socialists in Britain also tried to signal caution: “Military supremacy means practically a military dictatorship [in India],” an editorial in *Justice* remarked, but there was little reason to suspect that the Liberals, who were cocksure of their chances to win office, were going to do anything to restore civilian control of the military in India; the Liberal imperialists had a lock on the election and now wanted a blank check, without the bother of proposing any real alternatives to militarism in India.¹⁴¹ British

¹⁴⁰ *Arya Gazette* November 10, 1904, in *SNNPP*, vol. XXVII, no. 46, 268.

¹⁴¹ “Toward Militarism,” *Justice*, July 1, 1905.

socialists also congratulated the Indian nationalists on the launch of their boycott of British imports.¹⁴²

Political developments in India were thus quickly outstripping those in England, where there was still no sign signaling when Balfour might dissolve Parliament. Gokhale, who had meanwhile been elected to lead the 1905 session of the INC, at last, fixed a date for his departure for Britain.¹⁴³ Gokhale took immediate charge of the INC deputation when he reached London in October. Thronged by well-wishers and newsmen at the station, Gokhale was expectantly heralded as a moderate within the nationalist party and a politically artful member of the Viceregal Council. Gokhale told a reporter that he had come to launch a new campaign to win English voters over to the idea of self-rule for India.¹⁴⁴ A couple of days on, in another interview, Gokhale adeptly told readers that while the Swadeshi boycott was a desperate, last-ditch measure, it was nevertheless progressing beyond Bengal more quickly than anyone in England probably realized.¹⁴⁵ Accordingly, Gokhale told the reporter, he was headed to Lancashire, where the effects of the boycott were sure to be felt hardest. But a couple of days departing for the industrial north, Gokhale pluckily shared a stage in gritty West Ham with the socialist parliamentary candidate, Will Thorne, and H. M. Hyndman, the chairman of the Social Democratic Federation.¹⁴⁶ Enlivened in front of an enthusiastic audience of a thousand or more, Gokhale let himself speak openly, suggesting that British officials in India were, in the name of the electors of Great Britain, pushing Indians to despair.

¹⁴² "Nearing the Crash in India," *Justice*, October 28, 1905.

¹⁴³ Surendranth Banerjee wrote to Gokhale on September 8 to say that Bengal required his support and that he had to attempt to build an alliance with Liberal frontbenchers Brodrick, Fowler, Balfour, and Campbell-Bannerman. Banerjee to Gokhale, September 8, 1905, in Nanda, *Gokhale*, 194.

¹⁴⁴ "The Congress Delegates: Mr. Gokhale's Welcome," *India*, October 6, 1905, 161.

¹⁴⁵ "Interview with Mr. Gokhale," *Morning Post in India*, October 6, 1905, 162.

¹⁴⁶ Hyndman to Naoroji, October 9, 1905, in Nanda, *Gokhale*, 200.

Yet, behind the scenes, H. E. Cotton censured Gokhale for campaigning with socialists, and he even threatened to resign from the British committee if a member of the INC ever again shared a rostrum with Hyndman.¹⁴⁷ After more than a decade of service to the cause of India, Hyndman was loath to countenance such a slight, and he told Cotton how he felt. Nonetheless Cotton was successful in poisoning whatever attraction the SDF held for Gokhale, whose sympathies for the Liberal party otherwise matched those of the senior members of the British committee. More importantly, this forced Lajpatrai, who was still at sea en route from New York, to distance himself from the SDF on his return to Britain. Whether purposely or otherwise, Gokhale left for Manchester without Lajpatrai, and he gladly cloaked himself in the colors of the Liberal party at Churnette Street Hall while speaking to the constituents of CE Schwaan, the erstwhile head of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, staunch lobbyist for India reforms, and the Liberal representative of the North Manchester parliamentary district.¹⁴⁸ Gokhale started in that night by identifying the viceroyalty of Lord Ripon, who left office in 1884 after his adversaries succeeded in gutting the Ilbert Bill, as the benchmark of Liberal policymaking in India. The decades since, in contrast, had been marked by “a wave of imperialism that has swept over the whole of the empire.” “You here have suffered from that wave,” Gokhale remarked to the audience, thus specifying that imperialism was as much about the rightward shift in Britain as it was conservative policy in the colonies.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Word of this rebuke infuriated Hyndman. He rifled off an angry letter to Cotton, whom he criticized for pretending to be a friend of India, all the while pumping a fat retirement for himself “out of the stomachs of the starvelings of Hindustan.” English advisors to the INC were, Hyndman wrote to Naoroji, no more than “official Liberal bloodsuckers.” Hyndman to Cotton, October 20, 1905 enclosed with Hyndman to Naoroji, October 21, 1905, Naoroji Papers, National Archives of India.

¹⁴⁸ Schwann, a merchant, who together with another member of the Indian parliamentary committee had travelled to the 1890 session of the INC in Calcutta, see “Reforms in India,” *New York Times*, December 27, 1890.

¹⁴⁹ Gokhale listed a series of reversals as the effects of imperialism in India: The local councils that Lord Ripon had introduced as a means for Indians to be partially self-governing had been curtailed, the Vernacular Press Act permitting vernacular newspapers to report on politically sensitive matters had been replaced by the Official Secrets Act, and the scope of the commission tasked with promoting education to the natives had been trammelled. G. K.

Though the Conservative party, once the party of landed aristocrats, had unrelentingly trained its assault on the walls of the citadel of Free Trade since the extension of the vote in 1867, Gokhale hoped to stir the liberal conscience of the audiences. “The name of Manchester is greatly honored in India,” Gokhale informed them, praising the examples of the *Guardian* newspaper, their local MP Charles Schwaan, and the Manchester School of liberal economics. If the cotton manufacturers of Manchester were angry that the Indians had trained their sights on Lancashire with their boycott, Gokhale implied, their anger was misdirected.¹⁵⁰ Liberal Manchester, which once saw Indian reform as its own cause, ran the message, had failed to call “this reactionary Government to account.” The Liberals, Gokhale believed, were nevertheless the “natural allies” of Indian reformers. At a speech to the National Liberal Club in London, on November 15, Gokhale laid out his reasons for this close identification. Indian reformers, Gokhale clarified, shared the Liberal ambitions to settle conflicts overseas peacefully, to achieve domestic retrenchment, and to implement reforms to fight the monopoly interests of one class over the unprivileged masses.¹⁵¹

Yet radicals within the INC were skeptical of the esteem in which moderates continued to hold the Liberals. The reports of speeches that Gokhale had made in Manchester led the *Indian Social Reformer* to take the opportunity to remind its readers that the Liberal party was the champion of aggressive Free Trade and exclusive white labor, and that as such, the aims of the Liberals were at variance with those of Indians. Lajpatrai, who by then had left to return to India,

Gokhale's Speeches and Writings, edited by D. G. Karve and D. V. Ambekar, Vol. 2, *Political*, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1966), 321-322.

¹⁵⁰ The Manchester Chamber of Commerce had replied to a request from its counterpart, the native chamber in Calcutta, to intervene to stop the division of Bengal. In reply, the Manchester CC replied that agitation was unwise and strongly urged it to abandon the boycott. “The Partition of Bengal: Anti-Partition Committee and Manchester,” *India*, October 6, 1905, 163.

¹⁵¹ G. K. Gokhale, “England’s Duty to India,” November 15, 1905, *Speeches of Gopal Krishna Gokhale* (Madras: G. A. Natesan, 1920), 924-936.

had come to the opposite conclusion about the moderates who talked of identifying the INC with the Liberal party in England; the moderates were, in his judgment, presuming affinities that were a chimera. Just as Gokhale was about to make the rounds of Rad-Lib organizations, the *Hindustan Review* ran an editorial by Lajpatrai, who sought to argue that the socialists were the only party, save for the Irish nationalists, with whose methods the Indians ought to emulate.¹⁵²

Gokhale and Lajpatrai thus embodied the growing split within the Indian nationalist party between the “Moderates” and the “Extremists.” Both felt strongly about the party issue but found themselves hampered, in their efforts to win the sympathies of the English electorate, by their instinctual distrust of the English working classes, on the one hand, and of the Liberals’ relative indifference, on the other. That is, while Lajpatrai and Gokhale had difficulties in impressing on the British electorate the seriousness of the Swadeshi boycott, many members in the INC had come to suspect that British workers harbored a deep resentment about the possibility that Indian mills would come to compete with Lancashire. A decade earlier, when a cotton duties bill was up for debate, Pherozeshah Mehta, who even then sought an alliance with the Liberal party, had stated that British policy was principally motivated by the thought “that the infant industries of India should be strangled in their birth if there is the remotest suspicion of their competing with English manufactures.”¹⁵³

While Lajpatrai and Gokhale toured England trying to win over British electors, an investigative report from the *Times of India* of September 13 on the abusive conditions rife in Indian textile mills was sparking outrage across England. The exposé revealed that, in spite of a temporary measure ratified in August by native mill-owners, which restricted the length of the

¹⁵² Lajpat Rai, “Our Struggle for Freedom: How to Carry it On,” 352; also see his comments in *Panjabee*, December 11, 1905.

¹⁵³ Pherozeshah Mehta, “Speech on the Cotton Duties Bill [1894],” *Speeches and Writings of the Honorable Sir Pherozeshah Mehta* (Allahabad: The Indian Press, 1905), 390.

workday to twelve-hour shifts with a mandated half-hour break, some mill operatives in Bombay worked close to fifteen-hour days since the electric light had been introduced. The author of the article hazarded that half or more of the seventy-nine mills in Bombay, illuminated by a wan, artificial sun, were now operating into the night and had “no actual reason [to shutter at all], save the limits of the endurance of the men.” The *Times of India* reporter also found children retained as full-time mill hands, some of whom looked to be as young as nine, fetid workshops in which windows were shuttered tight because of the moisture required for processing cotton, and a grievously defective system for inspecting industrial workplaces. Lovatt Fraser, the editor of the *Times of India*, wrote an accompanying editorial to the article that squarely threw down a challenge to the chiefs of the INC. Fraser wanted the nationalists, who, in his opinion, were no more than “modern imitators” of the English Liberals of half a century ago, to break their conspicuous silence about improving the conditions for Indian workers. “We are entitled to judge them by their attitude toward such [issues],” the editorial bellowed. The article stirringly made use of Tennyson’s words from “Vision of Sin” (1841) by way of a conclusion: “Beyond the darkness and the cataract/ God made himself an awful rose of dawn/ Unheeded.”¹⁵⁴

The altogether tepid response of the INC at once revealed the cracks and contradictions within the Indian nationalist party. Though Indian mill owners were unsupportive of the Swadeshi boycott, nevertheless Indian nationalists held that the article was playing to sympathies of Unionists, Radicals, Liberals, Labourites, and English mill hands of the SDF by presenting Indian cotton mills as a threat to British industrial might and the livelihood of British workers. The workday controversy was an opportunity for the Indian nationalists to advance their cooperation with British socialists, but the INC campaigners in Britain tried to skirt the matter

¹⁵⁴ Lovat Fraser, “Bombay Slaves,” *Times of India*, September 13 and 28, 1905.

publicly. The abuses highlighted by the article had stirred workingmen in Lancashire. Yet the INC campaigners were distrustful of British working-class concern and held the view that the article amounted to a smear campaign to discredit Indian capitalists. Gokhale was conspicuously silent about the subject in his speeches in Lancashire. Meanwhile, the British committee filed a series of cautious responses to the exposé, even as it relegated all mention of the matter in its own newspaper to interior columns, on page three, typically beneath the fold. After the various trades associations in Manchester weighed in on the matter, petitioning the Government of India to intervene, the committee perfunctorily reiterated its faith in the inculcated mill-owners to set their own affairs in order without outside impulse or interference.¹⁵⁵ Almost no one, save for the SDF, sought to remark on the rise of industrial action—in the shape of strikes, walk-outs, and work stoppages—that was increasingly commonplace in Indian mills, where a growing, primarily non-Brahman, industrial underclass was able to muster collective action, despite the absence of formal trade unions.¹⁵⁶

The swift response of the textile workers of Lancashire to the reports on the abusive conditions in Indian mills heightened rather than allayed the suspicions of Indians nationalists about their motives. When the story hit Britain in early October, a beat reporter at the *Manchester Guardian* interviewed union representatives for their immediate reaction, all of whom remarked that, even though their solicitude was sure to be mistaken as selfish, their primary concern was to intervene as workingmen. The head of the spinners' association noted that, in an ideal scenario, there would be uniform conditions for workmen in all countries. DJ

¹⁵⁵ *India*, October 6, 1905, 159; October 13, 1905, 171; October 27, 1905, 195.

¹⁵⁶ For more on industrial action in India see Morris David Morris, "Hours of Work," chapter 6, and "Trade Unions, the State, and Labor Discipline," chapter 10, in *The Emergence of an Industrial Labor Force in India: A Study of the Bombay Cotton Mills, 1854-1947* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).

Shackleton, a member of the parliamentary committee of the Trade Union Congress, who had previously worked on Indian famine relief efforts,¹⁵⁷ also weighed in by pointing out that though Indian millworkers worked at least 70-hours a week on average, while their counterparts in Britain were restricted to 55 ½-hours a week, Indians mills, though no doubt profiting their owners, were no match for Lancashire. William Mullin, the head of an amalgamation of carders, lamented the absence of organizations protecting the welfare of Indian operatives while proffering the axiom, “cheap labor is often expensive.”¹⁵⁸

Quelch, on the pages of *Justice*, made a valiant effort to appeal to Indian radicals on behalf of the SDF. While industrial warfare was well known elsewhere (England, Germany, Russia, and America), the wails of Indian mill slaves signaled that the workingmen of India were at last ready to “enter the lists against the [world-wide] capitalist class.” Comparing the descriptions of the Bombay mills by Fraser to the awful scenes of factory life in England that Marx had captured in his chapter in *Capital* on the working-day, Quelch remarked that it was not enough to ask to limit the length of the working-day, as twelve-hours in an industrial mill was scarcely any better than fifteen. Furthermore, he added, if it were not for “the growing class-consciousness of the operatives themselves, conditions would be as bad in England as in Bombay.”¹⁵⁹ Against this, Indian nationalists such as Wacha and Gokhale simply continued to hold up the standard of Free Trade, while the Extremists Tilak, Pal, and Lajpatrai, were able to do little more than muster a cry for tariffs protecting Indian industries.

The Lessons of 1905

¹⁵⁷ Shackleton challenged Keir Hardie for the chairmanship of the parliamentary Labour party.

¹⁵⁸ “The Bombay Mills: Lancashire and the Labour System,” *Manchester Guardian*, October 4, 1905.

¹⁵⁹ “Slaves of Bombay,” *Justice*, October 28, 1905.

After spending October on the trail of speaking engagements in Britain with Gokhale, Lajpatrai left the campaign to return to India, where he at once threw himself into the Swadeshi cause. Accepting an invitation to address the local Swadeshi Vastu Pracharini Sabha, scheduled for the day after he sailed into Ballard Quay in Bombay, Lajpatrai spoke to an audience of five thousand about how the Swadeshi boycott was “an inspiration from above,” the effects of which were already being felt in Britain. The salvation of India, Lajpatrai remarked, was dependent on rallying the masses to make the boycott a success. Yet the boycott, focused as it was on the immediate conditions of the present-day, was presumably subject to the same criticism that Lajpatrai, paraphrasing the French statesman Thiers, had himself once leveled at similar forms of agitation. If the boycott was to be efficacious, it had to originate in, and lead onwards to, more self-awareness politically, as a future-oriented “religion and a science, much higher, both in its conception and its sphere, than mere agitation.”¹⁶⁰

Throughout the weeks that followed, Lajpatrai referred often to the democratic spirit he had witnessed in Manchester to argue for a dramatic, tactical change in the methods of the INC. Anarchists in Europe, Lajpatrai wrote, were adopting methods that “culminate in murders, assassinations, and crime,” which were “wicked no doubt,” but nevertheless attested to a desperate yearning that, by comparison, made all the more acute “the apathy, the indifference, the want of earnestness, [and] the absence of a spirit of sacrifice for the cause” of the Indian nationalist party.¹⁶¹ If the INC wished to properly lead the struggle for right and freedom, Lajpatrai contended, the members of the nationalist party had to reexamine their close identification with the Liberals. “You only have to be a few days in England to come to the

¹⁶⁰ Lajpat Rai, “First Principles of Political Progress,” *East and West* 1, no. 10 (August 1902), 1038-1040.

¹⁶¹ Lajpat Rai, “Our Struggle for Freedom,” *Writings and Speeches, 1865-1928*, edited by V.C. Joshi (Delhi: University Publishers, 1966) 1:83, originally written in 1905 while in England.

conclusion that the Liberal executive is as indifferent to Indian affairs as the Conservative,” Lajpatrai wrote, even as Gokhale was trying to seek interviews with the members of the Liberal front bench. “I would rather have Indian affairs fought and discussed on party lines,” he reiterated, while pressing once again for an alignment with the SDF.¹⁶² “The workingmen in England were now [as] awake,” to the crisis of liberal imperialism, Lajpatrai tried to impress on his compeers, “as we are.”¹⁶³

Lajpatrai had returned to Lahore still hopeful that the Swadeshi boycott was proceeding at full tilt. A Swadeshi Prachar Sabha had been established in Rawalpindi in early September 1905, while in Amritsar there were attempts to establish a cooperate agency to supply Indian-made articles.¹⁶⁴ The *Punjabee* made the case that Swadeshi was to be treated as Gospel and *dharma*.¹⁶⁵ Even the otherwise skeptical *Tribune* offered the opinion, “Let every household set up a spinning wheel and weaving loom, and let the wives and daughters of the country ply their hands day and night to cover the shame of their husbands and sons,” who were already under the hypnotic spell of a civilization that had emasculated them.¹⁶⁶ Contrariwise, the *Arya Gazette* was eager to distance itself from the INC,¹⁶⁷ though one Nanak Chand, a student at the DAV College, wrote in to say that, “The *Swadeshi* movement owes its origin to Swami Dayanand.”¹⁶⁸ Dissent became evident in the ways in which Punjabis made sense of the aims of the boycott. As one commentator noted, “there is Swadeshi and [then there is] Swadeshi.” And by December it was

¹⁶² “India and English Party Politics,” originally in the *Indian Review* of November 1905, reprinted in the *Punjabee*, December 11, 1905.

¹⁶³ “India and English Party Politics,” *Punjabee*, December 11, 1905.

¹⁶⁴ *Punjabee*, September 4, 1905.

¹⁶⁵ “The Swadeshi Mass Meeting at Lahore,” *Punjabee*, October 23, 1905. Also see “Swadeshism,” *Punjabee*, September 23, 1905.

¹⁶⁶ *Tribune*, September 14, 1905.

¹⁶⁷ *Arya Gazette*, July 6, 1905, in *SNNPP*, vol. XVIII, no. 28, 192.

¹⁶⁸ *Arya Gazette*, September 21, 1905, *SNNPP*, vol. XVIII, no. 45, 263.

clear in the Punjab that the ecumenicism of Swadeshi was about to collapse in the wake of widespread opposition to the boycott.

The announcement of the boycott led to a debate about what Punjabi Muslims should do: revive the old scheme to found an association capable of presenting a united front before the Government, as the *Vakil* editorialized,¹⁶⁹ or, consider joining the INC, on advice of the *Akhbar-i-Am*.¹⁷⁰ The *Vakil* of Amritsar remarked that, contra the advice of those who wished to throw in their lot with the INC, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan had offered a clear reason why the adherents of the Prophet should stand aloof: their inferior numbers were an obstacle to safeguarding their rights within the predominantly Hindu INC.¹⁷¹ The *Curzon Gazette* of Delhi held the view that the Muslims were, in fact, so backward in education as to be unfit to meddle with the affairs of governing.¹⁷² And the *Nur Afshan* in Ludhiana bemoaned the boycott. It asked polemically, what kind of a definition would Swadeshists offer for words like liberty and right? It suggested that in goading everyone to use indigenously manufactured items that were often more expensive than imported ones, the onus fell disproportionately on Punjabi Muslims, who saw that, in the Hindu domination of the Swadeshi boycott, “the veneer of education was too thin to hide the oppression of the old caste system.”¹⁷³ And by the fall of 1905, it was clear that the Nawab Salimullah of Dhaka was hostile to the boycott, which led the *Watan* to riposte that Bengali Hindus were notorious for their impertinence.¹⁷⁴ “The offenders (Hindus) are preparing to do in India what the Home Rulers are doing in Ireland, the Nihilists in Russia, and the Socialists in Germany and

¹⁶⁹ *Vakil*, November 7, 1904, in *SNNPP*, vol. XVII, no. 45, 264.

¹⁷⁰ *Akhbar-i-Am*, December 8, 1904, in *SNNPP*, vol. XVII, no. 49, 288.

¹⁷¹ *Vakil*, July 16, 1904, in *SNNPP*, vol. XVII, no. 30, 183.

¹⁷² *Curzon Gazette*, November 1, 1904 in *SNNPP*, vol. XVII, no. 45, 264. The claim was repeated by the *Paisa Akbar*, November 14, 1904, in *SNNPP*, vol. XVII, no. 46, 269.

¹⁷³ *Nur Afshan* (English edition), October 20, 1905, in *SNNPP*, vol. XVIII, no. 43, 289.

¹⁷⁴ *Paisa Akhbar*, October 10, 1905, in *SNNPP*, vol. XVIII, no. 42, 283.

Austria. They are carefully studying the existing situation in Russia, as also the causes which have brought it about.”¹⁷⁵ Throughout 1905, these resentments continued to build as Swadeshists came to despair about their failed bid to rouse Punjabi Muslims. Lajpatrai, like other Hindus, came to assume that, instead of participating in the will of the nation, Punjabi Muslims were more invested in the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in Macedonia and the growing alliance of the Shah with Tsar.¹⁷⁶

Throughout and after 1905, Indian nationalists would feel the pull of international events more strongly than ever. Their own experience of the Russo-Japanese War, the first revolution in the Tsarist Empire, and the ultimate failure of the Swadeshi boycott of English manufactures deepened the split in the Indian National Congress between moderates and extremists. The agreement around Swadeshi, as well as the fervor with which Gokhale and Lajpatrai alike promoted it, would thus prove illusory. In retrospect, Swadeshi was but a last-ditch effort to influence politics in the metropole after the liaison with Labour and the SDF came to naught, on the one hand, and the Liberals continued to be evasive about the most important questions of colonial policy, on the other. With its attendant emphasis on the worship of the nation, Swadeshi appears, in this version of the events, as symptomatic of the despair that took hold of some nationalist radicals when other avenues for political change, up to and including revolutionary politics in Britain, were adjourned *sine die*. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, 1905 brought into relief for British socialists who were interested in India reform a vision of the future based on an explicitly international anti-imperialism. Indian radicals were nonetheless already grappling with “imperialism”—as it was referred to later by the likes of Hobson and Lenin—in a

¹⁷⁵ *Watan*, December 8, 1905, in *SNNPP*, vol. XVIII, no. 49, 325-26; *Paisa Akhbar*, November 29, 1904, in *SNNPP*, vol. XVII, no. 48, 285; *Victoria* (Sialkot) November 1, 1904, in *SNNPP*, vol. XVII, no. 45, 265-266.

¹⁷⁶ Lajpat Rai, Punjab's Sympathy with Bengal,” *Punjabee*, December 11, 1905.

deep and broad sense. That is, for Indian radicals, the crisis of imperialism was marked by the way the Liberals vacillated on Free Trade and issues such as Indian reform. The Liberal party, as was clear to Indian radicals like Lajpatrai when he spoke to socialists and the unemployed in Manchester, was now itself insufficient to the cause of liberalism. The move for Lajpatrai, from trying to secure reforms for India in alliance with British socialists to rallying around the Swadeshi boycott, was not so much a matter of a switch in his thought or of an embrace of “anti-colonialism.” Rather, it was a matter of judgments made in the context of a deepening crisis of democracy within the British Empire.

Engulfed in crisis, Balfour resisted calls to dissolve Parliament. At last, at the conference of the national union of Conservative associations, held at Newcastle, in mid-November of 1905, the Unionist party irreparably split over tariff reform. The revolt Chamberlain had fomented in 1903 had exhausted the party. Under attack, the Unionist Free Traders openly took to pressing the case for supporting the Liberals, who had made overtures by signaling their willingness to soft-pedal their support for pressing for Irish Home Rule.¹⁷⁷ Even the *Daily Mail* was forced to concede that the state of affairs within the party foreshadowed disaster. Balfour, in a final bid to outflank his opponents, resigned from office on December 4, which left the Liberals scurrying as they tried to form an administration without a majority in Parliament.

Despite the last-ditch effort by Balfour to stymie his opponents, the Liberals, at last, won their sweeping parliamentary majority in January of 1906.¹⁷⁸ After he lost the race in East

¹⁷⁷ The Liberal Imperialists tried but failed to shunt Henry Campbell-Bannerman off to the side by appointing him to the House of Lords.

¹⁷⁸ The Liberals won 377 seats, Labour claimed 53, and the Irish nationalists another 83. The Conservatives managed only 132 and the Liberal Unionists a mere 25.

Manchester, Balfour remarked that the new Liberal Prime Minister Bannerman-Campbell represented “a mere cork” on the socialist tide gathering momentum from the Continent, soon to break out on British shores.¹⁷⁹ The elections in Britain, Balfour noted, were a “faint echo” of the zeitgeist that had led to massacres in St. Petersburg, riots in Vienna, and socialists gaining strength in Berlin.¹⁸⁰ A fortnight before resigning, Balfour remarked on “the contagion” of the revolution that had rattled the Tsarist empire in 1905, positing that, “England has always caught every continental disease but... in a modified and relatively innocuous fashion: compare 1792, 1830, 1848, and the later Socialist Movement.” The rise of Labour, Balfour suggested to the secretary to Edward VII, had brought Britain “face to face (no doubt in milder form) with the socialist difficulties which loom so large on the Continent.” Presciently, Balfour wrote, “Unless I am greatly mistaken, the election of 1906 inaugurates a new era.”¹⁸¹ Indeed, while it may have seemed that one well-established party had beat out the other, the Liberals won by default; they did not achieve victory, so much as the Unionists achieved defeat. More importantly, the ascendance of Labour signaled the growing anachronism of the Liberal party. The win for the Liberals revived the Indian parliamentary committee, which now included thirty of the fifty-three new Labour MPs, but Indian nationalists were chastened by the relative indifference of the Liberal chiefs to the cause of Indian reforms. More importantly, the Indians would soon feel the forceful undertow of the socialist torrent Balfour had mentioned, pulling them into the whirlpool of international socialism.

¹⁷⁹ Quoted in Sydney H. Zebel, *Balfour: A Political Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 124. Balfour had remarked that social reform was the most effective antidote to socialism, see Zebel, *Balfour*, 122.

¹⁸⁰ Balfour to Lord Salisbury, January 17, 1906, in Zebel, *Balfour*, 143.

¹⁸¹ Quoted in Zebel, *Balfour*, 143.

Chapter 2

India at the International

“Order reigns in Warsaw—I mean Lahore—Order reigns in Lahore!” H. M. Hyndman told an audience of socialists at Chandos Hall in central London, on May 12, 1907.¹ Yet the witticism belied a sense of alarm.² Earlier that afternoon, with Hyndman at its head, the Executive Council of the Social-Democratic Federation (SDF) had rushed to convene an emergency session to debate the situation in India. If the stories telegraphed in the London dailies were to be believed, over the last fortnight, India had been in a state of rebellious ferment. The authorities there had reportedly foiled a nationalist conspiracy to incite rebellion in the companies of Sikh soldiers barracked in the cantonments off the Grand Trunk Road near Rawalpindi. The ploy was timed to commemorate the outbreak of the 1857 sepoy revolt. A series of dispatches from the frontline confirmed that officials in the Punjab had been particularly anxious after a serious disturbance in Rawalpindi in late April, when violence followed a demonstration of tenant cultivators, led by local Arya Samajists, over a land revenue hike.³ Localized strikes at an ordinance depot and the railroad sheds also roiled the air.⁴ Still more pressingly for Hyndman, flash wire services were now relaying the news that Secretary of State for India John Morley, on whom moderate, liberal-minded Indians had pegged their hopes for India reform, had invested officials with on-the-spot discretion to use an arcane statute, first legislated in 1818 under East India Company, permitting

¹ H. M. Hyndman, *The Unrest in India*, (London: Twentieth Century Press, 1907), 12.

² Hyndman was playing on the words spoken in the winter of 1831, when the news reached the French Chamber of Deputies that the Tsarist commander Paskevich had reached the Polish capital, quelling a revolt by Polish cadets. See “Trouble in India and Liberal Tyranny,” *Justice*, May 11, 1907, 1; C. H. Norman, “The Indian Agitation: H. M. Hyndman at Chandos Hall,” *Justice*, May 18, 1907.

³ “Indian Native Unrest: The Rioting at Rawalpindi,” *Times*, May 6, 1907.

⁴ Lajpat Rai, *Story of my Deportation*, (Lahore: Panjabee Press, 1908), 5.

the authorities to deport anyone believed to be a threat to domestic tranquility. Lajpatrai, the noted Arya Samajist, had been whisked off to Fort Dufferin in Mandalay from Lahore, without formal charges or a trial, in the belief that he was the “originator, organizer, financier, inspirer, and directing-head of a complex and deep-rooted scheme of revolution.”⁵ Meanwhile, his “indefatigable lieutenant and chief oratorical firebrand,” the Sikh schoolmaster Ajit Singh, who had been one of the speakers at the demonstration in Rawalpindi, was on the run.⁶ Government officers steeled themselves for another outburst of civic disturbances by deploying the Royal Irish Rifles to the scene; the defenses at the Lahore Fort were also redoubled in case of an emergency.⁷ Public assemblies were outlawed throughout the region. The swift mobilization of reserves, in combination with the move to deport Lajpatrai, overwhelmed the would-be revolutionaries. Around the Punjab, in cities such as Rawalpindi and Lahore, squadrons of light cavalrymen were seen patrolling the streets,⁸ and Lord Kitchener, the supreme commander in British India, wrote into the *Daily Mail* to reassure Britons that the Empire was strong and its colonies secure—even if, a week ago, in his words, stalwart Sikh cultivators from Lahore to Lyallpur believed that the denouement of British rule in India had come.⁹

Against the jingoism of London editorials pressing Whitehall to dispatch still more reinforcements to India, British socialists, particularly the SDF, raked the Liberal administration over the coals, on the pages of leftist newspapers and at specially called gatherings, for recourse to what Hyndman referred to as Muscovite methods to maintain order in India.¹⁰ The rendition of Lajpatrai drew immediate comparisons to the case of the wrongfully indicted French officer,

⁵ “The Unrest in India,” *Times*, May 10, 1907.

⁶ “Indian Unrest,” *Daily Mail*, May 10, 1907.

⁷ “The Unrest in India,” *Times*, May 10, 1907.

⁸ “Quiet in India,” *Daily Mail*, May 11, 1907.

⁹ “Indian Unrest,” *Daily Mail*, May 13, 1907.

¹⁰ Hyndman, “The Unrest in India,” 13.

Alfred Dreyfus, whose hurried conviction had rubbed the sheen off the liberal self-conception of the French republic.¹¹ Although his diaries show that he was privately anguished at the troubled state of affairs, John Morley, the secretary of state for India, had quickly reconciled the Liberal party as a whole, even the new Labour representatives elected in 1906, to deportation, *lettres de cachet*, and coercion.¹² Questioned at Parliament by Balfour, now the leader of the Unionist opposition, about the turmoil in the Punjab, the secretary of state sought absolute discretion, protesting that the matter fell within the realm of state secrets. A deft debater, Morley brushed aside all talk of coercion in India, arguing that no one wanted the authorities to suppress sedition more than the moderates in the Indian National Congress, as disorder was sure to ruin their chances of preserving control of the nationalist party. After the secretary of state bested his rivals in the House of Commons, an official at the India Office remarked that, though “Honest John” fancied himself a democrat, at heart he was “a fearful autocrat.”¹³ An editorial in *Labour Leader*, an organ of the socialist-inclined Independent Labour Party, expressed the contradiction succinctly: “The man who had made a name for himself as the eulogist of Voltaire and Rousseau and Cromwell,” found himself justifying orders gagging native newspapers, proscribing the right to assemble peacefully, and imposing martial law in troubled districts.¹⁴ Although order was restored quickly to India, the Lajpatrai affair haunted the Liberals into the autumn, as the

¹¹ “Liberal Repression,” *Justice*, June 8, 1907; “The New Arrangements in India,” *Justice*, August 31, 1907.

¹² Morley to Minto, June 13, 1907, in Mary Minto, *India: Minto and Morley, 1905-1910*, (London: Macmillan, 1934), 144-45. “Your way of putting [matters] helps me realize how intensely artificial and unnatural is our mighty Raj, and it sets one wondering whether it can possibly last. It surely cannot, and our only business is to do what we can to make the next transition, whatever it may turn out to be, something of an improvement.” Morley to Minto, August 15, 1907, in Minto, *India: Minto and Morley*, 151.

¹³ Sir Arthur Godley to Lord Minto, May 10, 1907, in Minto, *India: Minto and Morley*, 135-36.

¹⁴ “Mr. John Morley Again,” *Labour Leader*, November 15, 1907.

socialists kept the issue alive in Britain and within the Socialist International, until Lajpatrai was at last released in mid-November.¹⁵

After proposing a motion of sympathy with Lajpatrai and Ajit Singh, Hyndman narrated the arc of his own development as an India reformer, going back into the 1870s, when he was still a radical conservative in the tradition of Burke, Coleridge, Carlyle, and Disraeli.¹⁶ A wistful Hyndman recounted how, well before his turn to socialism, he had concluded that Gladstonian Liberals, a grouping that included the present-day secretary of state, were in bad faith when it came to British India. Despite an almost uninterrupted parliamentary majority since India was transferred to direct crown rule in 1857, the Liberal party had done little even by the 1870s to stanch the enormous sums withdrawn yearly from the colony, or to initiate meaningful reform. “From 1880 until the present-day,” he added quickly, pivoting to the track record of the Conservatives, “India has continued to be bled, bled, bled,” paying out retirees, paying Home Charges, and as a result of remittances that benefited the capitalist and landlord classes in Great Britain. It was doubtful, Hyndman ventured speculatively, whether the Spanish conquistadors had ever exacted anything approaching this tremendous tribute from South America.¹⁷

The unrest in the Punjab, Hyndman contended, was but a symptom of “the whole wickedness of our rule in India.”¹⁸ The wickedness, as he explained, was that India was ruled neither for the benefit of Indians themselves nor for that of British workingmen, who, whatever the claims of those on Pall Mall, neither benefitted from empire nor would suffer if India were relieved of her frightful oppression.¹⁹ Quoting statistics to show that the standard of subsistence was itself in

¹⁵ “Lajpat Rai—An Indian Dreyfus Case,” *Panjabee*, May 15, 1907.

¹⁶ Mark Bevir, “H. M. Hyndman: A Rereading and a Reassessment,” *History of Political Thought*, XII (Spring 1991) 126.

¹⁷ Hyndman, “Unrest in India,” 5.

¹⁸ Hyndman, “Unrest in India,” 4.

¹⁹ Hyndman, “Unrest in India,” 16.

decline in India, Hyndman held that a cataclysm was inexorable, as the opportunity to reform the conditions for the impoverished multitudes had ended decades ago. The juggernaut of western progress had crushed the fortunes of Indians, Hyndman remarked, paraphrasing the statement of a veteran India hand.²⁰ At the 1907 congress of the Socialist International in Stuttgart, Hyndman hypothesized that there were in fact two different Indias. One was a prospering Anglo-India battered on the wholesale impoverishment of the majority of the country. Then there was the India groaning under “misery such as has never been seen on a like scale elsewhere, even under twentieth century capitalism.”²¹ After he recounted for the audience how, in the summer of 1905, he had come to make the acquaintance of Lajpatrai at India House in Hampstead, Hyndman wondered aloud if the Liberals intended on prosecuting him for putting forward “the truth about India” and “the infamies of our rule,” going so far as to declare himself to be in “sincere sympathy with those who are in revolt.” Metternich, the Austrian statesman, had once remarked, “one can do anything with bayonets except sit on them,” but that was precisely what John Morley was now attempting with his “useless policy in India,”²² Hyndman continued in his castigation of the Liberals. “You cannot deport *me*, under the law of 1818,” he recited from a letter he had rifled off to the secretary of state, “or conveniently refuse me bail, or decline to appear in court yourself on subpoena.” The audience reacted at the mere mention of the Liberals with cries of “Shame!”²³

Hyndman made the case in his report to the Second International that the hallmark of British colonialism, as exemplified in the Indian case, was not the fact of colonial rule itself, but the

²⁰ Statement by Thorburn in Hyndman, “Unrest in India,” 6.

²¹ H. M. Hyndman, *Ruin of India: The Report of the Social-Democratic Federation to the International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart* (London: Twentieth Century Press, 1907), 11.

²² Hyndman, “Unrest in India,” 12.

²³ Hyndman, “Unrest in India,” 1.

fact that it was “profit-mongering imperialism.” While the hunt for new colonies had “help[ed] to retard the ultimate breakdown of the capitalist system,” he explained, the main characteristic of imperialism was the acquisitive drive to secure further “outlets for English capital, shaken in its self-confidence at home by German and American competition.”²⁴ That is, though sharing many aspects of earlier forms of colonialism, the British Empire now bore the stamp of international capitalist development in the 20th century; the colony–metropole relationship had not only been maintained, but also transformed. Exemplifying this transformation was the elaborate system of extortionate charges to the Indian exchequer for the privilege of British rule. While British capitalists were profiting from a secure outlet for their capital in the shape of investments or advances loaned to the colonists, “British workers [had] not understood the economic and social effects of capitalist colonization,” namely that “the whole system of modern colonization was injurious to workers” as such—including workers who lived and labored in London. The working classes were therefore imperialists “in the worst sense,” pouring themselves into the Labour party, rather than picking up the socialist standard. It was nevertheless incumbent on them to compel Whitehall to introduce a self-government for Indians—as moderate nationalists such as Dadabhai Naoroji himself insisted—“under English sovereignty.”²⁵

Hyndman was successful in pushing through a resolution at the 1904 congress of the International, proposing that colonies should be accorded “that degree of freedom and independence appropriate to their stage of development, with the understanding that complete freedom of the colonies must be the ultimate aim.”²⁶ The Second International continued to

²⁴ H. M. Hyndman, *Colonies and Dependencies: Report to the International Socialist Congress* (London: Twentieth Century Press, 1904), 9.

²⁵ After the passage of which Naoroji, who was also in attendance, was feted with “tumultuous cheer and applause.” See Julius Braunthal, *History of the International*, translated by Henry Collins and Kenneth Mitchell, vol. 1, 1864-1914, (New York: Praeger, 1967), 312.

²⁶ Quoted in Julius Braunthal, *History of the International*, 1: 311.

affirm the fundamental belief of the First: the fate of India was bound up with the progress of a democratic-socialist revolution in England. However, the Social Democratic Federation, led by Hyndman, was alone within the Socialist International in going so far as to argue that the task of quashing the vampirism of British rule in India was as important, if not more important, than achieving socialism in Western Europe.²⁷ Attending the 1907 congress of the Second International in Stuttgart at Hyndman's invitation, Indian radicals were thus taken aback, understandably, when the International did not place the same importance to India that Hyndman and the SDF did.

Ahead of the Stuttgart congress of the Socialist International, Eduard Bernstein, whom Hyndman referred to as "advocate-in-chief on the Continent for the British India Office," had once more stirred up "the revisionist dispute" within the International, arguing that the English rule in India had been beneficial and that socialists had to reconsider their unshakable anti-imperialism.²⁸ A socialist world order, the revisionists held, might well involve imposing rule over less developed and advanced regions. Hyndman was preparing his rebuttal for the congress that August in the shape of a vital report on the British colonies, sections of which he rehearsed in his address in London. Though he was inclined to see India as "the classic instance of the ruinous effect of unrestrained capitalism in Colonial affairs," Hyndman acknowledged that the issues that British socialists faced were of concern to all international socialists, as representatives of a worldwide party.²⁹ Social democrats on the Continent and in the United States faced the same dual task as those in Britain: destroying capitalism in all its complexity while trying to affect "the emancipation of all mankind regardless of race, colour, or creed."

²⁷ Hyndman, "Colonies and Dependencies," 14.

²⁸ Hyndman, "Ruin of India by British Rule," 10.

²⁹ Hyndman, 10.

Furthermore, colonial policy had lately come to be a pressing issue for the international social democrats; the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), the largest party in the International, had lost almost half its parliamentary seats the preceding winter, in the so-called “Hottentot” elections, which had functioned as a de facto referendum on whether the Reich ought to continue to hold its colonies in Africa.³⁰

The gathering Hyndman led at Chandos Hall closed by ratifying a resolution on British rule in India. Apart from professing solidarity with the Indian “agitators” such as Lajpatrai and Ajit Singh, who were trying to “awaken their countrymen,” the motion recorded its “fervent hope” that British rule in India would soon be swept aside, peaceably or otherwise. Hyndman himself implored metropolitan socialists to rise to the level of the situation through their refusal to allow “our murderous despotism in India” to continue, and pledged themselves furthermore to oppose the repression of Indians who were “rightly struggling” for their emancipation. Hyndman then left to address another gathering at Long Acre on the same subject. Hyndman ably countered many of the points raised by Bernstein and his co-thinkers, many of whom were associated with the Fabians in Britain. Nonetheless, despite his numerous speeches on the subject in 1907, Hyndman failed to grasp that the report on colonial policy he had filed in fact expressed, to the deeply riven Socialist International, a *minority* opinion. Further, Hyndman was mistaken in mapping the divide within the Second International onto the growing split within the Indian National Congress. The conflict in the Second International had coalesced into revisionist-reformists on the right versus radical-revolutionaries on the left, whereas the Indian National Congress was separating itself into different camps of Moderates and Extremists. Moreover, the

³⁰ The SPD went from 81 to 43 seats in the Reichstag. See Carl E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905-1917* (New York: John Wiley, 1955), 60-61.

different sides in the INC understood themselves first and foremost in the terms of Indian nationalism, even if some members had sympathy for socialism and specifically for the SDF.

Emboldened by the SDF, the Extremists in the INC sought to build on their efforts in politicizing the Lajpatrai affair. Laying out to the socialists at Stuttgart their case for complete Indian independence, the Extremists found that the views of the British social democrats were outliers even within the International; indeed, the socialists were by and large skeptical of the culturalist chauvinism of the new party of Indian nationalists. Although sympathetic to the Indians, the socialists were reluctant to endorse a right to self-determination, in the abstract. If the Moderates were internationalists, even when trying to be properly nationalist, the Extremists, rebuffed by the International for their chauvinist aims, retreated to their own devices; India did not return to the Socialist International until more than a decade later, after the Third International, or Comintern, was formed in 1919. Exasperated with the Liberals in Britain as well as in their failed rapprochement with the international socialists, radical Indian nationalists tried in the meantime to revive the Swadeshi boycott, which had floundered since its conception in 1905, while attempting to win sympathy for their cause across the Atlantic, in New York.

The Lajpatrai Affair

Mindful of the clampdown since the turmoil in Rawalpindi, Lajpatrai fretted that some of his own speeches, particularly those that he had made in the company of radicals overseas, might now be wielded to charge him with sedition. Moreover, Lajpatrai was troubled that he had failed to win bail at the high court in Lahore for the three “ringleaders” arrested after the Rawalpindi demonstration.³¹ Forewarned that officials “were gnashing their teeth [at the] thought that I was

³¹ The three friends were Gurdas Ram, Hansraj, and Amolak Ram. See Rai, *Story of my Deportation*, 2.

the source of all the mischief,” Lajpatrai later recounted how he bided his time by dispatching notes to associates, such as William Wedderburn, to whom he tried to explain the fast developing situation in the Punjab for the sake of those in London.³² Amplifying his misery, the spring rains had come late, giving him a terrible case of the chills while he had only his eldest son to take care of him in Lahore; everyone else in the household had sought to escape the latest plague outbreak by going to see relatives in Ludhiana.³³ Still, Lajpatrai worked single-mindedly on his correspondences, going to so far as to refuse visitors, unsure of whether he would be taken into custody before the deadline for the mail to England. After a late breakfast on May 9, Lajpatrai was putting in an order for his carriage when his munshi informed him that there were inspectors from the Anarkali station outside. Armed with assurances that he might continue on to the courthouse after a brief detour to be interviewed by the district commissioner, Lajpatrai left with the officers, still carrying his bundle of letters in hand.³⁴ Yet his coach had scarcely traversed the threshold of the property when the district superintendent of the Lahore Police startled Lajpatrai by jumping on to the steps of the carriage, which left no doubt that he was in for more than routine questioning.³⁵ That afternoon, with the superintendent seated in front, the deputy commissioner himself took the wheel of a cabriolet to deliver Lajpatrai to the military side of the Mian Mir railway station. There he was made to board a carriage of Oudh and Rohilkhand, its windows shuttered, bound for Diamond Harbor on the outskirts of Calcutta, en route to Fort Dufferin.³⁶ Typically an insomniac, Lajpatrai recalled that he slept well the entire week, on his forced journey to the capital of British Burma.³⁷

³² Rai, *Story of my Deportation*, 29.

³³ Rai, 24.

³⁴ Rai, 30.

³⁵ Rai, 42.

³⁶ “Notes and News,” *The Indian World* 5 (May 1907), 427.

³⁷ Rai, *Story of my Deportation*, 42.

Lajpatrai had returned to India from England in the autumn of 1905 with the ineluctable sense that the INC had to make more of an effort at politicizing the cause of India both in Britain, where Indian reform had to be transformed once more into a party issue, and in India, where the Swadeshi boycott represented an opportunity to mobilize supporters on a mass scale. Yet, ahead of its yearly caucus, the INC looked as if it might split, as the mission to Britain that summer had satisfied no one. The mission had failed insofar as the Moderates had been unable to secure firm commitments from the Liberal party; the deputation failed to appease the Extremists, too, who were especially frustrated with the limited strategy of attempting to win incremental reforms through constitutional means. Though after his return both factions within the INC, the Moderates and the Extremists, sought to claim him for their own side, Lajpatrai fell somewhere in between, neither-nor. He had returned with a new admiration for Gokhale, whose exertions on behalf of the nationalist cause he had found politically objectionable in their details, but nevertheless commendable. Lajpatrai was nonetheless plainly sympathetic to the radical view that the nationalist party had found limited success politically since it was founded in 1885. The radicals wanted desperately to see the party overcome its “mendicant” ways by enlarging the boycott in Bengal on more than one front, pushing it to a national scale while expanding its scope to include everything British (rather than simply British manufactures). Ahead of the 1905 session of the INC, Lajpatrai remarked that, of all the countries he had visited on his journey, England was the most conservative; she was therefore going to be “slow to adopt the new ideas” gaining traction within the young Labour party and in social-democratic circles.³⁸ With the

³⁸ Reprinted from the *Indian Review* as “Indian and English Party Politics,” *Panjabee*, December 11, 1905.

Swadeshi boycott in Bengal as their readymade weapon, Lajpatrai held, Indians were about to “realize the truth of the adage that ‘nations are by themselves made.’” “Swadeshi,” he wrote, “ought to be the religion of a united India.”³⁹

Throughout the first half of 1906, Lajpatrai found himself hemmed in on all sides, in spite of—arguably partly because of—his control over the Indian Association of Lahore and a number of Swadeshi organizations. The response in the Punjab to the Swadeshi boycott in Bengal was anemic. A short-lived ecumenism had quickly come apart. Hindu chauvinists held that the Muslim majority of the region, which had in substantial measure refrained from participating in the boycott, were responsible for the slow development of nationalist consciousness. Although Lajpatrai made some efforts at conciliation, gesturing toward the sizable Muslim underclass by pointing out that Swadeshi had made everyday things more expensive, the majority of Hindus in the Punjab remained half-hearted, at best, about trying to overcome differences between the different religious communities.⁴⁰ Lajpatrai was enlisted in the ranks of the communitarian Punjab Hindu Sabha when it was founded that December, but, even so, he continued to work at the national level, pressing the INC to transform itself into a formal party, complete with a constitution, a twelve-month program of activities, and a well-funded outreach center in Britain. Lajpatrai hoped this re-forged INC would have the capacity for mass mobilizations while providing a broad umbrella for Hindu–Muslim cooperation, promoting Indian industries, and

³⁹ “Indian and English Party Politics,” *Panjabee*, December 11, 1905.

⁴⁰ The foundation was laid in Lahore for a new association, the Indian Moslem League, which was to be a loyalist alternative to the Hindu-led Indian National Congress. With the growing divide in the Punjab, the Hindus formed new associations of their own, such as the new Hindu Sahayak Sabhas, which sought to subordinate or to diffuse some of the animosities that had festered for decades in the relations between the orthodox Sanatan Hindus and the reformist Arya Samajis. See Kenneth Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th-Century Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 266.

developing of a network of independent schools providing both a liberal and a vocational education.

Other Arya Samajists took only an oblique interest in Swadeshi or other nationalist activities.⁴¹ That the Lahore-based Aryas had their own preoccupying concerns was signified in the motto of their newspaper the *Panjabee*, *Le ciel t'aidera*, borrowed from the name of the group formed by French liberals after the restoration of the Bourbons. Fearful that their numbers—as recorded in the census—were in decline, Hindus of the Anarkali Samaj were particularly active in promoting *Shuddhi* or “reconversion” ceremonies for Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus of the “untouchable” castes, and Indian Christians. For the merchant classes, who made up the Anarkali chapter in the main, Swadeshi represented an opportunity to find new outlets for their capital.⁴² Through their investments, the Arya Samajists sought to challenge Brahmo-led institutions such as the Punjab National Bank and Bharat Insurance Company. The Brahmos also had influence over the *Tribune* newspaper, whose new editor had taken to portraying the *Panjabee* as the voice of Anarkali Samajists with politically extreme views. Local authorities apparently shared this view, prosecuting the owner and the editor of the *Panjabee* for publishing articles that purportedly incited racial hatred, one of which dealt with the relative indifference of Anglo-Indians to the abject conditions created through a commonplace system of forced labor, known as *begar*. Another article took a critical view of the 1899 murder of a native subordinate by the British superintendent of the Gujranwala Police, which was never brought to trial.

Hyndman explained to his audience at Chandos Hall in London that the suppression of the *Panjabee*, whose defense Lajpatrai had led, marked the start of the troubles that had led to his

⁴¹ Arya Samajists made up almost half of the delegates to the 1905 and 1906 conferences of the INC, whereas they had made up little more than about a third around 1900.

⁴² Those who belonged to the “trader” castes. Lajpatrai himself belonged to one: the Aggarwals.

deportation. Given the unease over radicalism, the case was widely expected to go against the *Panjabee*, putting even more heat on Lajpatrai, on whom financial and managerial responsibility for the newspaper was sure to fall.⁴³ The *Panjabee* affair had strained some of his relationships with other Arya Samajists, who felt the *Panjabee* ought to have steered clear of politically controversial subjects. This same section of samajists was never particularly sanguine about the fact that Lajpatrai was so involved with the nationalist party. Disillusioned with the internecine rows within the Arya Samaj, in early 1907 Lajpatrai recorded to a friend who was staying at India House in London, that he had “practically retired from active samajic life.” That self-enforced retirement entailed, giving up involvement in the affairs of the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College, an institution he had helped to build and had come to cherish. Furthermore, “my son-in-law is almost dying,” Lajpatrai wrote, “as if all this [with the *Panjabee*] was not sufficient to crush me.”⁴⁴

A month into 1907, Lajpatrai wrote a letter to Gokhale, who was slated to arrive soon in Lahore, in which he identified a cluster of ominous storm clouds that threatened to burst over the Punjab at once. First there was the Punjab Land Alienation (Amendment) Act. Then, there was a new Colonization Bill.⁴⁵ The raft of unpopular new statutes, Lajpatrai cautioned Gokhale, was certain to create tumult in the Punjab. Though he himself had spoken at a number of

⁴³ The judgment against the *Panjabee* had only contributed to his sense of solitude. And after the legal appeals to overturn the harsh sentences on the owner and the editor failed, it had fallen on him to shoulder the responsibility for publishing the newspaper, which still faced the possibility of paying expensive legal settlements civil court.

⁴⁴ Lajpat Rai to Bhai Parmanand, February 28, 1907, in Home Political B, January 1910, file 25-26.

⁴⁵ Lajpat Rai to Gokhale, January 29, 1907, Gokhale Papers, National Archives of India.

demonstrations protesting the measures, Lajpatrai feared the outburst of resentment in the Punjab countryside might erupt too soon, and the INC would be ill-prepared to lead.

Almost since its inception in 1849, British rule in the Punjab had fulfilled a conservative vision of governing the predominantly Jat-caste yeomanry, based on the category of custom, with an administration that was paternalistically overseen by a constellation of semi-autonomous officials. The first governing board of the region founded what came to be referred to as the “Punjab School” of administration. It was their view that the effort to remake Bengal in the image of Britain by fiat, through the Permanent Settlement, had failed to transform the *zamindari* into a landlord class and, worse, had exacerbated the 1848 financial crisis that shook the East India Company state. The Punjab School figured that, as a matter of policy, the Punjab should remain an overwhelmingly agrarian society of Jat cultivators. Sometime in the mid-1880s, the Punjab Government took steps to advance this ideal, planning the metamorphosis of the desert wasteland in the central districts into perennially arable land. It invested over thirty million rupees to divert the Chenab river into a system of canals and excavations started in 1887.⁴⁶

Arcadia or not, the massive infrastructure project did increase prosperity, at least for a time, by developing acres of arable land. Yet, by 1907, the sheen had worn off the canal colonies. The best farmland had been quickly settled, galling newcomers, who were left to cultivate inferior land. Prized land tended to become fragmented when settlers handed their property down to their sons or leveraged it to moneylenders. District officers had wide discretion to choose the settlers, preferring cultivators who were able to productively work the soil, or veterans who satisfied the

⁴⁶ The new colonies that fed off the canals were so successful that, within a couple of decades, the Punjab Government was able to recover its initial capital outlay and the colonies were yearly yielding over seven hundred thousand rupees of profitability, N. G. Barrier, “The Punjab Disturbances of 1907: The Response of the British Government in India to Agrarian Unrest,” *Modern Asian Studies* 1, no. 4 (July 1967): 356. Also see C. H. Buck, “Canal Irrigation in the Punjab,” *Geographical Journal* 27, no. 1 (January 1906): 63 and Imran Ali, “*The Punjab Under Imperialism, 1885-1947* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), chap. 2, “Colonisation.”

more intangible criteria sought in would-be colonists, such as a track record of loyalty to the state. Grants were made to different classes of colonists with different proprietary rights—there were those who bought the title to property, tenant occupiers without a full title, urban capitalists who leased more than one “square” of land, etc.—all of which quickly made for a system rife with legal disputes. Furthermore, after urban Hindu moneylenders started purchasing the land of impoverished Muslim and Sikh cultivators, the Punjab Government sought, as early as 1899, to draft statutes proscribing the sale of land to all but a select group of agricultural tribes. The result of their efforts was the 1900 Alienation of Land Act, followed by a number of other measures intended to ballast the condition of the indebted peasantry and zamindars. The experiments in the canal colonies created a thicket of overlapping administration structures, such that the irrigation and revenue departments were sometimes at odds with each other, sometimes united against the autocratic district commissioners in the colonies. Added to the legal and administrative difficulties, boll worm infestations in 1905 and 1906 wrecked the cotton harvest, the chief cash crop of the colonies. However, when hard-up cultivators tried to sell off property, the Punjab Government, fearful that a mass exodus would gravely impact revenues, made it more difficult for them to alienate their land.⁴⁷ And in the area referred to as the Majha, the over-extension of the Bari Doab canals had already made water scarce in the districts of Amritsar, Gurdaspur, and Lahore, the heartland of the Punjab whence Sikh soldiers were recruited. The irrigation department, without consulting their co-administrators, in the autumn of 1906 levied an enormous increase on the rate cultivators had to pay for water. Ajit Singh, the founder of the *Anjuman-i-Mohibban-i-Watan* or Patriotic Society, started to rile up audiences affected by the new measures at massive demonstrations across the Punjab in the first third of 1907. The classes

⁴⁷ N. G. Barrier, “The Punjab Disturbances of 1907: The Response of the British Government in India to Agrarian Unrest,” *Modern Asian Studies* 1, no. 4 (July 1967): 362.

affected by these acts, Lajpatrai underscored in his letter to Gokhale, are “unrepresented in the Council.”

Alarmed at the politically volatile state of affairs, Denzil Ibbetson, Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, filed a pressing minute to his superiors. Ever since harsh sentences were handed down in the *Panjabee* case, he noted in his memo of April 30, the discontent of the townsfolk had melded with that of the yeomanry in the central districts. Frustrated cultivators were protesting modifications to their rights as tenants, while their counterparts in the western canal colonies were angry about increases to their water rates. Even more alarmingly, only a couple of weeks earlier, when workers on the state railways went on strike, the agriculturalists in the canal colonies showed themselves to be in broad sympathy with their cause, putting up substantial sums for the strike fund. Another development, the one that made the Lieutenant-Governor particularly apprehensive, was that nationalist agitators—who belonged “almost without exception to the Arya Samaj, a society founded primarily with a religious object, but which in the Punjab at least, has always had a strong political bent”—had trained their sights on the districts that funneled Sikhs into the military. The agitators were apparently plying soldiers of the local regiments with tales about how the English made use of the Sikhs to maintain their hold in India in 1857 but had then betrayed the servicemen who proudly fought for Britain in the Sudan, in Somaliland, in China, and at Saragarhi, repaying their sacrifice with over-taxation, confiscation, and ingratitude. Furthermore, officials across the empire could not help but notice that a sizable number of Sikhs from central districts of the Punjab were shipping out for the US and Canada,

where it was feared that the men were sure to be infected with republican ideas through their association with the Irish *Clan-na-Gael* or, worse, with “ill-digested socialistic ideas.”⁴⁸

Ibbetson, in pressing the Viceregal Council to reinforce his executive discretion, characterized the situation in the Punjab as “malignant” and “exceedingly dangerous.” A “new air” of rebellion was felt everywhere, but the actual danger “is in inaction and in what that inaction must lead to,” Ibbetson held. Specifically, he wanted more authority to deal with the troublemakers responsible for the “internal commotion.” First on his list of deportees was Lajpatrai, whom he identified as one of a new class of “extremists” within the Indian National Congress.

The air Ibbetson felt gusting in the Punjab in the spring of 1907 had swirled about India, in all directions, for months. Though the win for the Liberals in the 1906 elections revitalized the optimism of the Moderates, the Extremists in the INC set their sights on trying to capture the nationalist party, even as Gokhale returned to Britain that summer for a series of interviews with John Morley at the India Office. Afraid of the growing radicalism of the Indian Extremists, there was a new refrain in Whitehall: the INC was growing impatient. Morley reported to the viceroy, Lord Minto: “You cannot go on governing in the same spirit; you have got to deal with the Congress party.”⁴⁹ Although he felt that the weighty cast iron of British administration in India had somehow to be lightened, Morley was cool to reforms, as he made painfully clear in presenting his first Indian budget to Parliament. It was on that occasion that he emphatically

⁴⁸ E. J. E Swayne, “A Confidential Memorandum on Matters Affecting the East Asian Community in British Columbia Colonel, 11, RG7-G-21, vol. 200, File 332, vol. 3 (b), Library and Archives Canada. On the Irish see Minto to Morley, March 5, 1907, in Minto, *India: Minto and Morley, 1905-1910*, 122-123.

⁴⁹ Morley to Minto, May 11, 1906, in Minto, *India: Minto and Morley, 1905-1910*, 27.

stated that, when Queen Victoria had made a declaration in 1858 promising her Indian subjects equal treatment, her words were never intended to be construed “in a narrow, literal, restricted or pettifogging sense.”⁵⁰ The new nationalist spirit in India had to be faced with candor and consideration, but it was impossible for the Liberals to conceive of giving uneducated Indians the right to vote, much less to consider putting India on par with Australia or Canada.⁵¹ Morley added, “We are all agreed that it is wisest and best to exclude India from the field of our ordinary party operations.”⁵² The budget address came shortly before the fifth and final tête-a-tête with Gokhale, whom he had invited to Whitehall over the murmurs of some career officials at the India Office. Gokhale built up a case for specific reforms, such as the addition of at least one Indian member to both the secretary of state’s and the viceroy’s councils, with an eye toward India gaining a few of the privileges enjoyed by the other self-governing colonies. Morley stressed to Gokhale that he was willing to reopen a discussion of reforms on the condition that the INC exclude or at least hold the radicals in the party in abeyance. Practically, however, Morley lacked the stomach for any kind of revolution in Indian affairs. “Just the very opposite,” Morley wrote to the more conservative-minded Lord Minto, who had about as much disdain for the House of Commons as he had for the INC. “Not one whit more than you do I think it desirable, or even conceivable, to adapt English institutions to the nations that inhabit India.”⁵³ That is not to say that Morley was illiberal, but sober in his judgment, “For as long a time as my poor imagination can pierce through, for so long [as] our Government in India must partake, and

⁵⁰ John Morley, *Morley’s Indian Speeches*. Madras: G. A. Nateson, 1909 34.

⁵¹ Morley, 28.

⁵² Quoted in *Times of London*, May 11, 1907. Morely “In all that I have said I shall not be taken to indicate for a moment that I dream of [transplanting] British institutions wholesale to India. That is a fantastic and ludicrous dream.... You cannot give universal suffrage in India, and I do not insist that India should be on the same footing as our self-governing Colonies like Canada,” John Morley, *Indian Speeches, 1907-1909* (London: Macmillan, 1909), 31.

⁵³ Morley to Minto, June 6, 1906, in Minto, *India: Minto and Morley, 1905-1910*, 30.

in no small degrees, of the personal and absolute element coupled with free speech and free institutions. An arduous task in India.”⁵⁴

With Gokhale in parley at the India Office, Tilak visited Calcutta, where the Swadeshi boycott was still on simmer, with the intention of allying himself with like-minded Bengali radicals whose rhetoric had taken on an increasingly extreme color. Tilak, whose activities had often flustered the doves, had sought to seize an advantage while Gokhale was overseas, pelting the chiefs of the INC with a salvo of criticisms.⁵⁵ The Liberal secretary of state for India, Tilak insisted, had already let down the misplaced expectations of the moderates when he failed to undo the division of Bengal and referred to it as a “settled fact.” Armed with a copy of the budget address, Bipin Chandra Pal asked, “How are we to understand in the face of this broad, open declaration, that [the authorities at the India Office] would listen to our demand for self-government, if only we should keep it within the Empire.”⁵⁶ Liberals were able to offer only sympathy and soft-sawder, instead of substantive reforms, Pal held. “The New Spirit will not sell its birth-right, even for Mr. Morley’s mess of pottage,” he added.⁵⁷ That new spirit, he had elaborated in October of 1906: “values freedom for its own sake, and desires autonomy, immediate and unconditioned, regardless of any considerations of fitness or unfitness of the people for it.”⁵⁸ “They talk of Liberal policy and Liberal sympathies [in England],” Pal argued,

⁵⁴ Morley, *Indian Speeches*, 34.

⁵⁵ As early as 1899, D. E. Wacha, one of Naoroji’s lieutenants, had referred to Tilak as a “mischief maker” who ought to “find no place in the Congress camp,” in Gordon Johnson, *Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism: Bombay and the Indian National Congress 1880 to 1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 123-24.

⁵⁶ B. C. Pal, *Swadeshi and Swaraj: The Rise of New Patriotism* (Calcutta: Yugayatri Prakashak, 1954), 162. “And if self-government is conceded to us,” Pal remarked, “we shall not try to be engaged in this uphill work of industrial boycott . . . we shall impose a heavy prohibitive, protective tariff upon every inch of textile fabric from Manchester, we shall impose a protective, prohibitive tariff upon every blade of knife from Leeds. We shall make it impossible for Mauritius as well as for Australia, and Belgium and France to kill our sugar industry by carrying cheap beet root sugar from their territories here.” Pal, 165.

⁵⁷ Pal, *Swadeshi and Swadeshi*, 54.

⁵⁸ Pal, 55.

but “after the Act of 1832 until very recently, what was the character of the Liberal policy of the Manchester school of British Liberalism, the policy of Bright and Cobden?”⁵⁹ Not for well over half a century, that is, since the early 1830s, when Rammohan Roy had lobbied for the passage of a parliamentary reform, had liberalism in Britain held out the possibility of a genuinely cosmopolitan destiny for India. Of course, already in the 1890s, Aurobindo Ghose had contributed a series in of articles to the magazine *Indu Prakash*, titled “New Lamps for Old,” in which he explained that new lights were needed to replace “the old and faint reformist lights of the Congress.”⁶⁰ Again in 1907, Aurobindo recalled that the dreamlike image of “Britain, the benevolent, Britain, the mother of Parliaments, Britain the champion of liberty, Britain, the deliverer of the slave... was so deeply lodged in our imaginations that not only the Loyalists, the men of moderation, but even the Nationalists, those branded as extremists, could not altogether shake off its influence.” Yet, “that was a dream[;] the reality to which we awake is Rawalpindi and Jamalpur,” the scenes of a railroad workers’ strike in Bengal. Officials were tempting the moderates with “the bait of administrative reform” while promising to “lop off the tall heads” in the Punjab—“the policy of the tyrant Tarquin is always the resort of men without judgment or statesmanship.”⁶¹

After the sojourn to Calcutta, a trusted Tilak lieutenant wrote an open letter to the editor of the *Hindu* in Madras, pushing to change the structure of the INC, which is what Punjabis such as Lajpatrai had sought for decades. Foremost on the list of demands was that the INC establish a formal constitution. The other move, calculated to rankle moderate party elders, was the

⁵⁹ Pal, 176.

⁶⁰ Aurobindo Ghose, “New Lamps for Old,” *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Bande Mataram: Political Writings and Speeches, 1890-1908* (Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1973), 5.

⁶¹ Aurobindo Ghose, “Look on this Picture, Then on that,” *Bande Mataram*, May 6, 1907, *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*, vols. 6-7 *Bande Mataram: Political Writings and Speeches, 1890-1908* (Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 2002), 323-326.

suggestion to elect Lajpatrai to the presidency of the 1906 session of the INC. “Behind all is Tilak,” relayed a reliable confidant to Gokhale—since, after Lajpatrai, came Tilak, or so the moderates feared. Dadabhai Naoroji, who was now eighty-two, was cajoled to halt his campaign for a parliamentary seat from Lambeth to return to India to diffuse the standoff with the extremists. Naoroji tried proffering concessions to appease the radicals with his memorable speech, which declared that the INC stood for Swaraj. However, after the formal proceedings came to a close, Tilak did not hesitate to outline the tenants of “the new party.” All the benevolent intentions of the British, Tilak held, were there “to sugar-coat the[ir] declarations of self-interest.” It was undeniable that Liberalism was in crisis, Tilak remarked, as was the idea of democracy itself. It was therefore of no use to latch onto Labour in Britain, since workers had their own interests, and their party was equally caught up in the same difficulties the Indians faced. Though Gokhale had returned from England hopeful in 1905, Tilak noted that Lajpatrai wore the disappointment of experience.

At the 1906 session of the INC in Calcutta, Dadabhai Naoroji made the bold declaration that instead of “self-government under British paramountcy,” its ideal hitherto, the nationalist party would now dedicate itself to gaining Swaraj, which in his own words was tantamount to “self-government as in the United Kingdom or in the colonies.” Yet when Gokhale tried to roll back the statement, putting forward the notion that Swaraj was theoretically ideal but not practically attainable, radicals were swift in picking apart the apparent contradictions. Pal countered Gokhale with Hegel: “Modern thought does not recognize abstractions. The ideal is organically related to the real, the ideal is implied in the real, the ideal is involved in the real, and the ideal is based on the actuality of the real.” What was ideal was thus rooted in the real, rather than

imposed from outside, Pal contended.⁶² Further, “that which is not practically attainable is not an ideal,” but poesy, fanciful, or an abstraction. “And our ideal of Swaraj would not be an ideal,” Pal concluded, “if it were not practically attainable.”⁶³

Despite talk of trying to establish the United States of India, which was to be independent and autarkic, the extremists were no republicans. Pal had floated the idea of a United States of India when he asked himself, “What [will] a self-governing India would do?” Yet, unlike the vision of the Ghadar party that was later formed by radicalized Indians in the US and Canada, the conception Pal had of independence for India was limited to that of a modern nation state, with a right to impose tariffs on imports and cultivate its own industries. It was never a particularly democratic vision.⁶⁴ Behind the rhetoric of self-development and calls for self-sacrifice to the nation, then, the extremists saw a course for India not unlike the Japanese example of rapid industrialization. Aurobindo reckoned to achieve national discipline and sovereignty required centralization. For decades the rhetoric of the INC on the retrenchment of Home Charges, the controversial payments exacted from the Indian exchequer, simultaneous civil-service exams, and the like had tended to obscure, Aurobindo felt, the real accusation against British rule, which was that the Indians continued to pay for “the exquisite privilege of being exploited by British capital.”⁶⁵ Though “there is this possibility of a United States of India,” but as in the case of France, Pal remarked while giving an address in Madras in the spring of 1907, “it may be we

⁶² Pal, *Swadeshi and Swaraj*, 160.

⁶³ Pal, 161.

⁶⁴ “Self-government means the right of self-taxation[,] it means the right of financial control, it means. . . tariffs on foreign imports.” Yet, “we shall want foreign capital,” Pal added. Pal, *Swadeshi and Swaraj*, 163.

⁶⁵ Ghose, “The Doctrine of Passive Resistance: Its Object,” *Bande Mataram*, 271. Aurobindo tacked on that “the most obstinate of the misapprehensions is the idea that the New Politics is a counsel of despair,” whereas the new party, he explained, was not protesting against bad Government—it was protesting against the continuation of British rule itself. Throughout the month of April, 1907, Aurobindo wrote another series of articles for *Bande Mataram*, the Bengali newspaper founded by Bipin Chandra Pal. Titled the “The Doctrine of Passive Resistance,” the series sought to explain why to date the boycott had been only “spasmodically” effective. Also see Ghose, “Nationalism not Extremism,” *Bande Mataram*, April 26, 1907, 6-7: 353.

shall have to work it out through a middle stage of dictatorship.”⁶⁶ The Extremists did not shrink away from the logic of this claim.

That the Liberals at Whitehall had resorted to ukase to extradite Lajpatrai stirred moderate Indian nationalists; the extremists, meanwhile, felt vindicated.⁶⁷ The secretary was insistent that Lajpatrai “was a danger to the State,” but “we wonder what [he] means by the State,” Aurobindo intoned mockingly. “The biographer of Burke,” ought to well know, Aurobindo noted, “that the temporary and forcible subjugation of three hundred millions by a handful of alien bureaucrats does not constitute an organized state.”⁶⁸ “The apostasy of John Morley has come as a surprise and a scandal to numerous classes... who looked upon him as an avatar of the spirit of Liberalism,” Aurobindo wrote, though “the *Kesari* [run by Tilak] always thought otherwise.”⁶⁹ Despite his title, the secretary of state for India, “one of the foremost exponents of the most arrogant and exclusive type of enlightenment in nineteenth-century Europe, the scientific, rationalist, agnostic, superior type,” represented English supremacy rather than Indian interests; “as such, he was the last man to think well of or understand Asiatics or to regard them as anything but semi-barbarous anachronisms.” Aurobindo contended, perfecting arguments that soon formed the standard stock of nationalist criticisms of British rule in India, “The world of Liberalism and enlightenment to which alone liberal philosophy is applicable and in which alone liberal institutions can flourish, is the world of Europe and America which has inherited the

⁶⁶ Pal, “Swaraj: Its Ways and Means,” *Swadeshi and Swaraj*, 205.

⁶⁷ Morley reportedly remarked, “It is true, gentlemen, that I am doing things that are neither liberal nor democratic but then my anchor holds.” Quoted in “By the Way: In praise of Honest John,” *Bande Mataram*, November 18, 1917, 6-7: 753.

⁶⁸ Ghose, “A Danger to the State,” *Bande Mataram*, June 28, 1907, 6-7: 551.

⁶⁹ Ghose, “The Secret Springs of Morleyism,” *Bande Mataram*, June 28, 1907, 6-7:548

legacy of Rome and Greece, of Christianity and rationalistic thought and science. Asia stands outside that charmed enclosure.”⁷⁰ Liberals talk “about the necessity of sympathy as the mainspring of Indian administration, but what is the nature of this sympathy?” It was the sympathy of a patronizingly benevolent master possessing absolute control over the life and death of a bonds slave. “True sympathy,” he held, “means ‘putting oneself in another’s skin,’ understanding and appreciating his view of things, his feelings, hopes and aspirations and feeling his struggles and sufferings as one’s own. This is the true liberal sentiment which men like Mr. Hyndman feel but which is extremely rare in the so-called Liberal party.”⁷¹

It was undeniable, wrote Aurobindo, that the recourse to expulsion “came as a shock on the Moderates, as a surprise to the Extremists.” Through recourse to an antediluvian statute to remove Lajpatrai, the Liberal administration at Whitehall had made it clear, “with savage emphasis, that it will tolerate a meekly carping loyalism, [...] but will not tolerate the new spirit.”⁷² Though the Minto-Morley administration had enlisted the whole might of the British Empire to crush “disorder” in the Punjab, “disorder” was simply code for nationalism, Aurobindo held. While the Moderates were struck dumb, Whitehall hinted at reforms permitting a modicum of self-rule for India in a bid to “half-bribe, half-intimidate the Moderate party” into dropping any opposition to the tyrannical measures that had been instituted.⁷³ Yet the authorities had blundered in deporting Lajpatrai without charge, Aurobindo continued, destroying what little faith the moderate nationalists still had in the Liberals.⁷⁴ “Moderation,” he stated, “lies wounded

⁷⁰ Ghose, 6-7: 549.

⁷¹ Ghose, 6-7: 548-549.

⁷² Ghose, “The Crisis,” May 11, 1907, *Bande Mataram*, 6-7: 396.

⁷³ Ghose, “Mr. Morley’s Pronouncement,” May 16, 1907, *Bande Mataram*, 6-7: 414.

⁷⁴ Ghose, “In Praise of Government,” May 13, 1907, *Bande Mataram*, 6-7: 402. Also “The Bagbazar Meeting,” 14 May, 1907, *Bande Mataram*, 6-7: 405; “Sui Generis,” May 17, 1907, *Bande Mataram*, 6-7: 423.

to the death.”⁷⁵ The Liberals had treated the INC Moderates to “the whip of scorpions.” Even the members of the British committee, who had offered him a cold-shoulder in England, had developed a sudden love for Lajpatrai once a member of the opposition had roared out in Parliament: “Why not shoot Lajpat Rai?”⁷⁶ When he learned about what happened in Lahore, the Swadeshist Bipin Chandra Pal halted his rounds of Madras, where he had been giving full-throated expression to the Extremist view of Swaraj. (Within a matter of weeks, Pal himself was subjected to deportation, much to the relief to some moderates.) At India House in London, Hardayal, who was then a radicalized student at Oxford, led efforts to raise awareness about the Lajpatrai affair. And when Gokhale wrote a letter to the *Times of India* to say that constitutional reforms would be meaningless if they could not be had without the deportation of someone like Lajpatrai, Lord Minto confessed to Morley his disappointment, “if he chooses to play with fire he must take the consequences.”⁷⁷ Minto remarked, “either he is incapable of understanding the real friends of India, or he is, as you say, as big a revolutionist as Lajpat and the rest of them. It is very disappointing.” A new chapter of Indian nationalism was now set to open. “It has been decided to continue to attempt to fight the battle of nationalism in the Congress Pandal until at last a majority of the delegates declare for our views.”⁷⁸ The task for them, in his opinion, was to hold fast to the triple unity of Swadeshi, Boycott, and Swaraj.”⁷⁹

Toward Stuttgart: The Dilemmas of the Second International

⁷⁵ Ghose, “And Still it Moves,” May 23, 1907, *Bande Mataram*, 6-7: 435.

⁷⁶ Statement by Sir Howard Vincent, in Ghose, “The Statesman on Shooting,” June 21, 1907, *Bande Mataram*, 6-7: 521. Also see Ghose, “The Sphinx,” June 14, 1907, *Bande Mataram*, 6-7: 504.

⁷⁷ Minto wrote that, “as to Gokhale, if he chooses to play with fire he must take the consequences.... [E]ither he is incapable of understanding the real friends of India, or that, he is, as you say, as big a revolutionist as Lajpat and the rest of them. It is very disappointing.” Minto to Morley, August 7, 1907, in Minto, *India: Minto and Morley, 1905-1910*, 150.

⁷⁸ Ghose, “Capturing the Congress,” December 18, 1907, *Bande Mataram*, 6-7: 800.

⁷⁹ Ghose, “The Question of the Hour,” June 1, 1907, *Bande Mataram*, 6-7:472.

The eccentric Bhikaji Cama, a member of the coterie of Indian radicals in the French capital, lent an articulate voice that rose above others in the clamor-filled debate on the Lajpatrai affair. Madame Cama, as she was referred to popularly, wrote a forceful article in the London-based *Indian Sociologist*, protesting the high-handed treatment that the Liberal administration had meted out to Lajpatrai, in which she claimed that “there can be no sedition in [the nationalist slogan] ‘India for the Indians.’” The directness with which she made the case for Indian independence brought Madame Cama to the attention of Hyndman, who then invited her to travel to Stuttgart as an informal observer of the British delegation to the 1907 congress of the Socialist International. It was a chance for the extremists to win over the International—an organization that had welcomed the venerable Dadabhai Naoroji at its 1904 congress in Amsterdam.

The Swadeshi extremists were anxious to be seen as more patriotically radical than the moderates within the Indian nationalist party. Based on their experience with internationalism, which was limited to the unbendable faith the SDF had in the cause of Indian self-rule, the extremists held the reasonable expectation that the bulk of the Socialist International would be equally sympathetic to their cause. Hyndman was himself growing impatient with the International on the issue of imperialism, even as Indian nationalists were attempting to grapple with the issue in their own manner. Though the nationalist party was ramifying, the extremists followed the course of Dadabhai Naoroji by trying to win over the sympathies of the socialist International, in the belief that their extreme nationalism was not a complete obstacle since, as the SDF saw things, socialists were inter-national and not anti-national. Aurobindo had once likened the Moderates to the French autocrats who, rather than pressing for revolution in 1789, had mocked its plausibility. However, in hoping for solidarity from the wider socialist

International, the extremists had reckoned without their host. The most outspoken Indian nationalists, with their strident culturalist claims, their rejection of the classic liberal conception of emancipation, and their wish to industrialize India behind tariff walls, made it difficult for international social democrats to see the Extremists as politically to the left of the moderates. Little in the experience of the Indian nationalists, with the International, or other socialist groups, had steeled those who came to Stuttgart for the acrimonious debate that was to come.

Throughout numerous articles and in their own written correspondence in the 1850s and after, Marx and Engels took up the “India Question,” though the issue was primarily understood in terms of the fraught relation of British workingmen to the empire. “You ask me what English workers think about colonial policy,” Friedrich Engels wrote to a friend who was studying the issue, on September 12, 1882.⁸⁰ The answer was simple: “the same as the middle classes think.” Engels reported that, in the absence of an adequate party to lead them politically, English workers “gaily share the feast of England’s monopoly of the world market and the colonies.” English workers, since gaining the right to vote in 1867, were thoroughly bourgeoisified. Engels, a vital member of the General Council of the defunct First International, was still able to remember the era in which English millhands had courageously blocked Lord Palmerston from pursuing the idea of British intervention on the side of the Confederate South in the US Civil War. The General Council had hailed English workers for grasping at once that the war was a declaration of a new “crusade of property against labor,” while praising Lincoln, who was

⁸⁰ The friend was Karl Kautsky, the main theorist of colonialism within the Social-Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) in the decades preceding World War I. Engels to Kautsky, September 12, 1882, *Karl Marx Fredrick Engels Collected Works*, vol. 46, *Marx and Engels, 1880-1883*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1992), 322.

responsible for prosecuting the war, as a champion of workingmen. England herself was different now, which made it difficult to envision what it might take to achieve socialism there, let alone in the colonies, Engels lamented. Yet, presumably since she was proletarianizing quickly, Engels hypothesized, “India may, indeed probably will, start a revolution.” A revolution in India that hastened the downfall of the British empire was bound to create new conditions of possibility for the struggle for socialism within the metropole. (Engels held that the downfall of the French in Algeria or Egypt might also do the same.⁸¹) Though, were a revolution in India to occur, a new, generationally distinct group of English workers had to be clear about opposing a war to save British rule. Left implicit, at least in this reply, then, was that Engels thought poorly of the Democratic Federation in England, which traded on rather than transcended the chauvinism of British workers, as well as the instincts of its head, Hyndman, who had tried in vain to win over Marx and Engels to the new party, founded in 1881.⁸² Despite his continued differences with Engels, Hyndman came to earn a reputation as an “orthodox” Marxist within the Second International that was founded in 1889. The sociologist Sombart even referred to Hyndman as one of the “Church Fathers” of *fin-de-siecle* socialism.⁸³

After he withdrew from his parliamentary race in 1880, in which he had stood as the independent candidate for Marylebone, Hyndman wrote to his friend Dadabhai Naoroji about what a win for the Liberals might mean for India.⁸⁴ Although moderate Indian nationalists such

⁸¹ Were there a socialist revolution in England, on the Continent, or in the US, Engels hypothesized, the semi-independent, settler colonies, such as Canada, the Cape, and Australia, might plausibly claim their independence. The “simply subjugated,” colonies, i.e. India, Algeria, Egypt, and those controlled by the Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish, on the other hand, had to be taken over, at least temporarily, in order to be led toward independence.

⁸² See Engels’s comments about Hyndman in the letter to Eduard Bernstein, May, 3, 1882, *Karl Marx Fredrick Engels Collected Works*, vol. 46, *Marx and Engels, 1880-1883*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1992), 250-51.

⁸³ Quoted in Chushichi Tsuzuki, *H.M. Hyndman and British Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), v.

⁸⁴ A scion of empire, with familial connections to the West Indies that stretched back to the late eighteenth century, Hyndman had made a name for himself as an Indian reformer in the mid-1870s, publishing articles promoting the retrenchment of expenditure in British India, the employment of more Indians in the administrative services, and the

as Naoroji identified as Liberals, there were reasons to be cautious of the new Liberal administration of WE Gladstone, Hyndman intimated.⁸⁵ The case Hyndman made to Naoroji in 1880 was that the Liberals had failed to realize that the English were practically and politically responsible for some 190,000,000 Indian subjects.⁸⁶ At the very least, Hyndman wanted the “Grand Old Man of India” to consider whether the Liberals were adequate to the project of empire, understood as the kind of cosmopolitan British empire that Naoroji hoped to see realized.⁸⁷ A regular contributor to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, whose editor leaned Conservative, Hyndman was critical of the Liberal party, which he believed neither had the intention to reverse “the defects of our administration [in India]” nor took full cognizance of the Tsarist menace to British paramountcy there.⁸⁸ Hyndman chafed at the strategy the Liberals had followed in their latest campaign, a strategy built on opposing Beaconsfield-ism, the vision of a robust British empire linked to Disraeli, the Earl of Beaconsfield. Beaconsfield’s administration had sought a stake in the Suez Canal without parliamentary consultation; introduced a bill to name Victoria empress of India, which some critics believed threatened to efface the constitution; and led Britain into (disastrous and expensive) wars with the Zulus and in Afghanistan despite the growing budget deficit. “Territorial aggrandizement, backed by military display,” wrote

election of Indian members of Parliament. It was while trying to find statistics on the fiscal condition of British India, in the fall of 1878, that Hyndman happened upon a tattered copy of *The Poverty of India*, in which Naoroji had elaborated his “drain of wealth” thesis, at a bookstore in Westminster. See H. M. Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 160.

⁸⁵ Hyndman to Naoroji, April 25, 1890, National Archives of India.

⁸⁶ Hyndman was close to Edward Stanhope and Louis Mallet, under-secretaries of state. See Hyndman, *Record of an Adventurous Life*, 162-63.

⁸⁷ Years on, in a letter written to Naoroji in 1902, Hyndman, now a confirmed Marxist, reiterated his belief that the election of Gladstone and the Liberals had thwarted the promising efforts by Conservatives to reform the British Indian empire. The collapse of Indian reform that came with the defeat of the Conservative administration, Hyndman wrote in his autobiography, was “the saddest disappointment of my life.” See Hyndman to Naoroji, January 6, 1902, National Archives of India; also see Hyndman, *Record of an Adventurous Life*, 164.

⁸⁸ John Morley, a Liberal, took over The Pall Mall Gazette from Greenwood after the election of 1880. Hyndman apparently also confessed privately to the growing territorial ambitions of the Qing in Asia. Hyndman, *Record of an Adventurous Life*, 162-64.

Gladstone in the autumn of 1878, “is the *cheval de bataille* of the administration.”⁸⁹ The Midlothian campaign that Gladstone launched in 1879 transformed “imperialism” from an epithet that the British had once hurled at the authoritarian regimes of Napoleon III and Bismarck into an category of abuse to describe domestic policy under Disraeli—“the closest British equivalent of Bismarck.”

Hyndman was exceptionally, if not uniquely, equipped to combine agitation centered on democratic demands and the Janus-faced colonial policy of the Liberals, on the one hand, with an analysis of imperial political economy, on the other. Tutored in economics at Cambridge by Henry Fawcett, the “MP for Hindustan,” Hyndman was able to assimilate the statistics Naoroji had collected to argue that capital in India “acts very differently from capital elsewhere...[in] that it certainly does not compete to any extent for the most remunerative employment.” The fact that natives held only a fraction of the enormous British Indian debt of £220,000,000 was a symptom of the fact that, at least since 1857, Indian capital was restricted to traditional outlets such as agriculture and money-lending, instead of developing new industries. Quoting an anonymous article written in 1870, Hyndman noted that the wealth of Indian capitalists was rooted in “thousands of miserable bullocks and such like investments,” providing small-scale capital to impoverished agriculturalists, rather than investments in the railroads, irrigation works, or industrial cotton mills.⁹⁰ Though “official apologists” often latched on to specific examples, such as that of the Punjab, as evidence of a prospering India, Hyndman wrote, “the truth is that Indian society as a whole has been frightfully impoverished under our rule.”⁹¹ A financial crash

⁸⁹ Gladstone, “England’s Mission,” *The Nineteenth Century*, September 1878, 568.

⁹⁰ H. M. Hyndman, “The Bankruptcy of India,” *The Nineteenth Century* 4, no. 20 (October 1878), 587-88.

⁹¹ H. M. Hyndman, “The Bankruptcy of India,” Part II, *The Nineteenth Century*, 5, no. 25 (March 1879), 451.

in debt-ridden India, Hyndman held, was inevitable, though an insurrection led by its poverty-smitten ryots (tenant cultivators) was bound to be hopeless.

Hyndman had floated into the orbit of Marx and Engels in the first half of 1880. At their first interview, Marx spoke admiringly of the articles Hyndman had written on India, though the Old Moor apparently found him personally insufferable. Even so, Marx borrowed sources from Hyndman, specifically statistics conveying what the British took from India in the form of rent, dividends for railways, pay for soldiers and officials, etc. Hyndman, on his own initiative, had hoped to introduce Naoroji to Marx, an encounter which never came off. Just after he himself was first introduced to Marx, Hyndman traveled to the US to tend to his investments, with a borrowed copy of the French edition of *Capital* in tow. India, specifically the fiscal administration of British India, featured as a major subject of their correspondence. Given the scale of the economic vampirism of British rule in India, Hyndman wrote to Marx, at the outset of 1881, “as I told [you earlier], I fear from India will come our first shock.”⁹² The details that filtered through Hyndman left Marx and Engels with the distinct impression that British rule in India was in “imminent danger.” The solution, Hyndman wrote, “I think [is that] we ought to withdraw [from India],” about which Marx vouchsafed no reply.

Hyndman continued to exchange letters with Naoroji right through to 1906. Apart from pillorying the Gladstonian Liberal party, Hyndman, who had since founded the SDF, tried to move Naoroji closer to his own radical views.⁹³ Throughout their correspondence, Hyndman

⁹² Hyndman was also the source of the tidbit that Marx relayed to Nikolai Danielson in February 1881 that there was “actual conspiracy going on [in India] wherein Hindus and Mussulmans cooperate.” Marx to Danielson, February 19, 1881, *Karl Marx Fredrick Engels Collected Works*, 46:63-64.

⁹³ Naoroji, who identified with the Liberals, wrote to Hyndman to express outrage that the British intended to cover the expense of the invasion of Egypt from Indian revenues. Naoroji, while accepting that there was a modicum of truth in the idea that English workers formed the best means to emancipate millions of famished Indian ryots (cultivators), politely wished Hyndman success by way of a reply, but noted that the task of peacefully precipitating a revolution in Britain was going to be a difficult one. See Naoroji’s reply to Hyndman, September 9, 1882,

sought to emphasize what he felt he had learned from Sir Louis Mallet, the Cobdenite under secretary of state at the India Office under Disraeli, that the fate of India was tied to a revolution in Britain. Although somewhat bemused when Hyndman wrote to the elder statesman in August 1884, predicting the imminence of such a revolution, Naoroji, who was himself still angry about the Anglo-Indian reaction to the Ilbert Bill, wrote “now that the mask is openly thrown aside, our hope, now, is mostly in England.”⁹⁴ Already despairing on the state of Indian revenues when Gladstone then tried to use Indian coffers to pay for the invasion of Egypt, Naoroji came to see that, in the absence of a forceful democratic will in Britain, the interests of India were going to remain subordinated to imperial interests. Later on, in the summer of 1904, Hyndman led Naoroji to the Amsterdam congress of the Socialist International, where Hyndman was presenting a report on English colonies and dependencies.

The intense scramble for colonies since the mid-1870s made the issue of Empire a more pressing matter for the Second Socialist International than it ever was for the First.⁹⁵ Still, almost two decades after it was founded in 1889, the Second International had never formulated a policy on the subject of colonialism, presumably since socialists took it to be obvious that the colonies were where all the cruelties as well as the contradictions otherwise veiled in modern civilization were left to go naked. The absence of a formal socialist policy on the colonies, moreover, fit with the well-established Marxist view that the issue of national self-determination was never

reprinted in R. P. Masani, *Dadabhai Naoroji: The Grand Old Man of India* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1939), 201.

⁹⁴ Quoted in Masani, *Naoroji*, 294. The collapse of the Ilbert Bill forced the Lord Ripon to resign.

⁹⁵ Brauntal, *History of the International*, vol. 1, 1864-1914, 306. Though it had been more or less defunct since 1872, the First International folded after its 1876 congress, which was held in Philadelphia.

politically straightforward. Ahead of the 1896 London congress of the International, where the issue of Polish restoration was slated to be a subject of major debate, the implacable Rosa Luxemburg wrote to urge her comrades to reject a resolution on Polish independence, which she thought was sure to constrain Polish socialists by pressing them into a self-provincializing national party.⁹⁶ George Lansbury, a member of the SDF, nevertheless brought forward a resolution proclaiming “the right of all nations to complete sovereignty.” The Lansbury resolution held that colonization “in the name of religion or civilization” was a thin cover for schemes whose “aim is simply to extend the area of capitalist exploitation in the exclusive interests of the capitalist class.”⁹⁷ In adopting his resolution, which reiterated commonplaces, the congress masked some serious differences of opinion.

After the 1896 congress, the first since the death of Engels, the German social democrat Edward Bernstein ventured intrepidly to reexamine the status of the “right of all nations to complete sovereignty” as a socialist shibboleth. Bernstein, the influential editor of the *Sozialdemokrat* of Zurich, felt that the delegates at the London congress had skirted the substance of the issues at stake in the debate on Poland by simply repeating their contention that a properly adequate resolution to the oppression of some nationalities hinged on “the final triumph of socialism.” “Not all struggles of subject races against their masters are struggles for emancipation in equal degree,” Bernstein stated confidently, with the self-assurance that he was simply repeating the views of Marx and Engels. Both “elders” of the International were, at various moments, critical of the idea of protecting non-modern societies as a bulwark against modern civilization—Engels in the case of the “semi-barbaric” Balkans and Marx in his criticism

⁹⁶ Rosa Luxemburg, “The Polish Question at the International Congress in London” (1896), *The National Question: Selected Writings of Rosa Luxemburg*, edited by Horace B Davis, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), 49-59.

⁹⁷ Braunthal, *History of the International*, vol. 1, 1864-1914, 306.

of Thomas Carlyle for preferring “slavery against capitalist civilization.”⁹⁸ Furthermore, Bernstein had come to the conclusion that there was no reason to assume that acquiring colonies was itself reprehensible. What was of decisive importance, he stressed, “is not whether but how” colonies are effected.⁹⁹

If a tribe of African slave-traders or “races who are hostile to or incapable of civilization” turned on their colonizers, Bernstein hypothesized, “their revolts against the latter do not engage our sympathy and will in certain circumstances evoke our active opposition.” With a rhetorical thrust in the direction of certain members of the SDF and its splinter group, the Socialist League, with whom he had already traded barbed words, Bernstein charged that socialist adventurers who wanted to lend succor to the “savages” or “semi-barbaric races” in their resistance struggles against the advance of capitalist civilization were blinded by romanticism. “However critical our view of contemporary civilization may be, we none the less acknowledge its relative achievements and take [those] as the criterion for our sympathy,” Bernstein wrote.¹⁰⁰ The Gordian knot of capitalism was not to cut by the “attempt to draw a Chinese wall around the capitalist world until the revolution is completed.”¹⁰¹ Besides, Bernstein harbored doubts about the plausibility of “the final triumph of socialism,” which he believed was tantamount to “a utopian reference to the last judgment,” a disagreement that soon mushroomed into the revisionist dispute within the Second International.

⁹⁸ H. Tudor and J. M. Tudor, *Marxism and Social Democracy: The Revisionist Debate 1896-1898*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 67.

⁹⁹ Eduard Bernstein, *The Preconditions of Socialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1899] 1993), 169. Bernstein’s thoughts were centered on German involvement in China after Kiaochow Bay was leased in 1897.

¹⁰⁰ Bernstein in Tudor and Tudor, *Marxism and Social Democracy*, 52.

¹⁰¹ Eduard Bernstein, “Die internationale Politik der Sozial-demokratie vor dem Londoner Sozialistenkongreß,” *Vorwärts*, May 24, 1896.

The articles Bernstein wrote in the fall of 1896 for *Neue Zeit* quickly made him a target for Ernst Belfort Bax, the plucky sometime member of the SDF.¹⁰² Against Bernstein, Bax had a list of ripostes, the first of which was that modern civilization was itself a curse. While accepting that modern capitalism was a necessary stage before socialism, Bax held that not everyone in all the corners of the earth had to complete the transition to capitalism in order to arrive at socialism. Furthermore, capitalism, in spite of all indications of crisis, was gaining additional shelf life by means of its rapacious colonial conquests. Departing from his other comrades in the SDF, Bax held that the slogans promising “national freedom,” while radical before 1848, were now obsolete. Against Bernstein, who had argued, “National consciousness does not exclude internationalism in thought and deeds, any more than internationalism prohibits the defense of national interests,” Bax reaffirmed what he took to be the core of the message of the *Communist Manifesto*, which was that socialists ought to be anti-nationalist. All national aspirations were, in effect if not intent, going to derail workers from pursuing socialism. British “practicality” and “common-sense,” Bax contended, had taken hold of Bernstein, as he lived in exile there. Bernstein had thus “unconsciously ceased to be a Social Democrat.”

At least since 1900, Bernstein had refuted the view that imperialism represented a final, desperate attempt by capital to prolong its rule. “But then there is imperialism and imperialism,” he wrote in *SM* in the spring of 1900, pulling statements from the *Eighteenth Brumaire* to underscore the idea that modern imperialism was altogether different from ancient empires, and from *Civil War in France* to argue that Marx had characterized the Bonapartist (Second) Empire as imperialist, an era marked not by the end of capitalism, but by the consolidation of the “enslavement of labor by capital.” The fact that France had reverted to a democratic state in

¹⁰² Bax had joined the SDF in 1882 then split in 1884 to join the Socialist League only to return to the SDF in 1888.

1871, but still held on to its colonies, Bernstein believed, was a sign that Marx had been mistaken. Bernstein held that a robust internationalism could only be built “on the foundation of recognition of national communities”; consequently “one can very well be a nationalist without being, for that reason, a bad internationalist.”¹⁰³

India figured in these controversies amidst socialists, albeit in minor, or at least indirect, ways. Although he held in the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* that “everything tends to drive international socialism into national channels, therefore national sections.... [must be] accorded maximum freedom of action,”¹⁰⁴ Bernstein always remained remarkably hostile to the Indian National Congress. While publishing his series “Problems of Socialism” in 1897, Bernstein wrote an article that lauded British rule in India, which no doubt greatly infuriated Hyndman. The article (hitherto untranslated into English), which was written for *Neue Zeit*, the foremost theoretical organ of the Second International, sought to debunk the sorts of claims Indian nationalists had made about the growing immiseration in the lot of Indian subjects.¹⁰⁵ The best statistics available failed to substantiate the claims of a decline in economic conditions, Bernstein held, pointing to the enormous increase in the productivity of the land under the irrigation projects, such as the ones in the Punjab initiated by the British. Even more importantly, Bernstein noted that Naoroji and Gokhale themselves wanted to see India remain under British rule. Although India was able to sustain a *Kulturleben*, Bernstein remained unmoved by the demands of Indian radicals or the socialists who supported them. Against Bernstein, Hyndman wrote in 1898, “It is manifestly not true, that the earlier development of capitalism entails... the earlier

¹⁰³ Eduard Bernstein, “Social Democracy and Imperialism” (May 1900) in *Discovering Imperialism: Social Democracy to World War I*, translated and edited by Richard B. Day and Daniel Gaido (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 227.

¹⁰⁴ Cited in Schorske, *German Social Democracy*, 80.

¹⁰⁵ Eduard Bernstein, “Einiges über das indische Problem,” *Neue Zeit* 15, no. 2 (1897): 618 -624 and 651 -655.

development of organized socialism. On the contrary, the complete capitalist predominance in industrial England has been the main cause of the reactionary attitude of the workers.”¹⁰⁶

Politics, particularly on an international scale, therefore remained essential. The 1907 congress at Stuttgart was, in some respects, a redux of this dispute, with the difference that Extremists in the Indian National Congress now sought the support of the International to champion their calls for independence.

The shift from *Realpolitik* to *Weltpolitik*, marked by the Great Powers’ worldwide hunt for new colonies, had also fostered the likelihood of an “inter-imperialist” war. British (and Dutch) socialists had the issue forced on them with the Boer War in South Africa (1899–1902). Should socialists approve of “the opening up of the dark continent to commercialism”? That was the dilemma with which members of the SDF wrestled, especially if such imperial adventures lent “a fresh lease of life to the capitalist system.” A frustrated Hyndman, never bashful about peppering his comments with anti-Semitic innuendo, felt that the socialists had been forced into a difficult choice of supporting either an “abominable war on behalf of German-Jew mine owners and other international interlopers,” or British annexation of the Transvaal.¹⁰⁷ The SDF maintained an anti-war stance, on the other hand, whereas the Fabians, who formed another section of the British delegation to the International, backed the annexations by Great Britain in the name of the natives of the Transvaal against the Boer oligarchy. George Bernard Shaw, the Fabian socialist to whose views Bernstein came closest politically, held that a state “which hinders the spread of

¹⁰⁶ H. M. Hyndman, “Socialism and the Future of England,” *Cosmopolis* 9 (1898), 34.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Tsuzuki, *Hyndman*, 128.

international civilization must disappear.”¹⁰⁸ With the war still incomplete, the International sought to resolve these differences by putting forward a clear resolution rejecting colonialism at its congress of 1900. Introduced by the Dutch socialist, Henri van Kol, the resolution linked the project of militaristic-territorial expansion to the development of capitalism in its latest stage, *imperialism*. Until the separate commissions that Rosa Luxemburg had recommended were formed and had a chance to study the issues thoroughly, the socialists once more resolved, as a temporary measure, to oppose colonial aggression and militarism in their own countries.

The commission on colonial policy, jointly led by Hyndman and van Kol, filed its reports in advance of the 1904 session of the International at Amsterdam. The revelations of E.D. Morel’s *Leopold’s Rule in Africa* (1904), graphically portraying the atrocities accompanying the rubber trade in the Belgian Congo, lent the work of the commission a sense of desperate urgency. Van Kol introduced the difficulties the commission faced, by acknowledging the differences of opinion within the International. While protesting the forcible annexation of colonies and “capitalist piracy” that had led to the brutal atrocities in Africa, van Kol was left to wonder whether socialists should “abandon hundreds of thousands to infinite misery, to intellectual and moral degradation, instead of protecting them against capitalism?”

Ahead of the 1907 congress, Quelch, the editor of the SDF newspaper *Justice*, outlined the stance of British socialists in his article, “Social-democracy, Nationalism, and Imperialism,” as a way of preparing for the debates at Stuttgart. Social democrats generally abhorred mainstream economic theories, particularly those that made Free Trade “a sacrosanct fetish,” but had even

¹⁰⁸ Like other Fabians, Sidney Webb, who later wrote the prefatory remarks to Lajpatrai’s book on the Arya Samaj, supported the stance articulated by Shaw. See Braunal, *History of the International*, vol. 1, 1864-1914, 307.

more reasons to object to nations trying to protecting their industries with tariffs, since such measures pitted workers of one nation in competition with workers elsewhere.¹⁰⁹ Social democrats endorsed “national rights and national autonomy,” permitting “the right of every nation to manage its own affairs, and to work out its own salvation,” so that “in such matters[,] we may be said to inherit and carry on the best traditions of Liberalism, even after Liberals themselves have abandoned them,” Quelch wrote.¹¹⁰ While some international socialists sought to create a new working class in the colonies, “out of some of the so-called ‘subject-races,’” such an arrangement was sure to reinforce “class domination by a race antagonism,” such that white workingmen would side with white rulers rather than native workers, as the example of Australia and South Africa had shown. Against the revisionists who “fail to recognize these facts,” in their belief that “imperialist absorption” of various regions “was identical with internationalism,” Quelch held that it was “the duty of Social-Democrats to resist with all their might imperialist expansion and subjection of other races.” Like Hyndman and Bax, Quelch held that the maintenance of British rule in India meant that the British working class, while themselves getting no clear advantage, were “helping their masters—the class which robs them.” And in a statement that was sure to win over Aurobindo and Bipin Chandra Pal, Quelch wrote, if Indians “choose to remain subject to their capitalists of their own race and nation, that, after all, is their affair,” but that in no way justified “the rule of *our* capitalist class upon them.”¹¹¹

At Stuttgart, the largest gathering of the Socialist International to date, the socialists were riven, but none more so than the foremost national party within the International: the German

¹⁰⁹ Quelch, “Social-Democracy, Nationalism, and Imperialism,” *Social Democrat* 11, no. 7 (July 1907): 391.

¹¹⁰ Quelch, “Social-Democracy,” 391.

¹¹¹ Quelch, “Social-Democracy,” 394.

Social Democratic Party (SPD).¹¹² Although the SPD had supposedly settled the “revisionist” dispute of the 1890s, rejecting the reformist views Bernstein had outlined, the electoral setback that the party suffered at the outset of 1907 had emboldened the revisionists. Most SPD members believed the outcome of the latest elections, referred to pejoratively as the “Hottentot” elections, was the result of “a paroxysm of imperialistic enthusiasm”¹¹³ that had come over the voters; more importantly, the elections fractured the SPD, precisely on the issue of “its relationship to state and nation in the era of imperialism.”¹¹⁴ The chief theoretician of the orthodox center of the SPD, Karl Kautsky, acknowledged that the party “had underestimated the attractive power of imperialism, which was growing symbiotically with the increasing fear of socialism.”¹¹⁵ The center held that the growing reaction was a sign of a sharpening class struggle, the consequence of which was sure to be an even more vehement domestic opposition to the socialists, an assertive militarism, and an increase in the likelihood international crises; centrists felt the party had to steel itself for this dark future.¹¹⁶ Meanwhile, the revisionists within the party, led by Bernstein, insisted that the chauvinistic mass that had turned its back on the party was itself a symptom of the excessive radicalism of the SPD since 1905. The issues forced into the open in the internal debates of the SPD—colonial policy, chauvinism, militarism, and war—unsurprisingly formed the core of concerns to be taken up by the International at Stuttgart. Yet it was the revisionists who were ascendant in the months before they all convened at Stuttgart.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Lenin, “The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart,” *Proletary*, no. 17, October 20, 1907, in *Lenin Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), vol. 13, 75.

¹¹³ Rosa Luxemburg, *The Crisis of German Social Democracy: The “Junius” Pamphlet*, New York: Socialist Publication Society, [1915] 1919, 40.

¹¹⁴ Schorske, *German Social Democracy*, 63.

¹¹⁵ Schorske, 63.

¹¹⁶ Schorske, 65.

¹¹⁷ Schorske, 84.

Assured of a majority on the committee to consider the “The Colonial Question,” which had hitherto never been treated as an issue separate from imperialism, the revisionists sought to water down the wholesale condemnation of the colonies that had been a hallmark of socialist policy.¹¹⁸ Eduard David of the SPD laid out the case for a dramatic shift in the attitude of socialists toward the fact of colonies. “Europe needs colonies,” David stated, even quoting the veteran SPD theorist August Bebel to imply that, in order to raise backward races to “the level of modern men,” industrial nations had to share “the benefits of culture and civilization” through colonization. The revisionists tried to advance a motion introduced by Henri van Kol of Holland, who, in a radical departure from the established policy on colonialism, argued that a future socialist order might be forced to introduce civilization into the backward corners of the Earth. “You saw in the last election campaign,” van Kol chastened the SPD delegates, “the masses were hypnotized by the thought of the benefits wrought from the colonies.”¹¹⁹ The fact of colonies, van Kol tried to argue, was not identical with “imperialism,” which had a specific definition for Marxists.

The motion on the colonies forced certain differences out into open for the entire International to judge. Somewhat predictably, Bernstein sided with the majority resolution, pleading the case that socialists had to relinquish their utopian, purely negative stance on colonies. Would the anti-imperialists, Bernstein provocatively remarked, advocate giving “the United States back to the Indians,” which was “the ultimate consequence of such a [negative] view.” Committed to the view that all countries had to fall under the abattoir of capitalism before proceeding to socialism, the revisionists wanted the congress to sanction their view that civilized

¹¹⁸ Lenin, “The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart,” 75-81.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in John Riddell, ed. *Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International: Documents, 1907-1916, the Preparatory Years* (New York: Monad Press, 1984), 10.

nations had the right to exercise tutelage over others,¹²⁰ but found that their “socialist colonial policy” elicited the ire of the Kautskyist center in the SPD. With the debate dragging on over the course of days, Kautsky spoke out against the majority of his own party, giving expression to his exasperation with the reformist overtones of the proceedings. “How can the idea of a ‘socialist colonial policy,’” based as it is on a logical contradiction, “find supporters in this milieu?” Kautsky fumed.

After local authorities had forced Quelch out of the proceedings, when he offended their sensibilities by protesting that the Hague Convention of 1907 had been “a thieves’ supper,” Hyndman led the charge of the SDF in the debate on the colonies. Ahead of the congress, he had forwarded a resolution that asked the International to acknowledge “that the continuance of British rule in India is positively disastrous and extremely injurious to the best interests of Indians” as well as to task itself with cooperating with the extremists to free India.¹²¹ This was sure to elicit more intense debate. The revisionists saw British colonialism as performing the essential task of developing capitalism within India. Centrist social-democrats, who understood the rise of nationalism in India as inextricably tied to the development of capitalism there, approached the issue with caution, particularly with respect to the question of whether those demands of the Indian nationalists that would redistribute capital in British India were animated primarily by the desire to expand a native capitalist class.¹²² Moreover, British Labour, represented at the congress by the Independent Labour Party, was sure to object to the Hyndman resolution in the name of British workmen. Although, over the course of the debate, the members of the British Social Democratic Federation remained steadfast in supporting the “orthodox”

¹²⁰ Quoted in Riddell ed., *Lenin’s Struggle*, 11.

¹²¹ Quoted in “The International Congress of Socialists,” *Indian Sociologist* 3, no. 8 (August 1907): 32.

¹²² “Editorial Brevities,” *Social Democrat* 11, no. 4 (April 1907): 199.

defenders of the Marxist tradition over the “revisionists,” some of their own views on colonialism, such as their unshakable faith in the extremists of the Indian nationalist party, invited the skepticism of those who felt that nationalism no longer had a progressive role to play anywhere in the world. For what it was worth, the officials governing British India watched the debate on socialist policy at Stuttgart with interest. The director of the Department of Criminal Intelligence at Simla went so far as to circulate a synopsis of one of Bernstein’s article from *Vorwärts* (“*Forward*”) that lamented the failure of the majority resolutions on the colonies.¹²³

After days of contentious debate, a vote on the majority resolution on the colonies was scheduled for the afternoon of August 22, but first there was the matter of ratifying a condemnation of British rule in India entered by Hyndman. The presiding chairman invited Madame Cama to address the commission before the vote. The substance of her talk was to exhort international social democrats to endorse the pending resolution on the exploitative nature of British rule in India.¹²⁴ Clad in a silk sari, Cama rose to condemn the effects of British capitalism, “the dreadful miseries”—the food shortages, rates of death, and epidemics—that beset British India. She also invoked a central theme in the nationalist critique of imperialism, the “drain of wealth” to Britain, which had transformed India from another one of the colonies into a dependency.¹²⁵ Though she was there to win their sympathies, Madame Cama was critical of the fact that the International had lent assistance to some comrades to overthrow Tsarist

¹²³ Weekly Report of the Department of Criminal Intelligence, October 14, 1907, Home Political B, October 1907, file 80-87.

¹²⁴ “Indian Independence and the International Congress of Socialists,” *Indian Sociologist*, August 1907, pg. 32.

¹²⁵ The three extant versions of the speech differ in details, but generally agree on substance. See the French version in *Comptes Rendu*, 323-325; German version *Internationaler Sozialisten-Kongreß*, 38; and English in *Indian Sociologist*, September 1907, 36. The sharp distinction between dependencies and colonies, however, only appears in the English version.

absolutism, whereas the Indians had been left to fight British imperialism on their own. Of course, such a comparison was an invidious one, glossing over the fact that India lacked a socialist milieu, let alone a socialist party.



FIGURE 2.1 Madame Cama and S. R. Rana, who attended the Stuttgart congress of the Second International, August 1907. Madame Cama is seen carrying the flag she unfurled on the occasion; on her left is S.R. Rana. Half-tone photograph, 1907, source and photographer unknown, courtesy of the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam (IISG BG B9/835).

The Hyndman resolution on British India never came to a vote at Stuttgart. The presiding chair clarified that, while the office of the International wished to affirm the thrust of its sentiments, the resolution was ineligible to be brought to a formal vote, since the Social Democratic Federation of Britain, which had functioned as a conduit for the resolution, had not submitted it properly. Behind the formal reasons, major sections of the International had reservations about the party that had brought forward the resolution. Yet the article that ran in the

September issue of the *Indian Sociologist* nevertheless chose to elide the details of what had transpired in Stuttgart, painting a rather rosier image. It focused on fact that Madame Cama had made use of the occasion to publicly hoist a makeshift standard of a future, independent India.¹²⁶ It made no mention of the fact that the socialists had resisted giving Indian nationalists an endorsement of a right to self-determination.

The twin issues of imperialism and colonialism “revealed more clearly than any other the dilemmas, equivocations, and difficulties in which the members of the Socialist International found themselves.”¹²⁷ It was left to an American socialist, who had apparently had a run-in with an Indian Extremist on the West Coast of the US, to argue on the pages of the *Montana Herald* that the views of the British Social Democratic Federation on Indian nationalism were off the mark, since it was too “prejudiced against the British Empire.” Indian nationalism was at best “a bourgeois movement, and interests us [social democrats] not,”—or, worse, was “a racial movement, not a proletarian” one. “A change from a white to a black capitalist will not help Indian workers,” the same correspondent wrote.¹²⁸

Beyond Stuttgart

After the ambivalent reception at Stuttgart, Madame Cama headed across the Atlantic, with the aim of “giving a thorough exposé of British oppression,” while generating interest amongst the “the warm-hearted citizens of this republic in our enfranchisement.” The Pan-Aryan Association, cofounded in the autumn of 1906 by Mohammad Barkatullah, whom British

¹²⁶ The official French and German reports make no mention of this dramatic denouement, but the *Leipzig Zeitung* of August 26, 1907, apparently describes the scene.

¹²⁷ Joll, *The Second International, 1889–1914*, 109.

¹²⁸ Quoted in “Social-Democracy and Imperialism,” *Social Democrat*, 11, no. 1 (July 1907): 391.

intelligence characterized as “a through-going revolutionist,” was in effect sponsoring her talks in New York.¹²⁹ Enconced at the Hotel Martha Washington, she explained to an interviewer, “our vital cause [is] Swaraj; self-government.” Cama made effective use of the interview to condense the viewpoint of the Extremist nationalists. While the Moderates were still pursuing limited self-government, on the model of Australia and Canada, she told the interviewer “the Extremists insist upon freedom and self-government.” “Home rule,” Cama continued, “is our religion now,” as she shifted attention to to developments in the Punjab, specifically the deportation of Ajit Singh and Lajpat Rai without a trial, whose only crime was “speaking the truth.”¹³⁰ Deprived of their legal rights, subject to capricious deportations, and under close surveillance, the members of the national party, she insisted, had “made vast strides.” That then led the somewhat incredulous reporter to inquire, “How might this mighty overthrow come about?” Through “concentrated resistance,” she replied, the Indians, who outnumbered the British 1500 to 1, might achieve a “bloodless overthrow” within a matter of days. Identifying herself with the culturalist ideas of the Extremists, her last words to the interviewer were, “We want progress, but Anglo-Saxon progress works only one way[;] the English insist on keeping the mass of Hindus in darkness.”

A month later she shocked an audience at the Adams Chapel of the Union Theological Seminary with her harsh denunciation of British rule in India. A reporter who heard her address remarked its broadside “included impartially all western civilizations.”¹³¹ Before she left the stage, she unfurled a silken standard that had three horizontal stripes: a verdant stripe with eight white lotus buds, a saffron stripe in the middle on which the words “Bande Mataram” were

¹²⁹ “Note on the Anti-British Movement,” DCI Circular 5, October 1908, in IOR L/PJ/12/1.

¹³⁰ “Tales of Revolt in India,” *Sun*, October 20, 1907.

¹³¹ “Hindus Pitch into England,” *Sun*, November 20, 1907.

inscribed in Devanagari, followed by a vermillion stripe adorned with the sun and a crescent moon. The proceedings apparently ended in a row, as Cama raced into the aisles to confront the Bishop Frederick Courtney, the rector of St. James in New York, who had taken exception to the description of British rule in India as un-Christian. She was seemingly unaware that, even as she was speaking, the streets of Anarkali in Lahore were lit with *chirags* (oil lamps) to celebrate the return of Ajit Singh and Lajpatrai.¹³²

Focused as she was on pitching the case for complete Indian independence in New York, Madame Cama took no notice of thousands of her countrymen who had settled out West, nor the spate of “anti-Hindu” riots on the West Coast. The influx of Indian workmen on the Pacific Coast of the US and Canada transformed labor in the region and the conditions politically for the working classes. Socialists in the US and Canada would each grapple in their own way with the task of confronting racial chauvinism in the working class, on the one hand, and to address the realities of immigration, on the other. After all, the industries invested in importing Chinese, Japanese, and “Hindu” workers on the West Coast did so because they wanted cheap labor. Indeed, in some cases, the immigrants were brought in expressly with the intention to use them to break a strike or union. Although profoundly aware of their marked status as second-class workmen, British Indians, primarily Sikh men, also saw themselves as subject-citizens of the British Empire, entitled to certain rights, such as the right to settle peacefully, call over their families, naturalize as citizens, and vote. For these migrants, the Extremist criticism of liberal values was misplaced, as what applied to Britain and British India did not necessarily apply to the New World.

¹³² “Weekly Report on the State of Political Agitation in the Punjab,” November 18, 1907, Home Political B, December 1907, file 2-9.

The turbulent dynamics brought about by this wave of Indian migrants were not lost on some administrators of the state and empire. The whole subject of what was then referred to as “Oriental” immigration to Canada involved considerations of the highest importance, as it touched on the British Empire as a whole. A memo by an officer of the Criminal Intelligence Directorate in India remarked that, while the main supporter of Madame Cama in New York were the members of “a certain class who ‘dabble’ in Vedanta,” whose “charitableness” “varies with the square of the distance,” there was also a network of Irish radicals in New York that was openly sympathetic to the Swadeshists.¹³³ “The latest information on the subject,” ran the same memo, is that “close association between the Indian and the Irish malcontents is an established fact.” Mohammad Barkatullah, who later figured as a central member of the Ghadar party, was thought to be the main link to the Irish.¹³⁴ The circular hypothesized that, in spite of its color prejudice, the US was sure to be “the chief school” for Indian revolutionaries in the future, as the US still retained a sense of its own radical tradition, which had itself once overthrown British rule.¹³⁵

¹³³ Barkatullah established contacts with the editors of the *Gaelic America* and *Irish World*. See Weekly Report on the State of Political Agitation in the Punjab, November 18, 1907, Home Political B, December 1907, file 2-9.

¹³⁴ “Maulvi Muhammad Barkatullah” in IOR L/PJ/12/213, note of January 14, 1927. Barkatullah formed a so-called Provisional Government of India in 1919, wrote “Bolshevism and the Islamic Body-Politic,” and in 1920 attended the Soviet propaganda school in Tashkent, see IOR L/PS/10/836 52-63.

¹³⁵ “Note on the Anti-British Movement” in IOR L/PJ/12/1, CID Circular 5, October 1908.

Chapter 3

Western Clarion: The Political Firmament of the Pacific Coast

The modest legal outfit Bird & Brydon-Jack fielded a case in the spring of 1908 that touched on the thorniest issue in contemporary British Columbia: the influx of unskilled workmen from “the Orient.” Its new brief centered on the deportation orders leveled at 186 British Indian subjects, who had sailed in on the *Monteagle*, a retrofitted cattle transporter, plying the transpacific route for the Canadian Pacific Railway corporation.¹ Several of the newcomers, an eyewitness had reported, were Sikh veterans who came ashore proudly displaying their medals won in the Sudan and other imperial campaigns. Provincial authorities were nevertheless anxious to deport the men, regardless of their status as British citizens or their service to the empire, under an invidious new statute. At their last parliamentary session, British Columbian assemblymen, dead-set on trying to halt the inflow of “undesirables,” introduced their own version of a Natal Act, even though federal authorities in Ottawa had scuttled earlier iterations of the same in 1897 and again in 1901. Modeled on the example of an ordinance ruled legal in South Africa, the bill required all newcomers to British Columbia to passably write and speak English or express themselves equally well in some European vernacular, with a sub-clause prescribing, as a deterrent, a stiff penalty for the shipping company that ferried anyone who failed such a test.

Ahead of the appearance of the *Monteagle*, the three judges on the high court of British Columbia had partially invalidated the latest version of Natal Act by exempting the subjects of

¹ Fred Thirkell and Bob Scullion, *Breaking News: The Postcard Images of George Alfred Barrowclough*, (Surrey [British Columbia]: Heritage House, 2004), 47.

the Mikado, in light of the gentlemanly entente that emissaries of the Liberal administration in Ottawa had negotiated to limit the number of newcomers to Canada from Japan. Still, the attorney general of British Columbia threatened to continue applying the Natal Act, unless federal authorities intervened to deport the “Hindus” on the *Monteagle*, the majority of whom were provisionally cleared to land by the port-authority after passing a medical exam and proving their financial means. Alert to the fact that British Columbia had suffered ugly “anti-Asiatic” riots last autumn, officials in Ottawa hesitated over the best means to resolve the dockside standoff, at last prescribing the use of a continuous journey ordinance, originally intended to stymie the Japanese workmen who wanted to reach the western shores of Canada via Hawaii.² But by then local authorities had followed through on their threat of applying the Natal Act. Almost all the Indians failed the education test, prompting a deportation order, which Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) refused to comply with; the company was thus fined \$14,000. That action resulted in a legal row presenting a difficult knot of issues: Did the interior minister hold the authority to apply the continuous journey order to anyone? Had the British Columbia Natal Act violated the federalist Canadian constitution? What was the definition of a British citizen versus an imperial subject? Did British Indians hold the right to relocate anywhere within the empire? Though CPR was perfectly capable of representing its own interests, their in-house counselor turned to Bird & Brydon-Jack, a legal office led by the socialist J. Edward Bird, to advocate for the Indian arrivals.

² The continuous journey regulation worked by prohibiting entry to anyone who had not sailed on a direct through ticket to Canada from their native land, see “An Act to Amend the Immigration Act, 1908,” *Acts of the Parliament of the Dominion of Canada* (Ottawa: Samuel Edward Dawson, 1908), 357.



FIGURE 3.1 Indian immigrants at the quay in British Columbia with the CPR steamer the *Monteagle* in the background, ca. 1907–1909, photographer/studio of George Barrowclough, Vancouver Public Library (VPL 9426).

It was an improbable pairing. CPR had once fought Bird with all of its industrial might. While he was still trying to make a name for himself on the western slope, Bird had run afoul of CPR in the first months of 1903, when he worked as the chief solicitor for the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees, a union of railwaymen affiliated with the socialist-led American Labor Union, whose members had led a walkout at the company. That strike intensified into a major industrial crisis in western Canada, as stevedores, steamshipmen, deckhands, and telegraph runners walked off, while union miners who handled the coal supply for the railways led sympathy actions. The company deployed its full reserve of scabs, spies, and solicitors to break the strike, which lasted almost six months, proving disastrous for the railwaymen. Bird, originally an Ontarian, had since laid roots in British Columbia and was

elected an alderman from his North Vancouver district. Though he intended to run as the socialist party candidate for mayor of the city in 1907, his chances were hampered from the outset by the contrarian stance that the socialists had staked out on Oriental immigration, which was a politically fraught issue in all British Columbia elections. Against the tide of exclusionists who had rallied behind the slogan “White Canada Forever!” and favored pushing “the Oriental” back into the sea, the socialists held that such animus was misdirected; it was capitalism that had transformed workmen everywhere into a band of rootless Ishmaelites.

The detente that united Bird & Brydon-Jack, CPR, and the Liberal administration in Ottawa in opposition to the Natal Act was short lived. Although by mid-March some of the men who had traveled on the *Monteagle* had been forced to return, the judge presiding over the case was set to declare the British Columbia Natal Act *ultra vires*, giving the 142 passengers who remained the right to land in Canada. Before a decision was handed down in the *Monteagle* case, Canadian deputy minister of labor, William Lyon Mackenzie King, had rushed to England on hurried orders to confer with officials at the Colonial and India Offices about the best means to debar Indians from gaining admission into Canada. After imposing an onerous \$500 head-tax on Chinese newcomers and completing successful negotiations with Japanese authorities to restrict the number of immigrants from the islands, Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier wished to head off a flood from India, one that he believed was sure to “result in a serious disturbance to industrial and economic conditions [in British Columbia].”³ While giving the Deputy Minister W. L. Mackenzie King his remit as the head of a royal commission on Oriental immigration, in March of 1908, Laurier stated that the issue of British subjects journeying to Canada from India

³ Memorandum of March 2, 1908 by Wilfrid Laurier in W. L. Mackenzie King, *Report on Immigration to Canada from the Orient*, (Ottawa: Samuel Edward Dawson, 1908), 5.

“involves considerations of the highest importance,” since it affects “the British Empire as a whole.”⁴ Furthermore, the Canadian mission to London insisted that unscrupulous labor contractors had lured Indians to inhospitable, rain-soaked British Columbia, where their willingness to work cheaply was deeply resented by white workingmen, “whose standard of comfort is of a higher order.”⁵ Mackenzie King hoped to assure Whitehall that Canada would not exercise her plenary discretion “without a due regard to the obligations which citizenship within the empire entails.” But, in return, Ottawa wanted some reassurance that, as a matter of course, Canada would remain a predominantly white-settler nation.⁶

British Columbia socialists such as Bird, who as it happened, remained a steadfast friend to the Indians in Canada right through World War II, had little company in rejecting the idea of a “white Canada.” The militant union, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) as well as the Marxist-led Socialist Party of Canada (SPC), which had a stronghold in British Columbia, criticized race-based exclusion as inimical to the self-interests of all workingmen. However, Liberals and Conservatives opportunistically fueled anti-Asian sentiments by promising to exclude first the Chinese, later the Japanese, and now the Indians. Late in the summer of 1906, when the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council made a show of passing a resolution protesting the introduction of “Hindu” workmen into the market, an editorial in the *Western Clarion*, the SPC organ in British Columbia, explained that complaints about “the Sikh invasion” had to fall on deaf ears, since “so long as capitalist property rules, so long will the cheapest labor obtainable

⁴ Laurier in King, *Report on Immigration to Canada*, 5. The same report refuted the assertion by the superintendent of the transpacific service of the Canadian Pacific Railway that Indian soldiers who had visited Canada on their return from the Queen’s Jubilee in 1897 were responsible for the wave of migration to British Columbia.

⁵ The Secretary of State John Morley wrote to the Indian Viceroy Lord Minto on March 25, 1908 that “Laurier assures us that he is sincerely anxious to sanction no measure that by excluding East Indians would weaken the bond of imperial citizenship,” in Commerce and Industry, April 1908, file 17-18/4, National Archives of India.

⁶ King, *Report on Immigration to Canada*, 7.

be utilized for industrial uses, regardless of the wishes of those whose material conditions may be forced to lower levels as a consequence.”⁷ Capitalism, the editorial concluded, respected no creeds, institutions, or anything else, save its chances for profit-making, trampling under foot all other considerations. Ahead of the 1908 federal elections in Canada, the SPC tried to warn the workingmen that the Conservatives, Liberals, and trade unionists alike were “preparing an issue” by arraying themselves in opposition to Oriental workmen. The anti-Asiatic crusade, framed by its slogan “White Canada Forever,” was a ploy to arouse the most “virulent and bestial” prejudices of workingmen and distract them from their actual concerns.⁸ “If the imported hordes had votes, there might be some chance of procuring an economic change,” a socialist commentator wrote in the early months of 1907.⁹ But that was before three SPC MLAs, elected by hardened colliers from ridings located on Vancouver Island, rather ignominiously voted for the Natal Act and lent succor to the efforts to disenfranchise British Indian subjects within British Columbia.

Although British Columbia socialists rejected race-based exclusion as an attempt by capitalists to divide workmen into separate national, racial, and ethnic classifications, the SPC itself stood in opposition to *all* immigration into Canada, white or otherwise. Yet in adopting this view, the SPC had simply followed the lead of the more influential Socialist Party of America (SPA), which had resolved to oppose the importation of cheaper workmen, principally from countries with agricultural or traditional economies, who purportedly lowered the standard of life for all workers and retarded the realization of socialism. At its 1907 Stuttgart convention, the

⁷ “Influx of British Objects,” *Western Clarion*, September 1, 1906.

⁸ “Preparing an Issue,” *Western Clarion*, October 24, 1908. Also see the editorial before the 1909 by-elections “Red Herring Season,” *Western Clarion*, June 26, 1909.

⁹ “The Problem Confronting Labor in British Columbia,” *Western Clarion*, September 14, 1907.

Socialist International reiterated that socialists everywhere had a responsibility to fend off chauvinistic measures intended to exclude certain nationalities or races, while still promoting the interests of workmen.¹⁰ Though the SPC tended to remain aloof from the International, the party strove to limit the influx of more would-be competitors into the labor market, while opposing the race rhetoric that Liberals and Conservatives alike deployed precisely in order to rally support from workingmen to limit immigration. That is, whatever the prejudices of individual socialists, the SPC, as a party, wanted no truck with trying to mobilize a transnational white working class on the borderland between the US and Canada. Instead of pushing to integrate non-white workers, granting them full citizenship, campaigning for a minimum wage, and pressing the right to unimpeded migration, party socialists shirked their actual responsibilities.¹¹ The socialists thus straddled the divide between internationalism and nationalism; the SPC hoped to see the Indians return to India to fight “the rule of British capital in their native land,” even as the *Western Clarion* maintained, “the only hope of India is our common one, which will be realized only when the slaves of capital wake and burst their fetters.”¹²

If the stance that the socialists had staked out on Oriental immigration was riddled with ambivalence, it also paradoxically represented the only way forward politically for British Indians in Canada, who had no illusions as to the attempts by the mainstream Liberals and Conservatives to race-bait them. It thus transpired that by 1912 a group of migrant Indians, radicalized by their experiences as workmen in British Columbia, self-identified as members of

¹⁰ Secrétariat du Bureau Socialiste International, *VIIe Congrès Socialiste Internationale : Compte Rendu Analytique* (Brussels : Désiré Brismee, 1908), 255.

¹¹ Asian enfranchisement continued to be a divisive issue on the left in Canada well into the mid-1920s. The short-lived British Columbia section of the Canadian Labor Party split on the issue in 1928 when unions failed to back communists who favored an extension of the vote. British Columbia had virtual manhood suffrage after confederation but the vote was restricted to white men. Apart from British Indians, British Chinese subjects also lacked the right to vote. Benjamin Isitt, “Elusive Unity: The Canadian Labor Party in British Columbia, 1924-28,” *BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly* 163 (Autumn 2009), 33.

¹² “The Brightest Jewel in England’s Crown,” *Western Clarion*, May 2, 1908.

the Industrial Workers of the World, came together to establish their own branch of the SPC, an important antecedent to the Ghadar party, founded in 1913, that sought to unify the Indians settled on the West Coast. A similar situation held, *mutatis mutandis*, in the US, where, faced with similar disappointments as a result of their status as second-class British subjects, some of the future leaders of the Ghadar party—Hardayal, Sohan Singh Bhakna, and PS Khankojee—also felt an attraction to socialist ideas, particularly in the shape of the anarchist-inflected syndicalism of the IWW, which held an open-door immigration policy and sought to champion radical integration.

The experiences of the Indians radicalized on the Pacific Coast in the era before the First World War, specifically their disenchantment with their status within the British Empire, would spur the Ghadar party to envision a different kind of future for India than the one that the binarized Moderate–Extremist framework of Indian nationalism was to allow. With the departure of Mohammad Barkatullah for Japan in the early months of 1909, to teach Urdu at the University of Tokyo, and S. L. Joshi for Europe in March, the Pan-Aryan Association in New York had folded, in effect putting an end to the East Coast activities of Indian radicals.¹³ Out on the western slope, the Indians faced virulent discrimination, particularly in the wake of the economic crisis of 1907. Of course there were different ways in which the Indians might have responded politically to xenophobia. The fact that some of them looked toward the socialists reveals that their experiences on the West Coast reshaped the self-conception of these Indian migrants, who now saw themselves not as subjects under the crown but as modern wage-laborers who wished to make concrete demands for parity in their wages, shorter work shifts, and the right to full imperial or US citizenship. Such experiences further led the Indians to the conclusion that race

¹³ “Indian Agitation in America,” December 17, 1912, IOR L/PJ/12/1.

was an issue of class, rather than simply one of colonialism, in the sense that race constitutes one of the conditions for the reproduction (and exploitation) of wage labor. Shunned by trade unions, but accepted, albeit after some initial hesitation, by radical socialists such as the Industrial Workers of the World in the US and the Canadian Socialist Party in British Columbia, the Indian workers saw firsthand how their racialized status changed over time as a function of the exigencies of the labor market. (Not least because the socialists were among the few to denounce racism consistently.) Rather, the socialists in British Columbia had their own particular understanding of what was politically desirable, necessary, and possible. At various points this understanding overlapped with, but also differed from, the viewpoints of the increasingly radicalized Indian migrants on the Western slope. The encounter did not lead to one group simply joining the cause of the other, at this time; nonetheless, the political trajectory of the immigrant Sikhs was indubitably altered as it entered, then left, the orbit of the North American socialists.

At the Limit of Empire: Indians on the US–Canadian Borderland

Of the multitudes that set out to cross the ocean from the Orient, those from British India, though never particularly sizable, had the slowest start. Arrivals from India were indeed rare on western shores until about 1905, when steamship companies, faced with a decline in traffic from China and Japan, started to market their transpacific services in India and to Indians in the Far East. Even in California, where thousands of Chinese, then Japanese, newcomers had come ashore, the sight of a band of Sikh men on the Pacific Mail wharf, in the spring of 1899, was so unfamiliar that it warranted a news item. A reporter on the scene for the *San Francisco Chronicle*

marveled at the attractiveness of the men, the tallest of whom, Bakkshlied Singh,¹⁴ apparently had a full grip on English; the other three were identified as Bood Singh, Variam Singh, and Sohava Singh. All of the men in the group had left Lahore decades ago to serve as artillerymen in China, then made the transpacific voyage on the steamer the *Nippon Maru* to seek their fortunes stateside.¹⁵ Around 1920, a researcher found that, after going back and forth to India for about a decade, Bakkshlied Singh had returned stateside in 1910 with his wife and children and settled in Astoria, Oregon, where he presumably worked as a millhand,¹⁶ or in one of the other primary industries that were reshaping the northwest from a forested hinterland into a major gateway of commerce.¹⁷ For almost half a decade, other small groups of Sikh servicemen stationed in the Far East trickled onto the western slope after that first group led by Baskkshlied Singh, without ever precipitating an exodus of their countrymen in India.

A royal commission on Oriental immigration to Canada, formed in the fall of 1907, found that Indians were induced to make the transpacific journey. The commission saw for itself translations of ads circulated by the ticket agents in Calcutta promoting steamer service to British Columbia. Such advertisements laid out the rules as well as the requirements for gaining admission to Canada, i.e., passing a medical examination and proving a fixed measure of financial means.¹⁸ Fueled by these advertisement campaigns, the number of Indians who made the transpacific voyage leapt five-fold in 1907 over what it was in 1906, and thirty-six fold over

¹⁴ Most likely, the reporter had incorrectly, or at least idiomatically, transliterated the name Bakshish. Without firm evidence one way or the other, I retain and use the name as reported. "Four Sikhs Allowed to Land from *Nippon Maru*," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 6, 1899.

¹⁵ "Four Sikhs," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 6, 1899.

¹⁶ Rajani Kanta Das, *Hindustani Workers on the Pacific Coast* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1923), 10.

¹⁷ "Vancouver is now the recognized gateway between East and West," the Governor General of Canada Earl Grey declared, 'the gateway through the double streams of commerce between the Occident and the Orient, and between Britain and the self-governing nations of New Zealand and Australia will flow in ever increasing volume, until Vancouver shall become, perhaps, the first and most important port in the world.'" Quoted in Kornell Chang, *Pacific Connections: The Making of the U.S.-Canadian Borderlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 32-33.

¹⁸ King, *Report on Immigration to Canada*, 8.

1905. Still, official statistics fixed the total number of Indians who had reached the shores of western Canada by 1908, after which new rules made it all but impossible for them to land, at a mere 5,100, though exclusionists no doubt believed there were millions more behind them. (Albeit presently an “apparently insignificant stream,” ran a common refrain of the exclusionists, migration from India will “gradually enlarge till it floods our land and menaces our institutions”; others simply feared that the men were liable to remain unemployed.)¹⁹ Most of these new arrivals, the immigration commission heard, were hired off the docks by either the CPR itself, to work on the railroads, or by middle-men contracted by sawmill owners. All of the evidence vitiated the solemn assertion of the CPR superintendent, who had testified to the commission that the latest influx of newcomers from British India had been unsolicited, hypothesizing instead that the tide was the result of the glowing reports that Sikh soldiers passing through Canada on their return from London had written to their countrymen after Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee in 1897.

With the growing traffic of “East Indians,” successive mayors of the City of Vancouver sought in vain to take on the corporate behemoth that was CPR; their appeals to imperial authorities in London were equally without success. A contemporary commentator recorded that, when the *Empress of Japan* came into dock, in mid-October of 1906, the mayor forced the East Indians who were on board straight into detention sheds, even as he ordered the city clerk to rifle angry notes to the superintendent of the CPR, Prime Minister Laurier, officials in Hong Kong whence the ship had sailed, and Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill. The mayor was playing to the unease of workingmen in British Columbia, whose alarm that “more and more of the turbaned laborers were seen at work in the mills” had turned into outright animus when it was

¹⁹ Fred Lockley, “The Hindu Invasion: A New Immigration Problem,” *Pacific Monthly*, 6 (May 1907): 586-87.

learned that six or seven hundred more “Hindus” were in transit that autumn on inbound CPR steamers, with the expectation that thousands more lurked behind them. The more intemperate members of the city council meanwhile suggested shipping the Indians to Ottawa to impress the seriousness of the matter on the Dominion Government; one alderman even recommended that the mayor authorize that the hawser of the *Empress of Japan* be cut on the quay. The CPR superintendent replied to the note from the mayor by questioning the right of city officials to interfere in immigration matters. Instead of complying with their demands that the company deport those who had landed on the *Empress of Japan* and halt ticket sales to East Indians, the company instead sought to increase its passenger traffic, precipitating another showdown by permitting 900 British Indians, primarily Sikhs, to sail to British Columbia on the *Monteagle* in the fall 1907.

It was no coincidence that Sikh ex-servicemen furnished the largest contribution to the ranks of the first wave of British Indian emigrants. For better or worse, the Sikhs, a religious minority in northern India, had been identified as “a martial race” by casuistic nineteenth-century race science and thus disproportionately recruited to serve as sepoys or chokidars, some of whom were stationed at British cantonments in China, whence thousands of workmen subsequently made their departure for the Pacific slope. After their discharge, servicemen were eligible to receive a small allotment of arable land in one of the canal-colonies set up in the Punjab. But, as a contemporary writer, Saint Nihal Singh, noted, the soldier who returns to plough the fields in his village “finds it difficult to resume the thread of life where he left off when he enlisted, [as] the hackneyed and insipid distractions doled by the country signally fail to neutralize the chronic

ills and discomforts that render rural residence hateful to him.” Singh wrote that, while the ex-soldier lacked the wherewithal to “grasp the significance of the gravity of the economic situation of his nation,” he revolted at the idea of spending the rest of his days “herded in with the cattle.” Intrepid ex-sepoys thus “overcame the accumulated inertia of the ages, with a single manful move [overseas].”²⁰

Quite a lot of the Sikhs had rather more mundane accounts of their own actions. Sohan Singh Bhakna, who was fated to play a major role in the radicalization of British Indians on the borderland as the first elected head of the Ghadar party, wrote about his misspent adolescence in the Punjab as the main reason he had left India. When “I had frittered our property [on drink],” Bhakna recalled, “I had no choice but to head overseas.” After mollifying his creditors by putting up the few acres of land that remained of his inheritance, he left his mother and young wife in the winter of 1909, bound for Seattle. A handful of others from his village left with him under similar circumstances. The voyage was made easier, he hypothesized, by the fact that he and the others were Sikhs, who did not adhere to caste taboos and were able to rely on the chain of Sikh temples in the Far East for food and shelter.²¹ Armed with no more than an Urdu-Punjabi dictionary, Bhakna somehow made it through the interview with the port-authority officer, who let him disembark. Within a couple of days he had found his way upriver to Portland, where he was hired at Monarch Mills, on whose site some 200 Indian men worked.²² A reporter in British Columbia who visited the bunk-sheds in which a group of Sikhs lived near New Westminster collected similar stories. Life in India, the new arrivals told their interviewer, was stricken with

²⁰ Saint Nihal Singh, “The Triumph of Indians in Canada,” *Modern Review* 6, no. 2 (August 1909), 102.

²¹ Sohan Singh Bhakna, *Jiwan Sangram* [Life’s struggle], (Jalandhar: Youth Center, 1967), 27.

²² Sohan Singh Bhakna, *Meri Ram Kahani* [My autobiography], edited by Rajinder Singh Rahi (Samana: Sangam Publications, 2012), 60.

“a threefold curse,” caste, poverty, and disease, which kept them half-dead, half-alive.²³

Although the wages in British Columbia were satisfactorily high, a “Sargent Singh,” reportedly speaking on behalf of the others, expressed the hope that, in light of their service in defense of the empire, Indians might be made to feel more welcome in Canada.²⁴

Imperial-minded British officials were not endeared, but deeply unsettled by the fact that Sikhs were the ones headed overseas. The concern was precisely that Sikhs going abroad to find work came from the main military-recruitment districts in the Punjab—Ferozepore, Jullundur, Ludhiana, Amritsar, and Lahore.²⁵ Though no one saw the Sikh ex-servicemen who left their villages to venture overseas as particularly radical or nationalist, colonial officials believed justifiably that the experience of these men with an institution such as the British Indian military, which had habituated them to the idea of hard work for regular pay, would potentially have the effect of politicizing them in a specific direction. The concern, voiced in a confidential memorandum written by E. J. E. Swayne, the governing officer of British Honduras, after he toured British Columbia in 1908, centered on “the return of the Sikhs to the Punjab, spreading as they will, now, ill-digested socialistic ideas,” learned from their white coworkers. Without specifying the substance of these socialistic ideas, Swayne nevertheless wrote that, “these ideas cannot but tend to react amongst the military classes of the Punjab, to the detriment of British prestige.” Swayne understood that there were industries in British Columbia that needed a cheaper source of labor to counterbalance the “unlimited control of white labor unions,” but judged that it was more important for the empire and India to restrict the outflow of Sikhs

²³ Lockley, “Hindu Invasion,” 593.

²⁴ Lockley, “Hindu Invasion,” 592.

²⁵ Commerce and Industry, Emigration, December 1914, file 39.

without contracts of indenture, as free wage-laborers.²⁶ Though the Sikhs were generally liberal-loyalist types who believed in the empire, there was a chance that, as free laborers in British Columbia, they might be roused to make concrete demands for imperial citizenship, equal pay, and the vote. Indeed, by 1914, colonial authorities spoke about the “rabid and fanatical hostility to British rule that the Sikh laboring-classes in the Pacific Coast areas have acquired,” on account of their ill-treatment there, in spite of their formal status as British subjects.²⁷ Another official wrote that this “center of disaffection is, I imagine, one of the most dangerous that have now to be dealt with, and it is intolerable that young Indians should become anarchists or revolutionaries by a sort of force major [sic].”²⁸

Though an outright moratorium on Indian migration to Canada was impolitic, Canadian authorities reached out to their counterparts in India to dissuade would-be immigrants by printing circulars in the vernacular that sketched a gloomy depiction of life in British Columbia, while pressuring ticket agents in Calcutta and in Hong Kong to halt sales.²⁹ Such indirect means to dissuade Indians had little success. After pursuing an investigation of Gillanders & Arbuthnot, ticket agents for the CPR, a senior official in Bengal wrote plainly that such forms of discouragement were “bound to be fruitless,”³⁰ as scare tactics were unable to alter the fact that there was plenty of work at attractive pay available on the US-Canadian borderland.³¹ After the

²⁶ E. J. E. Swayne, Confidential Memorandum on Matters Affecting the East Indian Community, 11, RG7-G-21, vol. 200, File 332, vol. 3 (b), Library and Archives Canada.

²⁷ Commerce and Industry, Emigration, December 1914, file 39.

²⁸ Commerce and Industry, Emigration, December 1914, file 39.

²⁹ Canadian authorities often sought to reach out to India to discourage emigration to Canada, see Commerce and Industry, September 1907, file no. 13-14; Commerce and Industry, May 1908, file number no. 7/45B; and Commerce and Industry, July 1908, file no. 6/4.

³⁰ Commerce and Industry, Emigration, April 1908, file 17-18/4.

³¹ Letter from H. C. Streatfield Dated Sept 9, 1907, Aug. 1907, Commerce and Industry, Emigration, Sept 1907, file 13-14. Hopkinson himself found in December 1909 that “The Hindus here are principally engaged as section hands on the CPR, GNR, and Kettle Valley Railway at wages of \$1.50 to \$2.00 a day. Learnt from the Chief of Police that the Hindus were no trouble to white people and haven able to adapt themselves to the conditions of the place.”

catastrophic earthquake in San Francisco, officials in India feared an exodus for California, where contract work and labor were desperately required to rebuild the city.³² Government of India officials nevertheless fretted that Canadian and US immigration authorities might single out Indians for exclusion while their eligibility naturalization in the US and other legal matters were left pending.³³ And in their internal discussions, British Indian officials noted that, if the charge was that the Indians' cheap labor was depressing wages, a sensible response was to set a minimum wage, which neither the Canadians nor the those in the US favored.³⁴ But when a brief economic downturn hit in 1907, the British ambassador to the US wrote to the Colonial Office to report that the labor market had tightened and a significant number of Sikhs on the US–Canadian borderland were now unemployed.³⁵ It was thus in the self-interest of British Indians that their admission into Canada be halted at once, Secretary of State John Morley implied in his telegraph to Lord Minto in India, pressing for a behind-the-scenes resolution in 1908. Even as Whitehall temporized, the Canadians tried to cut through the difficult knot of imperial matters by implementing their own version of the Natal Act, and later imposing the continuous journey order,³⁶ which stipulated that all new arrivals must have traveled to Canada on through tickets. The Sikhs relied on their status as British subjects, as per the conditions set out by the Treaty of

Found competent in their work. 200 between Cranbrook and Fernie. Traveled through Nelson, Revelstoke. Home Political, B, May, 1910, file 162

³² Extract of letter from the Commissioner of Police, Calcutta to G of Bengal, Feb 8, 1907, Commerce and Industry, Emigration, March 1907, file 3B.

³³ Ambassador James Bryce to Earl Grey, Under-secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, August 31 1907, Commerce and Industry, Emigration, November 1907, file 1/17B.

³⁴ "The G of I do not say that Indian labourers should not be excluded. All that they say is that the exclusion should not take a form which is rightly resented by Indian public opinion. If the objection to the Indian labourer is that he is cheap, the difficulty could only be got over by the prescription of a minimum wage." The same memo spoke of a recommendation offered to officials in the United States, that if a minimum wage was an unpalatable step, then they ought to consider a literacy test to exclude those cheapening the labor market. Commerce and Immigration, Emigration, November 1916, file 19-21.

³⁵ Commerce and Industry, Emigration, May 1908, file 7/45B.

³⁶ Letter from Indian office, JP 3341, 23 August, 1916, GS Hardy, Commerce and Industry, Emigration, November 1916, file 19-21.

1815, to win them entry into the US and Canada. However, as an official in the Punjab noted, their growing discontent abroad stemmed from the fact that “the British ‘sarkar’ does not at any stage come forward in its traditional role of ‘mother and father’ to help them, but on the other hand openly leaves them in a lurch.”³⁷ The Indians in British Columbia found themselves with the nominal status of British subjects but without the benefit of diplomatic representation, and with limited legal recourse.

Socialists in British Columbia

Little sympathy for the Indians could be found among either established party in British Columbia. Neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals were beneath trying to scare up working class votes by portraying the other side as “soft” on the issue of immigration. If the Indian workmen had the vote, the Liberals suggested, the Indians would overwhelmingly vote for the party favored by their employers. For their part, Conservatives, who controlled the British Columbia Legislative Assembly in the era before the First World War, contended that the Liberals hoped to wrest control of the Legislative Assembly by granting non-whites the vote. It was left to the socialists to state the obvious: The Liberals and Conservatives had identical interests in playing to, and playing up, the issue of race, while the corporate behemoth Canadian Pacific Railways (CPR) and local industries had a vested interest in trying to flood British Columbia with cheaper labor. The Socialist Party of Canada, on the one hand, held that British Indian subjects were brought to Canada, “through no fault of their own”—a somewhat condescending take, perhaps, but one intended to counteract racist and chauvinist attitudes, which viciously scapegoated Indians. On the other hand, the socialists believed that all new

³⁷ Sarkar means authority, in this context it refers to the British Indian state. Commerce and Industry, December 1914, file 39.

arrivals to British Columbia were “unwittingly instrumental in delaying the deliverance of enslaved labor from the thralldom of capitalist exploitation.”³⁸



FIGURE 3.2 Sikh men in front of a Canadian Pacific Railway carriage, ca. 1905–1908, Alice Woodby Photograph Collection, courtesy of the University of Washington (UW 18744).

The handful of arrivals on western shores from India in the winter of 1903–04 did not escape the notice of the leftists in British Columbia. Until then, British Columbia socialists had reckoned little with the broad issues of empire, save for rejecting both the idea of implementing an imperial *zollverein* and schemes promoting resettlement from the British Isles to Canada. The standpoint of the SPC had been that British colonialism relied on giving British workers a sop about the glory of the empire, at the expense of socialism, but there had been no reason to think about the other colonies such as India. And when it came to the idea of an *zollverein* or tariff union, which was the subject of a congress of the chambers of commerce of the self-governing British colonies that was held in Montreal in the summer of 1903, a contemporary British Columbia leftist reiterated the view of the SPC that “imperialism is the last ditch of capitalism,” a desperate expedient to stave off socialism. That is, in promising to impose high duties on

³⁸ “The True Solution,” *Western Clarion*, December 15, 1906.

imported wares and to create incentives to boost trade within the empire, a federated customs union was intended to revitalize the lot of English merchants at the expense of the industries of the semi-independent colonies. “The cake” that Chamberlain had baked, remarked the same writer, “is dough,” which was a way of saying that the scheme for a *zollverein* consisted of half-baked assurances that it would create prosperity.³⁹

For the SPC, the idea of imperialism as “the last ditch of capitalism,” was more than mere rhetoric; it was a cornerstone of their worldview. Yet imperialism referred less to a distinct policy on the colonies than to a historical era of capitalist accumulation.⁴⁰ The SPC linked this conception of imperialism to the drive to incorporate Canada into a tariff union with the UK and other self-governing colonies. It was, as the SPC saw things, a desperate means by Canadian magnates and reformist unions to shore up capitalism.⁴¹ Militarism was the correlate and symptom of these imperialist methods to defer crisis, an editorial in the *Western Clarion*, entitled “The Cauldron Boils,” remarked. “The great, commercial nations of today,” the editorial stated, “are but vast armed camps, each zealously engaged in increasing its armament, for the double purpose of holding its working class in subjection to plunder, and defending its opportunity to dispose of such plunder in the world’s markets.”⁴²

With spring giving way to summer in 1904, the handful of Sikh arrivals who had landed that winter sought to find stable employment. Colonel Falk, a retired officer who had toured in India, took out a notice in the local classifieds on their behalf. The advertisement tried promoting their virtues as loyal soldiers, members of a race that had stood by the British through wars, at least as amenable to orders as “the Mongolian” and equally as frugal. A leftist commentator lampooned

³⁹ Philips Thompson, “Imperialism and Socialism,” *Western Clarion*, August 28, 1903.

⁴⁰ Thompson, “Imperialism and Socialism.”

⁴¹ Thompson, “Imperialism and Socialism.”

⁴² ““The Cauldron Boils,” *Western Clarion*, August 20, 1904, 2.

the posting, depicting the Sikhs as servile defenders of an empire that had relied on exploiting British workers, whose stolen surplus was then forced on to the colonies, “at the mouths of cannon.”⁴³ If their conquerors had indeed forced the Sikhs into obedience, as the retired British officer had stated admiringly, what chance was there that they would defy the ruffian employers in British Columbia? The *Western Clarion* later reported that one of the Sikh ex-servicemen had taken to carrying a sandwich board at the astonishingly paltry rate of \$1.50 a week.

The Sikhs, insofar as the socialists saw things, were the latest iteration of a class of cheaper wage-laborers from the Orient intended to break the back of established workers. Explaining the influx of British Indian “objects,” a front-page column of the *Western Clarion* remarked, in September of 1906, “Much complaint has been made of late in regard to the insufferable independence of the ‘Chink,’” whose demands for an increase of wages had “greatly scandalized the employing class.” The answer to this “sauciness” was to replace the supply of labor from China with workmen from India. The growing numbers of “cadaverous turbaned native[s] of British India,” famished as a result of “the rule of British capital in their native land,” the same article noted, had contributed to “the satisfaction of the capitalist and the discomfiture of the docile ‘working-plug.’”⁴⁴ Confronted with the accusation that socialist workingmen objected to newcomers because of their race, another socialist commentator, RP Pettipiece, explained, “the Sikh has as much right, theoretically, in John-Bull’s Canadian slave camps as John Bull’s capitalists in the Sikh domain. It resolves itself as a matter of force. The nation with the most effective death-dealing instruments and damphools to operate will determine what is ‘right.’”⁴⁵

⁴³ The officer was veteran Royal artilleryman, Colonel Falk Warren. “Note and Comment,” *Western Clarion*, June 25, 1904.

⁴⁴ “Influx of British Objects,” *Western Clarion*, September 1, 1906.

⁴⁵ “Sikh Immigration,” *Western Clarion*, October 20, 1906.

The realities of the wage-labor market in British Columbia figured prominently in the debates within the socialist party. Canadian socialists held to a classic Marxist view of the conflict between wage-labor and capital. Labor-power was a commodity on the world-market. Capitalists were therefore under a compulsion to find labor at the cheapest rates available. Furthermore, in a competitive market, as ET Kingsley repeatedly highlighted on the pages of the *Western Clarion*, surplus workers in one area might be brought in to fill a gap elsewhere. “The industries of this country, as of all others, function as capital, i.e., [a] means of exploiting labor. Capital, therefore, rules, and it is the prerogative of capital to obtain its labor in the cheapest market.” A salient article from the summer of 1904 sought to explain to readers “what the class struggle is.” At its core, the class struggle was about more than the wage a worker lived on; it involved “the matter of labor as merchandise [read: a commodity],” the article held. Armed with this view, the SPC, like their counterparts in the Socialist Party of America, interestingly came to look on trade unions with antipathy. For, in trying to negotiate a better rate of exploitation for workers, trade unions made it more difficult for “the class struggle of labor to lift itself from the category of merchandise to the standard of manhood.”⁴⁶

D.G.DG McKenzie, who had lived in India and edited the *Western Clarion* from 1908, once rather pithily remarked “we have no concern with the traffic in labor any more than we have with the trade in turnips.”⁴⁷ The SPC held that it was futile for Canadian socialists to interfere with the legal rights of the migrants pouring into a hole in the ocean: the idea of quashing the international labor market by putting a halt to immigration was a wishful thought. “While there will be found white men who resent the intrusion of the Japs into this ‘white man’s country,’ and

⁴⁶ “What the Class Struggle Is: Improper Use of the Term Confuses its Proper Understanding,” *Western Clarion*, August 13, 1904.

⁴⁷ Quoted in A. Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899-1919* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 56.

will endeavor to vent their spleen upon the Jap workman himself, those who understand the game of capitalist rule will see in the little brown men only others of its victims used as pawns upon the chess-board of world-wide robbery and rapine.”⁴⁸ Years later, in 1912, a reporter from Toronto interviewed members of the Industrial Workers of the World, who likewise stated that capital was responsible for the influx, but “then capital found that the Hindu demanded the vote. If he got it he would line up with us [labor]. . . . Capital wants cheap labor in now under restrictions, no vote, limited number, limited occupations.” The IWW man hastened to state: “We oppose that to the hilt!”⁴⁹

The socialists criticized immigration from the East, but were equally critical of importing white workers from the British Isles, or anywhere else for that matter, as a means for employers to reduce labor costs and make up for shortages in British Columbia. Like their comrades in Britain, the British Columbia socialists believed it was a ruse when the commissioner for immigration in Ottawa outlined a program to incentivize agents to recruit immigrants from Britain—promising £1 for a man over the age of 18 who migrated to work as a farmhand or in railroad construction, or a woman who intended to serve as a domestic, and 10 shillings for children.⁵⁰ The SPC reprinted an article by a member of the Social-Democratic Federation of Britain on “the emigration fraud,” which held that mendacious advertisements “lured [British workers] to the Canadian backwoods,” where Yankee capitalists were plundering and exploiting them even more rapaciously than British industrialists were. “Ground down to a narrow and uncertain existence through centuries of capitalist tyranny and oppression, [British workers] will

⁴⁸ “The Japanese Invasion,” *Western Clarion*, July 27, 1907

⁴⁹ Quoted in Agnes G. Laut, *Am I my Brother's Keeper: A Study of British Columbia's Labor and Oriental Problems* (Toronto: Saturday Night, 1913), 25.

⁵⁰ Phillips Thompson, “To Swamp the Market,” *Western Clarion*, December 22, 1906.

grasp at a chance to escape their misery and servitude,” a Canadian leftist remarked. But to “induce them to come over, their ears will be regaled with seductive stories. . . nine-tenths of [which] will be unadulterated falsehood.”⁵¹ It was in the interests of British Columbian workmen that no efforts be made to “cause an influx of laborers from any other part of the earth.” If anything, SPC socialists believed, workers ought to “remain where they are and fight the class struggle with their masters to a finish.”

Of course, the one fate worse than capitalist exploitation for a wage-slave was to be left without employment, as the Indians no doubt saw from experience. “The curse of unemployment [is] at once the fruit and feed of capitalism,” noted the *Western Clarion* on its front page, in the spring of 1903. Great wealth exists alongside of and as a result of the poverty of the mass. Capitalism, as a system, relied on a “reserve” of would-be workers, “together with all the poverty, misery, and despair that it implies.” “It is also clear, that if such a reserve of workless men does not exist,” the same author continued, “[one] had to be created” in order to create the conditions ripe for exploitation. Capitalists therefore relied on florid descriptions of life in countries such as Canada to induce men to immigrate there. And emigration from England and the Continent also functioned as “an admirable safety-valve,” as a means of disposing surplus workers, rendered superfluous by the introduction of new machines and improvements to the workflow. The one solution to the “curse of unemployment,” as editorials in the *Western Clarion* repeatedly stressed, was socialism, rather than mass deportation of the Indian arrivals.⁵²

⁵¹ JB McNab, “The Emigration Fraud,” *Western Clarion*, May 15, 1905, reprinted from *Justice* (London).

⁵² J. G. Morgan, “The Curse of Unemployment: At Once the Fruit and Feed of Capitalism,” *Western Clarion*, May 19, 1903.

It was commonplace for Canadian social democrats to complain that there was no noun in English that was more misrepresented or more maligned than “socialist.” Socialism was itself an “import” into British Columbia. Scotch and Anglo-American settlers to British Columbia brought radical ideologies with them, specifically socialism of both the Christian millenarian as well as the Marxist type. A number of British migrants had been radicalized by the Social Democratic Federation, the Independent Labor Party, and the Fabians. Yet the more immediate radical influence came from the United States. A branch of the US-based Socialist Labor Party led by the Marxist Daniel DeLeon was founded in British Columbia by Arthur Spencer in 1898. Faced with the rise of industrialism and the concentration of capital it inaugurated, Spencer remarked in 1899 that older craft and trade unions were fated for obsolescence.⁵³

British Columbia socialists folded into a national party, Socialist Party of Canada (SPC), formed in 1904.⁵⁴ The British Columbians had by then adopted the views of the Socialist Party of America, led capably by Eugene V. Debs, but were forced to accommodate elements of Christian socialism from the Canadian Socialist League, and then to concede a host of demands based on local concerns. Radicalized colliers in British Columbia had called a DeLeon loyalist, ET Kingsley, a double-amputee from an industrial accident in California, to fight for them. “The

⁵³ A new Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance (STLA) was therefore formed as the economic arm of the SLP. It sought to organize railwaymen of the CPR and targeted the reformism of the of federal Canadian Trades and Labor Congress (TLC). DeLeon and Spencer represented a kind of orthodoxy that that quickly split their party; the United Socialist Labor Party was formed in 1900. All the while there were those in Canada who felt the splits were a distraction. Herman Titus, a member of the newly formed USLP and editor of the Seattle *Socialist*, argued that socialism transcended national boundaries and that British Columbia, on account of its proximity to Washington state, ought to organize together with the socialists there and affiliate with the Socialist Party of America. The SPA was led by the Marxist Eugene Debs of the American Railway Union—a union that had established locals in Revelstoke and Vancouver in 1894. Debs himself lectured often in Vancouver at the invitation of the local trades council and was invited to dedicate the Labor Temple in 1899. Debs had a clear sense of the kind of view unions and socialists ought to take on integrationism—a call that the Canadian socialists equivocated on. Radicalized British Columbians came to hold view by 1900 that capitalism would be fought from West to East in Canada. See McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 53.

⁵⁴ The Socialist Party of British Columbia (SPBC) was formed in 1901.

pathway leading to our emancipation from the chains of wage slavery,” Kingsley remarked, “is uncompromising political warfare against the capitalist class, with no quarter and no surrender.” What Kingsley brought with him to British Columbia was a sensibility that was deeply critical of the utility of economic action through trade unions and rejected as short-sighted reforms such as wage increase and shorter hours. The ballot, Kingsley held, was the only viable weapon for the working class.⁵⁵ The ultimate objectives of a socialist party, moreover, could only be drawn within grasp when workers had already won control of the state.⁵⁶ And over the objections of others in his own party he led a fight against the conservative instincts of the unions.⁵⁷ From its uncompromising stance, the SPC looked on trade unions as an obstacle to socialism, since unions made demands that were limited to trying to ameliorate the effects of rather than overcome capitalism, thus postponing the revolution. The union chiefs, the socialists held, functioned in a condominium of sorts with employers, supplying them with workers in the high season and pulling those workers back when there was some slack. Editorials in the socialist organ, the *Western Clarion*, never tired of repeating, “the class struggle is fought over the matter of labor as merchandise, rather than its wage.”⁵⁸ The future of socialism in Canada, the socialists of British Columbia believed, was dependent on the revolution in the US sweeping north, then spreading

⁵⁵ For at least a decade, ET Kingsley was synonymous with socialism in British Columbia, and his hand was obvious in the short-lived Revolutionary Socialist Party of Canada (1902) and the creation of the Socialist Party of Canada (1904). Appointed the first editor of the *Western Clarion*, Kingsley took an “impossibilist” stance in the newspaper, which held that the trade unions were the manifestation rather than the antithesis of the capitalist system. The central tenants of impossibilism were that capitalism was beyond reform; attempts to ameliorate capitalism through the unions, while sometimes beneficial to workers, were, in the final analysis, myopic; and that a self-conscious working-class had to lead the fight for a cooperative commonwealth. Vexed by the opposition of some union men to socialism, Kingsley likened the faith that some leftists had in the trade unions to “the religious superstition of the middle ages upon its devotees.” Quoted in McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries*, 56.

⁵⁶ McCormack, 53.

⁵⁷ McCormack, 31.

⁵⁸ “What the Class Struggle is,” *Western Clarion*, August 13, 1904.

from West to the East. A labor party that was not socialist was a hulk on the sea without “compass, rudder, cargo or ballast.”⁵⁹

The SPC had thus set itself a difficult task. Despite the prevailing winds, which favored the mainstream Conservatives and Liberals, the SPC sought to contest parliamentary and local elections. The SPC committed themselves to a parliamentary course of action; its ambition was to win elections in British Columbia. Still, in the 1903 BC elections, the incipient party mustered a slate of 10 candidates and helped elect J. H. Hawthornwaite, a union man from Nanaimo who had come over to the SPC, and Parker Williams from Newcastle, both with constituencies on Vancouver Island.⁶⁰ If the imported migrants had votes, an editorial in the 1907 speculated, there was some possibility of economic change, as “the head of the lowest-grade coolie is no thicker than a fair percentage of the home-made article, and is probably just as susceptible to revolt.” The tactic was hobbled, in the view of one Canadian socialist, G. W. Wrigley, by the peculiarity of the Canadian election system; there were no statewide elections, so the socialists were forced to run candidates in local districts, with each candidate depositing \$200, a sum that was forfeited if the candidate did not secure at least half of the vote of the eventual winner. Moreover, there were property requirements, both for candidates and voters, putting any socialist or labor contenders in a difficult double bind. When local elections were held in 1907, the SPC cautioned that “the wage slaves of British Columbia have been blind enough to elect a majority of men who will write the law as dictated to them by the ruling class.” The worker who voted for one of the mainstream capitalist parties would be “getting what he voted for.”⁶¹ After similar results in the BC elections of 1909, an SPC member remarked that the socialists stood vindicated in their

⁵⁹ “The Capitalist Wolf Scents New Victims,” *Western Clarion*, January 5, 1905.

⁶⁰ If the vote were proportionally rendered: the socialists would have claimed 4 seats and organized labor 3. Trade unions and socialists elected 3 MLAs in 1903; 3 in 1907; 3 in 1909; 2 in 1912; 1 in 1916; and 3 in 1920.

⁶¹ “How About You, Mr. Elector of BC?,” *Western Clarion*, February 16, 1907.

assertion that there was an identity of interest between the Liberals and Conservatives. And though British Columbia had voted for Conservatives and Alberta for the Liberals, the same three corporations were dominant and had their hand in the elections: the Canadian Pacific, Grand Trunk Pacific, and the Canadian Northern Railways.⁶²

Despite their steadfast view that labor was a commodity on the world market, the stance that the SPC took on immigration, particularly the influx of Chinese, Japanese, and later British Indians, was filled with ambivalence. Although in its initial stages the SPC was a party made up primarily of Anglo-American immigrants, after 1905 a number of eastern-European exiles and workers filtered into their ranks. A common objection to these immigrant workers was their purportedly “unassimilable” character. Ethnic contractors were seen as degraders of labor. Though racism figured into this charge, the rational kernel of their claim was rooted in the view that workers from the East had little or no experience as modern wage-laborers, that is, as capitalist subjects. While workers feared the influx of migrants as competitors in the labor market, the socialists looked “with satisfaction [on] the efforts of these Eastern nations to adopt the civilization of the west and lift themselves to the very forefront of capitalist brigandage.” For “the sooner they accomplish this, the sooner will the conditions in the United States, England, Germany, France, etc., force the proletarian revolution, and the end of capitalism and its degraded wage-slavery.”⁶³

Although the SPC followed the cues of the radical integrationist policy of the American Socialist Party, the latter was itself split on the issue, carrying its disagreements all the way to the

⁶² Dan Sproul, “The Situation in British Columbia,” *International Socialist Review* 10 (February 1910): 744.

⁶³ “China Awakening,” *Western Clarion*, October 29, 1905.

convention of the Socialist International in 1907. At Stuttgart, the representatives of the Socialist Party of America submitted a resolution that called on socialists in industrialized nations to educate newcomers on the fundamentals of socialism and trade unionism, but also to stanch the tide of immigration of the “backward races.” The resolution revealed a cleft between radical integrationists and reformist exclusionists. Vice-chairman of the commission on immigration and emigration, Morris Hillquit, who had voted for the measure to halt immigration from the Orient at the 1904 congress in Amsterdam, rose to explain the new resolution, prefacing his remarks with assurances that socialists were without prejudice, but had to be realists. Capitalist development, Hillquit ventured, had led to distinct streams of migration: one stream, which was the putatively “natural” result of the capitalist system, the socialists wished to see continue. Yet individual capitalists, interested in a cheaper workforce, were responsible for an “artificial” stream of migration. Far-East migration, Hillquit remarked, fell into the latter category. “Against these nomads (*sarrasins*), our workers ought to be able to defend their ‘standard of life’ and their level of parity.”⁶⁴ And since “we are in the midst of a relentless struggle pitting capital against labor,” Hillquit continued, the influx of these “nomads” threatened to retard the course of socialism in the US. The Japanese socialists took exception. “It appears to me,” Tokijiro Kato of the Japanese Socialist Party noted, “that race is playing a significant role and that the Americans are guided by the infamous specter of the ‘Yellow Peril.’”⁶⁵ Recent events, such as the forced expulsions of Asiatic workers, Kato intimated, confirmed this suspicion; capitalists were trying to flatter the basest instincts of certain workers by exaggerating the threat. He reminded everyone of the words of the Communist Manifesto, “Worker of all countries, unite!” pushing the socialists in the US to take Japanese workers into their fold. Julius Hammer of the American

⁶⁴ Secrétariat du Bureau Socialiste International, *VIIe Congrès Socialiste Internationale*, 238.

⁶⁵ Secrétariat du Bureau Socialiste International, *VIIe Congrès Socialiste Internationale*, 245

Socialist Labor Party also rose to criticize the “completely erroneous” Hillquit resolution.

Hillquit represented a view “inspired by the corporate selfishness of certain unions”—a view that fanned racial hatred and led workers to acts of violence. The commission rejected the Hillquit resolution on a preliminary vote and instead reiterated that the worldwide migratory waves were as much the result of capitalism as unemployment, overproduction, and under-consumption. The commission resolved instead that it was the “duty” of all workers’ organizations to oppose the frequent attempt to depress the standard of life of workers through the mass importation of workers habituated to a meaner standard, principally from countries with agricultural or familial economies, without recourse to chauvinistic measures intended to exclude certain nationalities or races.⁶⁶

If trade unions harbored intense anti-Asian attitudes, the socialists in the SPC and IWW had an explanation for why such crass appeals based on race were detrimental to workers *as such*, of all races. Anti-Asian racism, as socialists well understood, was harmful even to those workers identified or classified as “whites.” The racism used to disenfranchise non-whites was also an obstacle to the full enfranchisement of whites. And in their clearer moments, the Canadian socialists understood the Chinese and Japanese to be central and foundational to the political economy of British Columbia, rather than simply as a national group or as immigrants. For socialists, the ability to constrain whom a capitalist hired or fired would mark an important advance for workers, but the trade unions had inserted themselves into this same fight. The unions and labor leaders feared competition from overseas as well as from the US. A socialist from Port Arthur, Ontario reminded comrades in British Columbia of the final dictum of the *Communist Manifesto*, “Workers of the world, unite!” And he admonished them, “let us forget all

⁶⁶ Secrétariat du Bureau Socialiste International, *VIIe Congrès Socialiste Internationale*, 255.

difference,” for “What is race or color?”⁶⁷ When the United Mine Workers of Lethbridge voted in 1909 to allow Chinese and Japanese miners into their union, the *Western Clarion* took another step toward adopting inter-racialism as a policy. “Our foes are not alien race, but of our own blood. Not our fellow slaves but our common masters. They know no distinction of race, creed, or color.” By pitting the European against Asians, the editorial argued, “the workers, ever blind, have risen to the bait. But is it not the capitalist class that beats down our wage with the Asiatic club?”⁶⁸ The editors hoped to see the interracial tribe of the mineworkers increase.

The SPC stressed the importance of the unity of workers, irrespective of color.⁶⁹ However, practically, the party often made concessions, especially at the level of rhetoric, to the racially charged concerns of white workmen who had the right to vote. The SPC was grappling with a real conundrum: Racial discrimination constituted an obstacle to the working-class struggle. Foreign labor was being imported with the more or less explicit goal of driving down wages and weakening the labor movement. However, a large segment of the labor movement was content with a narrow, reflexive reaction to this situation. Compared to uniting all workers against their mutual exploiters, it was easier to scapegoat immigrant workers. Meanwhile, immigration battles led both whites and immigrants to accept ever more degraded conditions of the working class. Class, in the original Marxist sense, was about more than economic exploitation; it was, as the SPC noted, about the contradiction, at the heart of producing surplus-value in capitalism: the contradiction between wages and capital—or between variable and constant capital and, at another level of abstraction, between circulating and fixed capital. The issue, in short, was not racism, in the sense of injustice based on race, alone. Rather, the socialists in British Columbia

⁶⁷ Gerald Desmond, “Workers of the World Unite for Emancipation,” *Western Clarion*, January 16, 1909.

⁶⁸ “All Slaves Together,” *Western Clarion*, February 13, 1909.

⁶⁹ Isitt, “Elusive Unity,” 56.

were faced with the multi-faceted issues proceeding from the way in which Indians and other minorities were pathologically left only half-integrated into the reproduction of capital. If socioeconomic class is viewed as the result rather than the cause of capital, then race and the historical circumstances by which capital is reconstituted assume a new significance politically for the working class, as such, and not only for racial minorities within that class. Yet this was precisely what complicated things for the SPC. The SPC did not concern itself with “preserving” the whiteness of the working class in BC; rather, the SPC realized that the salient issue was the conditions under which Indians came to Canada. For it was under those conditions that anti-Oriental racism had become a factor in the self-constitution of the working class.

That the new Indian arrivals on the western slope faced hardened anti-Asian attitudes is undeniable. Such discrimination took an especially ugly form in the wake of the recession that hit the US in the autumn of 1907, spreading northward to British Columbia as winter fell. But racial separatism on the borderland was neither principally the consequence of the recession nor of a defeat of the working-class, as the downturn itself turned out to be brief. The region rebounded quickly, generally enjoying an era of relative economic prosperity, which lasted until World War I. If anything, the perduring anti-Asian prejudice on the borderland reached its height while the area was still growing exponentially, when wages for skilled and unskilled labor were relatively high, and trade unions were still gaining rather than giving up their strength. Anti-Asian racism then figures as an invidious condition of the reproduction of the “white” working-class. The recession heightened the anxieties of the working class and fed xenophobia, which then endured even after the economy rebounded, on the basis of the immigrants’ “under-class” status having been cemented.

Contract Labor and an “Asiatic” Underclass

The socioeconomic realities that men from the Orient faced on the Pacific Coast of Canada and the US bracketed them as an under-class. Life on the western slope fluctuated with the seasons, so employers tended to draft workers in the high season and then release them as quickly once the cycle finished. Fresh arrivals were therefore vulnerable to predatory third-party contractors who monopolized the immigrant labor market in rapidly growing areas, where the reservoir of local workers was small, or where natives were reluctant to work as wage-laborers.⁷⁰ A clutch of Chinese middlemen first sprang up on the West Coast in the 1870s, in response to an acute labor shortage on the railroads, proving their worth as reliable sources of a seemingly endless supply of inexpensive workmen. Chin Gee Hee, a contractor in Seattle, funneled some 20,000 or more of his countrymen from southern China into the service of the railroad magnate James J. Hill, whose empire of steel and steam on the borderland included the Northern Pacific Railway (1883), the Great Northern (St. Paul–Seattle, 1893), and the Canadian Pacific (Montreal–Vancouver, 1895). After the Chinese Exclusion Act was ratified in the United States in 1882 (extended as the Geary Act a decade later), a group of Japanese contractors, led by Charles Tetuo Takahashi who ran the Oriental Trading Company, stepped in. The Oriental Trading Company took over the model of the Chinese contractors by supplying labor to the Great Northern Railways. British Columbia, which desperately needed more able-bodied workmen since it had fewer than 50,000 residents in 1881, readily absorbed the Chinese and Japanese. Yip Sang, tenured as a superintendent for the CPR, built a complex network of subagents in China who recruited workers and loaned them the means to make the transpacific voyage. Indebted villagers from the Pearl River Delta found themselves even more dependent on Yip Sang once in

⁷⁰ Chang, *Pacific Connections*, 25.

Canada, where they were housed, clothed, transported, and hired out by him—services for which he was then able to dock their paychecks—while squeezing still more from them by providing the newcomers with supplies and profiting off other services, such as posting letters, getting documents translated, and dispatching remittances. And after the main branch of the railroad was completed, in the mid-1890s, Yip Sang formed a company that was the exclusive agency for CPR ships going to and from China, which helped shape “an international market in labor that connected rural villagers in southern China to the railways, mines, fisheries, and mills in Washington, Oregon, Montana, and Alaska.”⁷¹ Yet Canadian authorities prohibitively raised the head-tax on Chinese migrants to \$500 in 1903.⁷² Around 20,000 Japanese immigrants had landed in Washington State and British Columbia by 1908, when the Meiji administration in Japan, mindful of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, restricted the number of its citizens departing for Canada to 400 a month. Apart from the railroads, employers in others sectors also relied on middlemen to mobilize unskilled workers for arduous tasks such as fruit picking, reaping a harvest, piling lumber at sawmills, laying down sections of railroad tracks, or packing salmon in the canneries.

⁷¹ The “conquest of distance,” as Kornel Chang notes, created “an empire of extraction.” The CPR opened a north-south feeder line from Vancouver to Seattle shortly thereafter. And the railroad companies began providing regular steamship service to transpacific destinations. “Between 1900 and 1913, revenues from commercial timber rose from \$136,000 to more than \$2 million per annum. There were close to eighty salmon canneries in the 1890s, mostly located on or around the Fraser River.” That packed a million cases of salmon valued at about \$5 million in 1897. “The total value of the region’s output from manufacturing, forestry, mining, fishing and agriculture went from a little over \$8 million in 1881 to over \$22 million in 1891 and almost quadrupled to \$84 million in 1901.” At the turn of the century, four out of five residents in BC were new arrivals. See Chang, *Pacific Connections*, 20-21.

⁷² The head-tax was raised from \$10 to \$50 in 1896, then from \$50 to \$100 in 1901, then to \$500 in 1903 before immigration from China was completely blocked by a Liberal administration in 1923.



FIGURES 3.3–3.5 Clockwise from top: Sikh sawmill workers at North Pacific Lumber Company in Barnet, British Columbia, date unknown, photographer/studio of Philip Timms, Vancouver Public Library (VPL 7641); Sikh workman at Imperial Cannery in Steveston, British Columbia, ca. 1913, photographer / studio of Todd, F. Dundas, Vancouver Public Library, (VPL 2057); Sikh on an Imperial Cannery salmon boat, ca. 1913, photographer / studio of Todd, F. Dundas, Vancouver Public Library (VPL 2052).

The industrialists interested in developing the immense natural resources of Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia relied on ethnic labor contractors. Yet socialists had reason to characterize this class of middlemen as labor-skinners. After all, Chinese, Japanese, and later Indian workers made about half to three-quarters of what their white counterparts made for their wages. Of course, capitalists and the contractors doubled-down on a number of half-truths to rationalize this kind of discrimination. A common refrain of theirs in this era was that workers from the Orient had reconciled themselves to a different standard of life than white workers or that all of the newcomers were mere sojourners who wanted to make a swift buck before going back to their homeland.⁷³ Although employers valued their access to this stream of eastern workers, who on the surface labored ungrudgingly for reduced pay, established workmen resented contractors for importing a potentially rivalrous workforce. The independent writer Saint Nihal Singh, who traveled through British Columbia in 1906–07, noted that “it is surprising and unfortunate, indeed, that [the Indian] men should be received even with *sectional* hostility. It is all the more surprising that the labour union[s] should oppose them.”⁷⁴ Like all other workmen, the Indian immigrants suffered “the baneful effect of wages.” If the unionists halted their endeavor to oppose the newcomers, Nihal Singh remarked, there was ample evidence that instead of cheapening labor, the Indians themselves sought higher wages.⁷⁵

⁷³ W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1978), 34.

⁷⁴ J. Barclay Williams and Saint N. Singh, “Canada’s New Immigrant,” *Canadian Magazine* 28, no. 4 (February 1907): 391.

⁷⁵ Williams and Singh, “Canada’s New Immigrant,” 391.

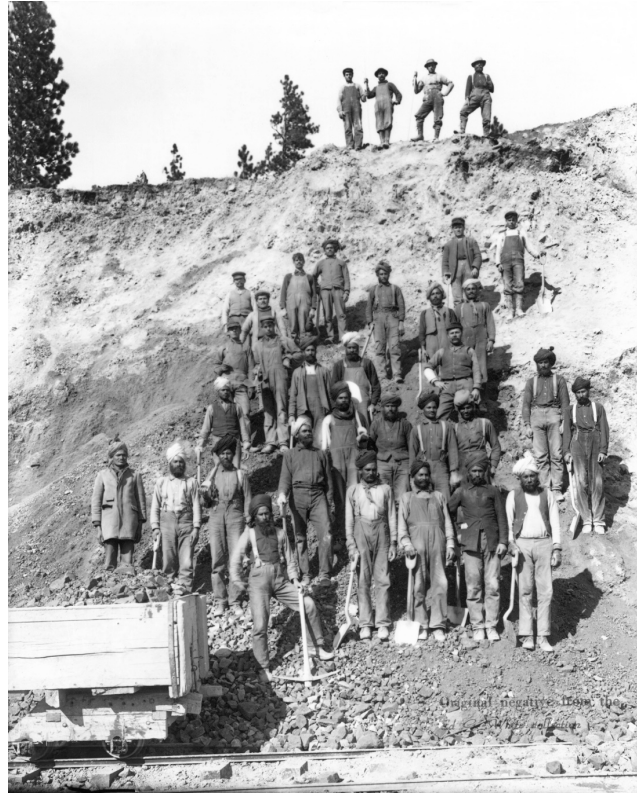


Figure 3.6: Sikh railroad gang in California, date unknown, courtesy of Meriam Library, Special Collections, California State University, Chico, Meriam Library (SC 21935).



FIGURE 3.7: Sikh railroad workers on Pacific and Eastern Railway which ran from Medford to Butte Falls, Oregon, ca. 1910, courtesy Southern Oregon Historical Society.

The future Ghadarites, such as Sohan Singh Bhakna, wrote autobiographically about the dialectic of welcome and unwelcome that he and others had faced on the US-Canadian borderland, where industries had absorbed “Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Turkish, and eastern European workers, but left them vulnerable in economic downturns, forced to ration their own bread.”⁷⁶ Faced with discrimination, the men found it difficult to find rentals, despite pooling their resources.⁷⁷ Forced into ramshackle accommodations, which were turned into dormitories to accommodate even more men, the Indian sojourners in the northwest and British Columbia lived in inhospitable conditions. After sizable numbers of British Indians started to arrive in British Columbia in the fall of 1906, civic health authorities in South Vancouver intervened to condemn some of their wretched, unheated tenements. The mayor then scuttled the destitute Indians beyond the city limits to an abandoned cannery, with no water or creature comforts, where the men were “housed” at their own expense, at the rate of three dollars a month.⁷⁸

Emigrants from India were never able to establish a successful credit-ticket system of their own, on the model of what the Chinese and Japanese had exploited so adeptly. Sawmill owners in British Columbia allegedly struck a deal with Davichand, identified as a Brahmin would-be contractor, who was to furnish the mills with 2,000 of his countrymen. The 1907 Canadian commission on Oriental immigration found that Davichand, together with his father-in-law and nephew had recruited about a 150 Indians to Millside, British Columbia, where the three men ran a store at which their compatriots bought rations.⁷⁹ Though Davichand bought tickets to Canada,

⁷⁶ Bhakna, *Jiwan sangram*, 31.

⁷⁷ See statement of Dominion Immigration Inspector at Vancouver in Williams and Singh, “Canada’s New Immigrant,” 388.

⁷⁸ Williams and Singh, “Canada’s New Immigrant,” 385; also see Hugh Johnston, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada’s Colour Bar* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014), 13.

⁷⁹ W. L. Mackenzie King, *Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Methods by which Oriental Labourers have been induced to come to Canada* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1908), 80.

which he then sent back to the Punjab on credit, his operation always lacked the sophistication of Chinese creditors and transportation brokers who loaned thousands of migrants the amount to pay for their passage and the head-tax, and then transferred or sold the debt (including interest) to affiliated companies and associations.⁸⁰ With the exception of small operations such as the one run by Davichand, Indian migrants generally had to mortgage some of their homestead, or had to rely on moneylenders and relatives to raise their own funds.⁸¹

Even with the clout of industrialists and steamer-transport companies, Indians who made the transpacific voyage still found it difficult to enter the US and Canada, as immigration authorities on both sides of the 49th Parallel made it difficult for them to exercise their privilege as British subjects. Referred to as pejoratively as Hindoos/Hindus by immigration officials though almost all of them were in fact Sikhs or Muslims, British Indians were refused entry in both countries for a host of reasons: the likelihood of destitution, physical defects, carrying contagious or dangerous diseases, practicing or supporting polygamy, or even for prearranging employment contracts. Between 1899 and 1913, though a total of 6,656 British Indians won admission into the US, another 2,844 of their countrymen were turned back, 107 were forced to deport, and 704 left of their own volition.⁸² The number of British Indian arrivals reached its apex in 1910, when 1,782 entered the US, but even that was no more than a droplet in an ocean of a million newcomers.⁸³ Official statistics fixed the number of Indians who had reached the shores of western Canada by 1908, after which new rules made it almost impossible for them to land, at

⁸⁰ Chang, *Pacific Connections*, 23.

⁸¹ Most of Sikhs were smallholders, whose families held 30 to 80 acres, on which crops such as wheat, corn, sugarcane, melons, and cotton were farmed. A number of the migrants mortgaged homesteads at exorbitant rates to be able to pay for the transpacific passage. Das, *Hindustani Workers*, 1.

⁸² *Hindu Immigration: Hearings before the Committee on Immigration on Restriction of Hindu Laborers*, February 19, 1914, 63rd Congress, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1914), 90.

⁸³ "International Immigration and Naturalization" *Historical Statistics of the United States Colonial Times to 1970*, Part 1, (Washington DC: United States Bureau of Census), 105-113.

5,179. Ahead of the outbreak of the Great War, about 10,000 Indians resided on the western slope, tallying the sums generously, although inflated estimates reckoned that the number was closer to 30,000.⁸⁴

While he visited Canada in the winter of 1905–06, J. A. Hobson, the foremost English theorist of imperialism, linked the issues of an imperial tariff union, “Asiatic” immigration, and the opening of the Pacific West. Hobson marveled at the picturesque landscape of British Columbia, “with its richly timbered lakeland, its background of softened mountain distances, and its quiet sheltered sea.”⁸⁵ Against this backdrop of natural wonder, Hobson noted, the West was the land of rampant speculation. Coal and iron mines flecked the majestic mountains, efficient fisheries lined the streams, and fruit orchards flourished in the valleys, while lumber mills were springing up on the edges of the sylvan landscape. The stark contrasts were not lost on Hobson, who remarked that nowhere else in Canada was “the labor question” as prominently marked as it was in British Columbia; “nowhere else is the class sentiment of employer and employed so much embittered. This is often lightly imputed to the proximity of the socialist-labor movement on the Pacific Coast of the United States, and to agitators who come up from Washington state; but the truer causes are deeper seated.”⁸⁶ Hobson continued by speculating that, if the number of inhabitants were to swell into the millions that were needed to properly realize its industrial ambitions, “this can only come by giving an open door to Asia. If nature has her way,” he speculated, “both commerce and population must tend more and more to become Asiatic, and, in fact, predominantly Chinese.”⁸⁷ A large share of the actual work, such as the Canadian Pacific

⁸⁴ The discrepancy is only partially explained by the fact that some Indians entered the US through Mexico. Rattan Singh, *Brief History of the Hindustan Gadar Party* (San Francisco: Hindustan Gadar Press), 1.

⁸⁵ J. A. Hobson, *Canada Today* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1906), 27-28.

⁸⁶ Hobson, *Canada Today*, 33.

⁸⁷ Hobson, 33.

Railroad, had already been chiefly built by “Oriental” labor. Yet, “for manufacturers, for roads, for fruit-growing, and for domestic service, it is natural that employers here should look longingly to the East, and should feel exasperation at the policy which shuts out their illimitable fund of cheap labor.” Even so, Hobson observed, wages were higher in British Columbia than in Ontario. All of which made the talk of Canada joining a British imperial *zollverein* all the more absurd. Protection tried to stimulate commerce artificially; “instead of trying to develop close commercial relations with their natural markets, [the champions of a tariff union in Britain] seek to draw the foods and manufactured articles they need from the far east of Canada, at enormous expense of carriage and long delays.” It was obvious to Hobson that, if rapid development of British Columbian industries and commerce was desirable, certain reforms were clearly necessary. The first was to throw down the tariff barrier against the United States, and the other was to ease the admission of newcomers from the East. Canada, as it stood, was pursuing a “dog-in-the-manger policy” by rejecting the labor that it needed to cultivate its natural resources. Hobson held that the prevailing conservatism in British Columbia amounted to a “monstrous exhibition of monopoly,” whether it was cloaked under the name of racial integrity, imperial interests, or protecting labor.⁸⁸ The stark contrasts evident in British Columbia were equally apt to describe the situation across the western slope, which, shortly after Hobson returned to England, burst into radicalized conflagration.

Outcast: The Anti-Asian Riots on the Borderland

Just as the summer of 1907 faded into autumn, the residents of Bellingham, Washington, a one-whistle halt on the Great Northern railroad, were preparing to host an enormous Labor Day

⁸⁸ Hobson, *Canada Today*, 36.

demonstration. A reporter for a local newspaper noted that the organizers, the members of the Central Labor Council, had burned their candles at both ends in anticipation of the largest ever festival of its kind in the northwest.⁸⁹ Little was to be left to chance, since a constellation of trade unions from within a hundred-mile radius had committed to participating, which included delegations from British Columbia.⁹⁰ Townsfolk had volunteered to host the visitors. Most merchants in the area were planning to shutter their shops in the spirit of the occasion. Though no doubt anxious about the commotion, the mayor, faced with reelection soon, handed the sons of toil *carte blanche* for their celebration.

Though rain on the morn threatened to wash out the merrymaking, townsfolk and visitors braved the bleak weather, enjoying a full slate of activities. A swarm of revelers had filled the streets by eleven o'clock, when a caravan of elaborate floats, each paying tribute to the different trades active on the borderland, set off from the section of Bellingham referred to as Old Town. Later, in the afternoon, the flock relocated to the waterfront, where tradesmen settled their workplace rivalries with sports. The sailors had it out with the stevedores at tug-of-war while the clerks at the electric company and the electricians fielded their own sides to play baseball. While women tried their hand at events such as spike-driving and were judged in pageants, the children bobbed for apples and hopped about in sack races. After dark, a firework display held everyone in awe, while under the main tent on the boardwalk at Silver Beach, the state band was heard playing dulcet waltzes and the schottische for revelers, late into the night. The lead column in the *American Reveille* on September 3 hazarded that the highlight of the celebration had been the enormous clambake at White City, the new fairground on Lake Whatcom, which boasted a wooden roller coaster and was bathed at dusk in white electric light. At least for the brief while

⁸⁹ "Big Celebration for Labor Day," *American Reveille*, September 1, 1907.

⁹⁰ "Two Nations Will March in Parade," *Bellingham Herald*, August 22, 1907.

that labor held the scepter, in the summation of the same writer, “the shores of the lake [were transformed] into the metropolis of the northwest.”⁹¹

Yet the revelries poorly masked the anxieties of workingmen. The issues that affected men who toiled for their livelihood—the length of the workday; a fixed minimum wage; union recognition; and the threat of replacement by cheaper labor, particularly by Chinese, Japanese, and Indian workers—loomed over the celebration in small-town Bellingham. A deputy of the openly anti-Asian craft union, the American Federation of Labor, who was invited to be the keynote speaker, referred elliptically to the obstacles that unions everywhere on the western slope faced, while the mayor tried unconvincingly to portray himself as a stalwart champion for workingmen, even as he warred with the Central Labor Council behind the scenes over an ordinance that limited the length of the workday to eight hours and stipulated a minimum wage.⁹² Ahead of the celebrations held on that first weekend in September, there were murmurs in Bellingham about the fact that local lumberyard owners were replacing their white mill-hands with East Indian crews, some of whom had come south to Washington via Canada.⁹³ Lost in the stories of the mirthful celebrations in Bellingham was the ugly scene when, as the crowds snaked through a gritty section of Old Town, some of the revelers taunted and beat the Sikhs in their midst. Meanwhile, there were reports from San Francisco that Olaf Tveitmoe, head of the Japanese-Korean Exclusion League (rechristened the Asiatic Exclusion League in December of 1907), had made use of the celebrations there to rouse the union members picnicking at

⁹¹ “Labor Day Ends with Clam Bake,” *American Reveille*, September 3, 1907.

⁹² Pressured by the unions, the mayor had previously refused to sign a pumping tender that failed to stipulate an eight-hour workday for its contractors, but he was now reluctant to concede on a minimum wage clause, which he believed was unconstitutional. If the mayor believed a fixed minimum wage on all municipally-run contracts was unconstitutional, members on the Central Labor Council saw it as best means available to deal with the menace of cheaply-bought, non-union workers.

⁹³ It was probably no coincidence that the shingle-weavers turned out in the largest numbers in Bellingham.

Shellmound Park to fight “the domination of capital” while guarding “the gateway of Occidental civilization against Oriental invasion.”⁹⁴

Angry that the mayor vetoed the idea of a minimum wage and mill owners refused to replace their Indian workers, a riotous mob of about 500 men set out from C Street after dark on Wednesday, September 4, 1907, to dislodge the Indian workers from their shanties and to raid the mills where some of them worked the night shift. The siren of shattered windowpanes signaled that a riot was in progress. Harrowed and molested migrants, in little but their pajamas, were seen scurrying about the streets, barefoot and desperate for refuge. At the flat tides, a patrolling officer found a band of young men pelting rocks at a half-naked man in the water. The ruffians were handcuffed but then released into the surging mob as it turned on to D Street to confront a local landlord who rented rooms to Indian men. When the landlord refused their calls to surrender the “ragheads,” the mob forced itself in and then hustled the men to the railroad tracks. Around midnight, after a brief reprieve, a smaller group raided the mills where South Asian crews worked, on the lots of Morrison, Bellingham Bay Lumber, and E. K. Wood.⁹⁵ Mill managers gutsily shielded their Indian workers from the riotous mob. Fred Wood, the owner-manager of the E. K. Wood Mill, hurried to the scene in Old Town, quickly piling the men under attack into his own car. Against the wishes of angry white workers, who threatened a walkout, Wood let Indians take shelter on mill property. After Wood and a manager at another mill were sworn in as citizen deputies, some Indians even returned to work their shift. (Such as it was, within a couple of days, some of the mills were nonetheless forced to shutter for the season, as a

⁹⁴ Quoted in *San Francisco Call*, September 3, 1907. A section of Olaf Tveitmoe’s anti-Asiatic message appears in Robert E. Wynne, “American Labor Leaders and the Vancouver Anti-Oriental Riot” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (October 1966): 174. A flock of union men parading on Market Street in San Francisco wrecked a streetcar run by a white, non-union operator, while the inspector attempting to rescue the motorman shot one of the thugs in the skull.

⁹⁵ Gerald N. Halberg, “Bellingham, Washington’s Anti-Hindu Riot,” *Journal of the West* 12, no. 1 (January 1973): 164-65.

result of an over-supply in the eastern markets.) The nocturnal disturbances left six men hospitalized. A local newspaper estimated that half of the Indians in the area, 125, were forced out of the vicinity by the morn. Most of the tormented men headed north to British Columbia at first light, though some ventured in other directions. A single mill, Larson's Mill, was the only one that ran a crew with South Asians after the riot, but special deputies were sworn in to assure that the workers were left alone. The night before, a local councilman had refused to be deputized, and almost all the Indians found themselves spending the night in safe custody, while Chief Thomas of the Bellingham Police was roundly criticized.⁹⁶

Even as migrants fled northward to Canada, where significant numbers of Chinese and Japanese settlers worked near growing numbers of East Indians, primarily Sikhs from the Punjab, it was in British Columbia that the exclusionists hoped to make their stand. A. E. Fowler of the Seattle Exclusion League wanted to hold a rally in Vancouver on September 7, when the outbreak in Bellingham had caught him somewhat unaware. The Seattle Exclusion League nevertheless rifled off a letter to President Theodore Roosevelt, imploring him, "in view of the Bellingham anti-Hindu riots, to take immediate action in checking the Oriental immigration into the Northwest." The League cautioned that there was worse to come.

On the afternoon of September 7, JE Wilton, the secretary of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council, led the demonstrators gathering on the steps of City Hall. The demonstration protesting the degradation in the condition of workers brought more than 25,000 onlookers and representatives of 58 labor organizations; those in attendance held up white flags with the slogan:

⁹⁶ Gerald N. Hallberg, "Bellingham, Washington's Anti-Hindu Riot," *Journal of the West* 12, no. 1 (January 1973): 167.

“For a White Canada.” A surge in Japanese immigration from Hawaii orchestrated by the Seattle-based Oriental Trading Company made the Japanese cluster on Powell Street a target for the crowds once they left City Hall to march through the streets.⁹⁷ Acts of vandalism followed when a more restive group returned the next night. The Japanese and Chinese residents had barricaded themselves and staved off a worse outcome. A couple of days after the incident in Washington state, British Columbia was the scene of its own anti-Asiatic riots.

After the riots, while local clergymen sought to shame the members of their flock for their un-Christian deportment, outsiders tried to make sense of what happened. The lead editorial in the major New York-based magazine, the *Outlook*, remarked, “the same causes that brought about the mob violence against Hindus at Bellingham, in the state of Washington, are responsible for the extended race troubles at Vancouver, in British Columbia, last week.” “It is not enough,” wrote the editors, “to repress the violence and to send the offenders to jail.” The fevered riots were “a symptom” of a “disorder” that was presenting itself. A diagnosis might lead then to “a radical cure.” Yet the editors of *Outlook* were satisfied to have traced the etiology of this illness to “race antipathy” and “economics.”⁹⁸

Socialists saw the anti-Asiatic mania in the northwest as politically motivated, a fiendish move to distract a considerable section of workingmen from more pressing concerns. The editor of the *Western Clarion*, the main socialist organ in British Columbia, noted that a class of opportunists had wanted to make the slogan of the exclusionists—“A white Canada!”—their own in advance of the autumn elections. A group of rabble-rousers had fanned the kind of race prejudice in white workingmen that “is virulent and bestial in the extreme,” goading them with

⁹⁷ W. Peter Ward, “Class and Race in the Social Structure of British Columbia, 1870-1939,” *BC Studies*, no. 45 (1980): 30.

⁹⁸ “Race Riots on the Pacific Coast,” *Outlook*, 87, (September 21, 1907): 89.

the untruth that Chinese, Japanese, and Hindu workmen had come as their enemies. It was therefore altogether unfair, the *Western Clarion* maintained, to hitch to workingmen, as such, or to the socialists the odium of what had happened to Asiatic workers on the borderland.

Indeed, the idea of a unified “white” opposition to “Oriental” immigration on the West Coast was itself always a myth. Some time after purchasing the Hume Lumber Mill in Astoria in 1908, Andrew Hammond, the owner of Oregon Pacific Railroad and Columbia River Railroad, apparently himself traveled to India to recruit workers.⁹⁹ Fitzherbert Leather, editor of the *American-Asiatic Journal of Commerce*, made the case in “The Significance of Oriental Commerce,” that the northwest had to look still further West for trade. It was a view shared by the writer Daniel Lincoln Pratt, who edited a magazine titled *The Ranch*. Pratt held that, in the northwest, immigration from the East was bound up with the need for labor, in an area focused on industrialization, and as such was always a politically important issue. Pratt wrote of the difficulties, under a bull market, in acquiring white workmen to shoulder the kind of hard toil required of railroad construction crews. Other residents of the northwest were indebted to the migrants who laid the first belts of steel that reached the ocean and finished the transcontinental link and the Union and Southern Pacific Railways. Pratt blamed the instances of racialized violence in British Columbia and in Washington as “imported or rather forced in from California.” It was the Exclusion League of California that was responsible for dispatching AE Fowler, the anti-Asian rabble-rouser, to the northwest. But such an explanation was, of course, inadequate to explain the riots on the western slope.

Though exclusionists on both sides of the US–Canadian borderland maintained important links, when, in late-1912, Agnes Laut of the Toronto based *Saturday Night* toured British

⁹⁹ Johanna Ogden, “Ghadar, Historical Silences, and Notions of Belonging: Early 1900s Punjabis of the Columbia River,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 113, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 177.

Columbia to look into the rise of the militant industrial union, the Industrial Workers of the World. She was surprised to find that the Wobblies (as members of the IWW were called) at least were reluctant to completely accept her analogy that Indian migration to Canada was a species of the same kind of labor issue as that of freed black slaves in the US. Laut had set about questioning her interviewees, “Don’t you think the injection of thousands and hundreds of thousands of Hindus in BC might bring the same curse here as the South suffers from the Black?”¹⁰⁰ While a number of the men she interviewed, such as RP Pettipiece, a member of the SPC and IWW who edited the labor newspaper *BC Federationist*, told her that they personally objected to Hindus, the IWW held a policy of “wide open doors to all wage workers.” Although “as a citizen, I do not want the Asiatic [as a neighbor],” Pettipiece told Laut, staying provincially minded on the issue of labor was inexcusable, since it was an international issue. What was more, Pettipiece continued, “labor had found that we might better have the cheap Asiatics come in here and organized in our fighting ranks, than to have the cheap products of Asiatic labor come in here and undersell our[s].”¹⁰¹ Pettipiece concluded, “The world is our market garden; and if the Hindu come in and gives the white[s] trouble, all I have to say is that it is only the social garbage of white crime and lust coming back here to plague us for our sins in India.”¹⁰²

Further pressing the issue, Laut asked whether the workmen objected to Asiatics who undercut their wages. The Wobblies held that workers strove to overcome that kind of cut-throat competition; it was best to let the Hindus “come in and organize in our ranks under our labor laws,” since “we aim to unite laborers of all nation is one solid army against capital.” Hindu workmen “will make so many more votes to overthrow capital!” It was not workmen, then, but

¹⁰⁰ Agnes G. Laut, *Am I my Brother’s Keeper: A Study of British Columbia’s Labor and Oriental Problems* (Toronto: Saturday Night, 1913), 21.

¹⁰¹ Laut, 24.

¹⁰² Laut, 24.

the middle class, made up of shopkeepers and those “masquerading as the spokesman of labor,” who were behind the heated anti-Asian rhetoric in British Columbia, Laut repeatedly heard. And though some held that, while the Chinese, Japanese, and Indian workers were “unassimilated,” which made it difficult if not impossible to organize them, Laut remarked, “in the IWW Hall on Cordova Street, Vancouver, I saw long lists of subscriptions from Hindu workmen to the IWW strike funds.”¹⁰³

While superficially the cases might have seemed similar, anti-Asian exclusion figured as a condition of the reproduction of the working-class in British Columbia in ways that were similar to, but in the final analysis, different from the ways that anti-black racism had been naturalized as an essential condition for the reproduction of a working-class in the US. For starters, the number of Oriental workers in Canada was always minuscule in comparison to the number of freed slaves. Whereas the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments were a concrete outcome of the Civil War, the Canadian constitution made it impossible for the Chinese, Japanese, and Indians to challenge their status as second-class settlers without the right to be naturalized or to vote. Based on their experiences, in which Oriental workers were brought in to break up a strike, union stewards had cause to see non-white workers as a reserve militia of would-be scabs. Though only a small percentage of workers in British Columbia ever belonged to unions in the decades that led up to the Great War, the earliest craft union, the Knights of Labor, which was formed in the 1886, as well as its affiliate, the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council, established in 1889, were strongly anti-Asian from their inception. A centerpiece of the socialist attack on the unions was that these unions, which were craft or trade-based, were full of prejudice; industrial unions such as the Industrial Workers of the World at least sought to be inclusive.

¹⁰³ Laut, *Am I my Brother's Keeper*, 24.

While the Asiatic Exclusion League made a nuisance of itself, BC socialists were of the opinion that it was formed for a host of reasons “except Asiatic exclusion,” in the sense that the exclusionists were no more than canvassers for the establishment party interests.¹⁰⁴ With the elections around the corner, the SPC asked, who benefited politically from the anti-Asiatic storm? Appealing to prejudice was a ploy, the editors of the *Western Clarion* concluded, to distract “workingmen [from] giving any intelligent consideration to the real concerns of labor. It affords an excellent opportunity to...lead workers from the scent that spells danger to ruling-class interests.” Political opportunists were set to “make this anti-Asiatic cry their campaign slogan in the next election” in order to “unseat the reason of workers” and hold them to the folly of supporting the ruling-class candidates. “The working-class mind is being inflamed with the idea that the Japanese, Hindu or Chinese workingman...comes as an enemy to the white worker. As racial prejudice is one of the meanest in the category and least founded upon reason, it is the easiest to stir up. When stirred up it is virulent and bestial in the extreme.” The slogan “A White Canada Forever” will be on the lips of every canting hypocrite employed as an apologist and defender of the rule of capital and the enslavement of labor.”

Under the circumstances, then, it was reasonable for the Indians on the western slope to feel they needed an outlet for their social-political discontents, and to feel that there was no satisfactory outlet. Therefore they had to cut their own path. Naturally, this was not a neat and tidy affair, it involved some groping, splintering of alliances, and small steps forward, only to be forced into retreat. Sikh veterans loyal to the empire found themselves at odds with the radical

¹⁰⁴ The author favored exclusion to hasten the replacement of workers by machines and mechanization. “As to Asiatics,” *Western Clarion*, November 16, 1907.

Indian nationalists, while the nationalists had difficulties with those Indians who were more interested in trying to remain on the West Coast than in Indian independence. And then there were those Indians who were radicalized in the direction of the socialists. Yet, in the immediate aftermath of the 1907 anti-Asian riots, the Indians in British Columbia were united in the task of grappling with the immediate obstacles: first, disproving the claim that they were already plotting to overthrow British rule in India, and second, opposing a scheme by the Canadian authorities to relocate them en masse to British Honduras.

British Columbia: “A Hotbed of Sedition”

Around the fall of 1908, faced with the unenviable choice of staying on in Canada as “undesirables” or decamping to British Honduras, the Sikhs of British Columbia sought an able advocate, someone to win them their full rights as British subjects. While an exploratory party visited Central America on their behalf, the officers of the Sikh religious-cum-welfare organization, the Khalsa Diwan Society, quickly identified a spokesman, Teja Singh. A lettered, baptized Sikh studying at Columbia, Teja Singh came to their attention on the recommendation of the circle of friends of India who lived in New York.¹⁰⁵ Erudite, devout, and politically moderate, Teja Singh had trained as a solicitor, which made him potentially invaluable to the Indians settled in Canada in their endeavor to win the vote, fight discrimination, naturalize as citizens, travel without restriction, and fetch their wives and children from the Punjab.

Yet the same attributes that made Teja Singh an ideal candidate revealed themselves as weaknesses once he took charge. Though he found some swift success in getting British Indians to be more self-sufficient by pooling their resources, his moderate views, which had at first made

¹⁰⁵ “Indian Agitation in America,” IOR L/PJ/12/1.

him so appealing to the Sikhs, lost out to more radical voices when he failed to win any major concessions from either Victoria or Ottawa. Further, rallying other Sikhs to his rather conservative vision of Sikhism only revealed the cracks in their united front. The first major venture Teja Singh undertook was to incorporate the Guru Nanak Trust Company, which was to serve as a real-estate office to invest in local industries, such as mines, timber, and shipping, or, in short, “all the work in which a trust company can engage.” The idea behind the Guru Nanak Trust was to forestall local authorities from deporting out-of-work Indians to British Honduras or elsewhere by giving everyone a share in the company. For its initial investment, the Trust, which was headquartered at the Sikh temple, bought a 152-acre lot of land that faced the English Bay, in North Vancouver; Teja Singh also negotiated the option of purchasing adjacent lots for \$80,000. Apart from the Trust, Teja Singh had the Khalsa Diwan Society incorporated, which was thereafter ably represented by its solicitor, the same J. Edward Bird who fought measures like the Natal Act.



FIGURE 3.8 Teja Singh in New York, George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress (LC-B2- 172-14 [P&P]).

While Teja Singh worked to settle the status of his countrymen, there were murmurs about the swift radicalization of the Sikhs on the western slope. After the borderland riots, the director of intelligence operations in India had even speculated that the Indian millworkers had been expelled from Bellingham on account of their radical activities.¹⁰⁶ Late in the spring of 1908, a correspondent for a London newspaper filed a column reporting that Indian revolutionaries in British Columbia had formed a new center, which allegedly masked its seditious, anti-British activities as a night school for Sikh workmen. The article, relying on a confidential source, revealed that the school, located in Millside, was under the direction of three men, one of whom was a notorious Bengali nationalist, Taraknath Das, identified as the editor of the *Free Hindustan* (formed in April 1908), who had since relocated to Seattle. It hypothesized furthermore that the Sikhs were susceptible to the rhetoric of Indian nationalists as a result of the harsh treatment meted out to them on the US–Canadian borderland. Most alarmingly, apart from carrying on their propagandizing efforts, this cluster of India revolutionaries had forwarded to their counterparts in India directions for producing makeshift explosives.

The stories about the Millside school were scuttlebutt for British Columbia dailies, giving rise to a host of new suspicions, while prompting the Sikhs to declare emphatically their loyalty to the empire.¹⁰⁷ Taraknath also refuted the claims publicly, going so far as to uncloak the confidential source of the information in the article, WH Hopkinson, as an Anglo-Indian spy. The allegations hit the Sikhs hard, since federal authorities were in the midst of trying to coax them to relocate en mass to British Honduras, where the sugar fields needed cultivators and the climate

¹⁰⁶ C. J. Stevenson-Moore in Circular 5 of 1908 from Simla, 1 October 1909, IOR L/PJ/12/1 “Note on the Anti-British Movement Among Natives of India in America.”

¹⁰⁷ “Sikhs Declare their Loyalty,” *World*, November 17, 1908.

was reportedly more suited to their constitution. Yet, instead of dying off after Taraknath left Canada in the late summer, the rumors took on a life of their own. Throughout the fall, a number of newspapers repeated the claim that there was a center in Millside where radicalized Sikhs had tested explosives and were plotting to overthrow British rule in India. Though some of the more credulous readers may have bought the story, it was almost certainly intended as a means of pressuring the Sikhs to take the offer to move. After the news flashed across other newspapers, Sikh elders were forced to repudiate the claims as sheer balderdash, a poorly veiled smear to discredit them.¹⁰⁸ Taraknath, however, kept up his anti-British rhetoric in the *Free Hindustan*, which had since relocated from British Columbia to New York. And in its October number, he recommended propagandizing the cause of Indian independence to the “underpaid, underfed, and poorly treated” Sikh soldiers. The Vancouver-based *World* responded by publishing an outlandish front-page story about a conspiracy, reportedly unearthed by British secret-service men, in which Sikh millenarians headquartered on the Pacific Coast sought to incite an mutinous revolt by native soldiers, with the aim of inaugurating a theocratic state to be headed by Teja Singh, an icon of the Sikh flock in British Columbia.¹⁰⁹ Quoting another anonymous Sikh informant, the same article held that middlemen in California helped the revolutionaries in British Columbia secure and smuggle modern arms to the would-be mutineers. Although no arrests were ever made in connection with the unproven conspiracy, a district intelligence officer reporting to Ottawa insisted that the local Sikh temple was a “hotbed of sedition,” whose chiefs were intent on supporting mutinous elements in India.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Article from *Vancouver Daily Province*, November 6, 1908, reprinted in “Sikhs Declare their Loyalty,” *Vancouver Daily World*, November 17, 1908.

¹⁰⁹ “Great Hindoo Plot Bared,” *Vancouver Daily World*, December 1, 1908.

¹¹⁰ Rowland Brittain, December 12, 1908, in Joan Jensen, *Continuous Passage*, 125. Also see: Memorandums by Rowland Brittain, number 334, January 5, 1909 and number 336 of January 9, 1909, Home Political B: May 1909, file 187.

After Teja Singh steered his countrymen away from the scheme to relocate them to Central America, Colonel E. J. E. Swayne, the governing officer of British Honduras, made the uncharitable, though apt, observation that “whilst no doubt flattered by the idea of posing as the head of the Hindu communities on this continent, [Teja Singh] is primarily a theosophical teacher.”¹¹¹ Throughout his sojourn in British Columbia, which lasted until 1914, Teja Singh, who had studied the natural sciences at Cambridge, fulfilled his role as spokesman for British Indians primarily by trying to educate the others on Sikhism. Singh lectured on subjects such as karma, transmigration, selflessness, and the Sikh credo, which, like other Sikh reformers of the age, he boiled down to the *Mulmantra* by Guru Nanak: “First, God is but one, who is the source of all truth, is the creator of everything, fearless and unspiteful, eternal and thus released from the cycle of birth and death, and can be realized through a spiritual teacher.”¹¹² Challenged by a local socialist on the cause of selfishness in man at one of his talks, in which he had spoken about the “annihilation of the self,” Singh retorted that the threatened war of capital versus labor would be inconsequential if, in the battle of right versus right, it was brute force that won. Instead, he believed, workingmen ought to devote themselves to developing a higher moral force through meditation to steel themselves against rapacious capitalists.

Though the Sikhs had fended off the British Honduras scheme, the authorities never relented in trying to make it difficult for them to settle in Canada, which led to an impasse. British Indians still faced a \$200 entrance head-tax, the continuous journey order preventing them from stopping in the Far East to complete their transpacific journey from India, and rules prohibiting the resettlement of their wives and children, all the while officials in Whitehall and Calcutta refused

¹¹¹ E. J. E. Swayne, Confidential Memorandum on Matters Affecting the East Indian Community, 11, RG7-G-21, vol. 200, File 332, vol. 3 (b), Library and Archives Canada.

¹¹² “Philosophy of Modern India,” *Vancouver Daily World*, November 7, 1908.

to intervene on their behalf to define their rights as British citizens. Frustrated with the status quo, worshipers met on October 3, 1909, at the Sikh temple to pray and to listen to the topical speeches that typically followed services. That afternoon, a Sikh veteran rose to address the deplorable condition of British Indian subjects in the colonies, putting forward a resolution stipulating that members of the executive committee of the temple refuse to wear their medals, uniforms, or insignia that signify their status as “a slave to British supremacy.” With no one protecting their rights as British subjects, the speaker felt, Sikh servicemen had been reduced to the status of mercenaries of empire. Sardar Gharib Singh, a member of the temple committee, promptly took off his medal, a decoration for chivalrous action that he was awarded as member of a Sikh regiment that helped to subdue the Boxer uprising in China. Later, Bhag Singh, the secretary of the temple, himself a veteran cavalryman, lit a bonfire with his discharge certificate.¹¹³ The *Free Hindustan* gleefully reported that the Sikhs had at last “assimilated the idea of liberty.”

After about 1910, the doubtful claims of race science increasingly figured into the debate over whether the Indian migrants had the right to be naturalized as citizens, a right that was available in the US only to whites or the decedents of African slaves. Yet, whereas in the US naturalization was a matter for individual states to decide, on the Canadian side, the issue was one of imperial subjecthood. It was “as loyal British subjects” that a delegation of Sikhs, which included Teja and Sundar Singh, petitioning Ottawa in mid-December of 1911, made their case for “redress on the onerous restrictions that have gradually reduced our status as British subjects below that of the most unfavored nationalities of the Orient.”¹¹⁴ A vitriolic editorial in the *British Columbia Sunset* responded to the Sikh mission to eastern Canada by denying their claims to

¹¹³ “Awakening of the Sikhs,” in note on “Indian Agitation,” IOR L/PJ/12/1.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Nand Singh Sihra, “Indians in Canada,” *Modern Review*, 14, no. 2 (August 1913): 148.

certain rights, spuriously hypothesizing that the Sikhs were of Jewish descent, “obtrusive” in their demands for recognition, and “coolies, intransitive, unassimilative, inarticulate, aloof, distrustful, and ignorant.” Although their numbers included weavers, carpenters, mechanics, machinists, printing apprentices, and electricians, the editorial noted with some satisfaction that, since “the rules of the unions, of course, make it impossible for these artisans and mechanicians to obtain work in this country at trades in which they are skilled,” the harsh realities of the market had thus taught these sojourners to nurture no expectations beyond that of the barest existence.¹¹⁵ “The Hindu and his advocates are going from one end of Canada to the other,” complained a columnist in Ontario, “clamoring at the top of their voices, not for the *privilege*, but the for the *right*, of admission to Canada, the *right* to vote, the *right* to colonize.”¹¹⁶ The *Toronto Globe* responded to the Sikh delegation passing through Ontario by pointing out that the issue was not of the loyalty of the Sikhs to the empire, their courage, or their social status, but rather centered on “the labor situation” in British Columbia, which was itself bound up with the politically charged issue of Canada as a self-governing, democratic nation. “The Oriental is not of democratic blood,” nor is the Celt, the *Globe* remarked.¹¹⁷ Interestingly, the Sikhs were loath to understand discrimination on the US-Canadian borderland as racism. If anything, some Sikhs, relying on the same race science as their detractors, were invested in proving that the Indians were Caucasoid, if not white. That is, at this juncture, many Indians did not fight racism by

¹¹⁵ The same editorial was especially critical of the efforts of Sundar Singh to take the case of the Sikhs of British Columbia to the “sentimentalists” of Ontario. “Sundar Singh is their John the Baptist,” an “educated heathen” who can “speak half the tongues of the Pentecost.” The editorial referred to a tussle with Teja Singh over who ought to lead the Sikhs of British Columbia and referred to Sundar Singh as a “caricature of Machiavel.” Sundar Singh took notice, and in the May March-April issue of the *Aryan*, he sought to refute the editorial in the *Sunset* by trying “to communicate to the Sikhs in India the harsh and unsympathetic treatment that their fellow countrymen had been subjected to in Canada.” See *BC Sunset*, January 20, 1912.

¹¹⁶ Laut, *Am I my Brother's Keeper*, 33.

¹¹⁷ “Orientals in Canada,” originally an article in the *Toronto Globe*, reprinted in *BC Sunset*, January 20, 1912.

trying to insist on racial equality, but instead by trying to argue that they belonged to same race as whites; their skin just happened to be darker. Unsurprisingly, this tack failed.

The Reluctant *Swarajists*

If the blueprint for the conspiracy foiled in the winter of 1908 was the invention of somewhat fevered minds, there was still more than a modicum of truth to the claim that the center of action for Indian nationalists had shifted from New York westward, where Taraknath Das was attempting to radicalize Sikhs. Financial difficulties in New York had forced the Society for the Advancement of India to shutter India House there the same month that one of its stewards, Barkatullah Bhopali, left the city to teach in Japan; then in March, another nationalist, S.L. Joshi, returned to India.¹¹⁸ Taken together, their departures also marked the collapse of the Pan-Aryan Association, which then left Taraknath, who had taken the kind of circuitous route to the US–Canadian borderland that was itself the stuff of spy novels, alone to open a western front. A student at the height of *Swadeshi*, he was recruited in 1902 into the Anushilan Samiti, one of the *akharas* (secret societies) in Bengal involved in “terrorist” activities, plotting the assassinations of British administrators and disrupting the machinery of the state. After a sojourn in Japan, Taraknath reached Seattle in the summer of 1906, but he traded the northwest for California, where he lived at a Hindu temple, enrolled as a chemistry student at the University of California, Berkley, and formed the India Independence League. Unable to pay his tuition, he left his studies to work as an interpreter for the US department of immigration, in the course of which he was stationed at British Columbia. Taraknath was the interpreter for the Sikhs at the trial of the

¹¹⁸ “Indian Agitation in America” in IOR L/PJ/12/1.

ringleader of an anti-Indian riot in St. Johns Oregon.¹¹⁹ Later, he recounted that, as an officer he was charged with trying to stem the Sikh “tide of turbans” into the US, but instead felt for his countrymen, on whose behalf he hired attorneys, founded an Indian association, and started publishing the *Free Hindustan* with the assistance of local socialists who were sympathetic to his cause, even if they did not share his extremism.

Through the *Free Hindustan*, Taraknath made a deliberate effort to enlist Sikhs on the borderland to the Indian nationalist cause, though at first the Sikhs were generally unreceptive to his entreaties. Most Sikhs saw themselves as loyal British subjects; the *Free Hindustan*, moreover, was written in English and therefore inaccessible to the majority of them. The task was made all the more difficult after the reports surfaced about his anti-British activities at the Millside school, prompting moderate Sikhs to distance themselves from him politically. Still, he tried a number of different tacks to link the discrimination the Sikhs faced on the borderland to the cause of Indian nationalism. If the authorities in the US and Canada halted the Indians like the Chinese, he wrote in the inaugural issue, “the passing of this law will cause financial depression among the peasantry of the Punjab. Let us tell [the British] . . . that if we are not allowed to enter British colonies, Britishers will sooner or later be excluded from Hindustan.” But Taraknath had little stake in whether the Sikhs won the right to stay in Canada. What he actually was interested in was the fight for Indian independence: “Dear brothers of Hindustan, let us be united together and exert our best energies to get *Swaraj* (absolute self-government).” Ventriloquizing a Sikh student in the US, Taraknath wrote, in the September 1908 issue, that a

¹¹⁹ James Laidlaw, Consul, to Sir James Bryce, Ambassador, June 16, 1910, “Anti-Indian Riot in the State of Oregon,” Commerce and Industry, Emigration, July 1910, file 24B.

Sikh who supported British rule was a traitor to his religion, which imposed an obligation on baptized Sikhs to fight for Indian independence.¹²⁰

Taraknath was dogged in his agitation. The first issue of *Free Hindustan*, April, 1908, reprinted a telegram he had wired to John Morley at the India Office, protesting the treatment of British Indian subjects in Canada. Also featured was an article arguing the case that the unfettered mobility of Indians within the British Empire was essential to “the national life” of India and, moreover, that the passing of the continuous journey order would cause financial depression among the peasantry. Taraknath traded on the sympathies of Sikh veterans in British Columbia by portraying native sepoys as maltreated, underpaid, and underfed. Through the *Free Hindustan* he insisted that, when Sikh soldiers had refused their orders to shoot their countrymen in the tumult witnessed in the Punjab in the autumn of 1907, this defiance was a sign of a developing nationalist consciousness. And if the Sikhs who had settled overseas were themselves only reluctant *swarajists*, Taraknath wanted them to dispatch translated sections of the *Free Hindustan* to the Punjab, where their relatives might be more amenable. Forced to abandon the US immigration service as a result of his views, Taraknath left his inchoate operation amongst the Sikhs in the northwest to his trusted deputy Guru Datta Kumar, sometime in the summer of 1908. Later, in the fall, he enrolled as a cadet at the military college in Norwich, Vermont.¹²¹

Such signs of disaffection inspired Guru Datta to start a new newspaper, the *Swadesh Sevak*, written in Gurmukhi to target a specifically Sikh audience. Yet, in spite of their gnawing sense of disenchantment with Canadian authorities, the majority of Sikhs were openly hostile to the kind

¹²⁰ September 1908 issue of *Free Hindustan* Quoted in L/PJ 12/1, “Indian Agitation,” pg. 4.

¹²¹ Forced to prematurely conclude his studies at Norwich, after he failed to secure an appointment in the Vermont National Guard, Das returned to Seattle to enroll as a student at the University of Washington. He referred to himself as the secretary of United India House, which he founded with G. D. Kumar, where on Saturdays Sikh workers were lectured on matters the sociopolitical condition of India. See note on “Taraknath Das” in “Agitation in America” in IOR L/PJ/12/1.

of nationalism that Guru Datta subscribed, preferring to fight for rather than reject their rights as loyal subjects of the empire. Guru Datta, a close associate of Taraknath Das, was now the one who inherited the task from Taraknath the task of politicizing the Sikh workers in British Columbia and Washington State. Although he tried to dispel such rumors in an open letter to the *Punjabee* of Lahore in the autumn of 1908, he regularly shuttled across the straits to Seattle, sometimes under the pseudonym of GDK Singh, presumably in an effort to blend in with the Sikhs. Guru Datta also functioned as the secretary of the Hindustan Association that Taraknath had founded. The *Swadesh Sevak*, started in 1910, tried to feed on the discontent of the Sikhs by publicizing their complaints about the continuous journey order and their disenfranchisement.¹²²

Yet Guru Datta had trouble getting Sikhs to ship his newspaper to India when Indian authorities banned its importation in the spring of 1911. Sometime in early 1912, GD Kumar reached total exasperation with the Sikhs in Canada, quitting British Columbia due to the opposition he had faced.¹²³ The *Sevak* was thus short-lived and the newspapers that followed in its wake, *Pardeshi Khalsa* (the *Fraternal Order Abroad* [1910]), the *Aryan* (1911), and the *Sansar* (the *World* [1912]), tended to be more moderate. The masthead of the *Aryan* of Victoria, edited by Sundar Singh and Kartar Singh Hundal, ran a single sentence of the 1858 declaration that Queen Victoria had made when she was invested with the title, Empress of India: “We hold ourselves bound to the natives of our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind us to all our other subjects.”¹²⁴ A new broadsheet, *Sansar* (World), reported on the

¹²² The May issue of the *Swadesh Sevak* reported on assemblies of Sikhs held in Vancouver on April 24 and in in Victoria on May 15 protesting the continuous journey order, the rules preventing them from getting their families from the Punjab, and their disenfranchisement. James Campbell Ker, *Political Trouble in India, 1907-1917* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1917), 230-32.

¹²³ After he left British Columbia for Seattle to see Taraknath and then California, which he thought to be more fertile for anti-British agitation. See “Agitation in America,” IOR L/PJ/12/1.

¹²⁴ Quoted in Hugh Johnston, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada’s Colour Bar* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014), 3.

ceremonies while proffering its own sermon on what the temple ought to be for the Sikhs in Canada. The temple was to be a space to reinitiate the men who, forced by circumstances to make the sojourn alone, had lapsed in the absence of their wives and children. Against the radicalized voices preaching sedition and a return to India, the editorial cautioned Sikhs to remain in Canada, maintain their temples as a foothold, and to remain loyal British subjects by prosecuting the case for their rights.¹²⁵ The Sikhs “should sacrifice our wealth” to contribute a fund for their common welfare; it also thanked those who had contributed to toward a publishing outfit—the Guru Gobind Singh Press. “We are right,” the editorial maintained, “and God is with us.”



FIGURE 3.9 Sikh religious march on the streets of Vancouver, British Columbia, ca. 1905. Postcard by Warwick Brothers and Rutter Limited, Toronto, Ontario, Vancouver Public Library (VPL Accession Number: 86540).

Of course there was no single Sikh “type” in British Columbia. Of the handful of Sikhs who made it ashore in 1913, one of them was Bhagwan Singh (Jakh/Gyane), a firebrand Sikh cleric,

¹²⁵ Translated selection of the November issue of *Sansar* in IOR L/PJ/12/1.

who noted the rifts then splitting the Sikhs of British Columbia. Forced out of Hong Kong after a number of arrests for preaching sedition to the Sikh soldiers there, Bhagwan Singh booked a ticket to Canada under an alias, on a CPR steamer that reached Victoria in the late spring. While trying to understand the sociopolitical landscape, he was initiated into the rivalries that had surfaced since Teja Singh left for India, some months earlier. Both the Guru Nanak Mining and Trust Company and the United India League had fallen into disrepair. Cordial relations that the Sikhs had maintained with other Indians had completely broken down; Muslims and Hindus had been barred from the main temple. Amongst the Sikhs, Singh identified one group as the orthodox or Tat Khalsa Sikhs, led by Bhai Varyam Singh, which made itself obvious by carrying “*dholas* (drums) and *chamtas* (symbols) [while] singing *shabads* (spirituals) in the streets.” The Tat Khalsas were at odds with the radicals, led by Bhag Singh, Balwant Singh, and Raja Singh, who worked with Hussain Rahim, a socialist. (Of course, there were the moderates, and Singh also referred to the Sikhs who worked as informants for the immigration authorities.) Aside from their ideological differences, Bhagwan Singh noticed the Sikhs splitting themselves up into groupings of descendants from the Majha, Malwa, or Doaba, thereby reproducing the regional distinctions of their native homeland.¹²⁶

The Socialist Network

After the first wave of British Indian arrivals, Canadian socialists started to take note of the serious rumbles of discontent in India. Yet, instead of praising Indian nationalists or giving over space in the *Western Clarion* to nationalist causes such as the Swadeshi boycott or the partitioning of Bengal, British Columbia socialists were more interested in the condemnable state

¹²⁶ The Majha refers to the interfluvium between the Ravi and Beas Rivers, the Malwa to the region south of the Sutlej, and the Doaba to the interfluvium between the Beas and Sutlej.

of poverty under British rule in India and the development of an incipient Indian working-class consciousness. The fiendish cruelties and unscrupulousness of British rule in India, remarked an editorial in the *Western Clarion* in the summer of 1905, formed one of the darkest historical chapters ever written. Later, another editorial remarked that when the British spoke about the glory of Christ evident in their rule in India, “glory” referred to “the glory of trade,” which itself relied on the wholesale swindle of British workingmen by capital. It continued, “British capitalism, in its rule over that unhappy land,” was pressing “the native of India, widow, orphan, or otherwise” into work, so that India might be “rendered subservient to the advances of trade and commerce.”¹²⁷ And in the first week of December, the editors of the *Western Clarion* flagged the news item about the abuse of child labor and the inordinate extension of the working day in the industrial textile mills of Bombay, where capitalists had installed electric lights to increase the absolute surplus value created by their workers.¹²⁸ The front page of the *Western Clarion* wondered, “If the myriads of natives of India, should revolt, what then would become of British supremacy in India?”¹²⁹

The capitalist development of India, in short, was predictably giving rise to a strain of chauvinist nationalism, but more importantly, was also responsible for proletarianizing Indian workers. “The socialist must view with satisfaction the efforts of these eastern nations to adopt the civilization of the west and life themselves to the forefront of capitalist brigandage, [as] the sooner they accomplish this the sooner will the conditions in the United States, England, Germany, France, etc., force the revolution, the end of capitalism, and its degrad[ing] wage-slavery.”¹³⁰ That is, the assumption was that workmen of the East were sure to adopt the

¹²⁷ “For Christ’s Glory Alone,” *Western Clarion*, November 4, 1905.

¹²⁸ Editorial, *Western Clarion*, December 2, 1905.

¹²⁹ “Asia and Africa Awakening,” *Western Clarion*, March 31, 1906.

¹³⁰ “China Awakening,” *Western Clarion*, October 29, 1905.

revolutionary ideas of socialism, “as readily as their masters imbibed those of western capitalism,” thus helping to draw the curtain on capitalism globally. The socialists remained ambivalent about the Indians, and, in the last, British Indians never fell in behind the socialist standard. The extent to which the Indian migrants returned to India to take up the nationalist cause, this reflected a defeat and retreat. British Columbia socialists understood imperialism as a historical stage of capitalism, whereas to the Indian nationalists, imperialism was fraught with several overlapping meanings but was seen by them, foremost, as a matter of policy that could be rectified by independence—whether as a self-governing colony within the empire, or full-blown nationhood.

Though the Socialist Party of Canada had let Taraknath Das use their printing offices to issue the first three numbers of the *Free Hindustan*, April through June 1908, the socialists were always careful to distance themselves from his nationalist rhetoric.¹³¹ Modeled as it was on the *Indian Sociologist* (London), the *Free Hindustan* was eclectic, its masthead emblazoned with the words of the archetypal anti-socialist, Herbert Spencer: “The resistance to tyranny is obedience to God.” Taraknath understood the influx of British Indian subjects into Canada in typically nationalist ways, placing responsibility on British for misrule as the main reason why Indians left their homeland, whereas the socialists saw the matter in a different light, as an issue of capitalism. Local conditions of all sorts, from misgovernance to the weather, influenced individual decisions to migrate, but these factors could not explain the patterning evident in cycles of immigration in modern society. British Columbia socialists took modern immigration

¹³¹ Taraknath relocated the newspaper to Seattle when he left British Columbia in the summer of 1908 and later worked out a deal to continue publishing his newspaper from New York with the Irish radical George Freeman who ran the *Gaelic American*.

to be a function of the fact that labor was as a commodity on the world-market, which Indian workingmen, like everyone else, tried to sell to the highest bidder.

The first issue of *Free Hindustan* superficially tried comparing the Indian nationalists to the young radicals who sought German unification in the course of the revolutions of 1848–49. Yet Taraknath tended to reiterate the standard, nationalist attack on the British administration in India, prompting the *Western Clarion* to run an editorial with a sharp rebuke of his nationalism.¹³² The criticism of the British state in India found in *Free Hindustan*, the socialists noted, was “a mistake that arises out of a lack of appreciation of [its] function,” since “Government is an instrument of the ruling class”; “its aim is to conserve the interests of that class and to abet it in squeezing the last atom of profit out of its slaves.” A certain desperation in India was understandable, but an outbreak of the kind that radicalized nationalists wanted to see realized would benefit no one but the state, giving it an excuse to settle the matter of Indian independence by putting down the working-class revolutionaries. “The only hope of India is our common one,” the editorial made clear, “which will be realized only when the slaves of capital wake and burst their fetters.”¹³³

Sometime in 1911, the Sikh temple committee had confirmed a non-Sikh member into its fold, Hossein Rahim, who introduced himself as a self-made merchant from Delhi. Yet there was always more to Rahim than met the eye. The man referred to as Rahim, whose real name was Chagan Khairaj Varma, had come to Canada as a tourist in 1910, but then stayed on after purchasing a sizable share in the Canada-India Supply and Trust.¹³⁴ After successfully fighting

¹³² Taraknath wrote an article on the split within the nationalist party brought about at the 1906 Surat session of the INC for the benefit of the readers of the *Western Clarion*. The section of nationalists to which he belonged, Taraknath wrote, had split from the Moderates, since the latter had shown themselves incapable of opposing British misrule and were “traitors to our national aspirations.” T. N. Das, “Hindu Fitness for Self Rule,” *Western Clarion*, February 29, 1908.

¹³³ “The Brightest Jewel in England’s Crown,” *Western Clarion*, May 2, 1908.

¹³⁴ *The Hindustanee*, May, 1, 1914, 12.

more than one deportation order at the high court of British Columbia, which greatly raised his stock in the eyes of other British Indians, he worked with GD Kumar and Atma Ram in the United India League, all the while positioning himself as a counterweight to Teja Singh. At a conclave at the Sikh temple in 1913, where the topic was the best means to win the admission of the wives and children of the men who had settled in Canada, a frustrated Rahim publicly referred to the Sikhs who were loyal to the empire as “war-dogs,” over which Teja Singh rose in objection and left the proceedings.¹³⁵ For Rahim, the restriction on the immigration of women from India was but a means of persecuting a section of the downtrodden working class.

Emboldened by his involvement with the IWW and the SPC, Rahim single-handedly tried to reopen the issue of Hindu enfranchisement, on which the left in British Columbia had maintained a conspicuous silence. Fearful that Indian workmen might align themselves with their capitalist employers, as Conservatives in British Columbia hoped, socialists had lobbied in 1907 to disbar British Indian subjects from the vote. Although socialists had come around to the idea of granting women the vote and sought to make it easier for workingmen to access the ballot, no one forced them to reconsider their stance on preserving the disenfranchisement of British Indians—until, that is, Rahim took up the cause in the spring of 1912. After elections were called for late March, Rahim somehow registered to be on the voter list, was administered an oath by the Liberal chairman of the city school board, and had himself installed as a scrutineer for the socialist party at the main polling station the 4th ward, Vancouver City Hall.¹³⁶ It was there that William Hopkinson, a spy tasked with reporting on the activities of Indian radicals on the western slope, found him and took him by surprise. A jury quickly indicted Rahim for perjury and a search of

¹³⁵ The session at the Sikh temple was held in the early months of 1913. See Home Political Deposit, June 1913, file 5-17.

¹³⁶ “Hindu on Voters List,” *Omenica Miner*, March 30, 1912.

his things revealed an SPC membership card and a list of subscriptions from other Indians in the area for SPC and IWW materials. Hopkinson wrote in his report on the incident that the acute danger was not in the Indians in Canada adopting socialism or militant industrial unionism, but in the effect that these men, tutored in methods of agitation and the ideals of social and political equality, might have on those back in India.¹³⁷

Together with Rahim, the Sikhs, Hopkinson reported in mid-1912, had formed a local the SPC and intended to translate works by the party and IWW into Urdu and Punjabi.¹³⁸ Early in 1913, Rahim became a member of the Dominion Executive Council of the SPC, and the troubled *Western Clarion* was run from the offices of Canada-India Supply Company, where the SPC held its executive meetings until the spring of 1914. Of course by then the *Komagata Maru*, the Japanese ship chartered by Sikhs attempting to challenge the continuous journey order, was preoccupying the Indians in British Columbia, as was the effort to build the nascent Ghadar party.¹³⁹ For what it is worth, J. Edward Bird and Rahim stood side by side on the wharf, as the *Komagata Maru* was turned back by the Canadian authorities. Before the *Komagata Maru* returned to Calcutta, war was to break out in Europe, precipitating a whole new crisis for the British Empire.

Towards Ghadar

It was the experience of inequality, rather than “racism” as such, that radicalized the Sikh migrants out West. That racism existed is undeniable. But the existence of racism led the Indians

¹³⁷ W. H. Hopkinson to India Office, March 1913, IOR L/PJ/12/1.

¹³⁸ Peter Campbell, “East Meets Left: South Asian Militants and the Socialist Party of Canada in British Columbia,” *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 20 (Autumn 1999): 48.

¹³⁹ Rahim was a target for Hopkinson; Nawab Khan and Bagge Khan worked to raise funds for the Socialist Party of Canada.

to take a specific course of action and, ultimately, to adopt a mode of thought that was not simply “anti-racist” in a reactive sense. Although the Ghadarities later wrote polemically about the injustices of “white” rule, their own explanation of the mechanisms behind the discrimination were never limited to categories of race; the Ghadarites believed that it would be more efficacious politically to challenge the causes of inequality, rather than to address the more amorphous target of “racism.” While anti-Asian racism was essential to working-class politics, there was no monolithic white identity on the western slope, despite the claims of the Asiatic Exclusion League, which was invested in proving that whiteness ought to be treated as if it were normative rather than specific.¹⁴⁰ The migrants sought to overcome discrimination through work slowdowns, collectivization, and the like, rather than by pitching their demands at the level of race. For their demands were specific to their aim of gaining full citizenship, wage parity, and the right to reunite with their wives and children.¹⁴¹ Such aims were concrete and strategic.¹⁴² Indeed, by 1913, Nand Singh Sihra could claim that the Indians, unlike the Chinese and Japanese, were unwilling to drive down wage levels.¹⁴³ It was a development not lost on the socialists of British Columbia who were then able to state with clarity, “We are not of any nationality; we are not white or black, but one thing suffices to make us all common; we are forced to sell labor-power to another class in order to live.”¹⁴⁴

Although their lived experiences on the borderland unquestionably had the effect of politicizing British Indians, their radicalization was never as straight-forward as either

¹⁴⁰ Chang, *Pacific Connections*, 93.

¹⁴¹ The Indians in the US and Canada repeatedly stressed that their situation was unlike that of indentured “coolies” who worked in the sugar-cane fields of Natal.

¹⁴² Almost from the outset, Indian workers on the West Coast were involved in disputes over pay and the like. Late in the winter of 1906, the Indian dockhands at Union Bay on Vancouver Island, went on strike after their employer refused them an advance on their pay. “Hindoo Laborers Go on Strike,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 31, 1906.

¹⁴³ Sihra, “Indians in Canada,” 142.

¹⁴⁴ “The Oriental Peril,” *Western Clarion*, May 23, 1913.

sensationalist headlines or state intelligence reports made it seem, as the Sikhs of British Columbia were generally unreceptive to entreaties by radical Indian nationalists. Indeed there were a number of voices vying for the attention of the primarily Sikh Indian migrants. Instead, the Sikhs sought to carve out a space for themselves as British subjects in Canada, under the leadership of the politically moderate Teja Singh. Yet, when the course he followed failed to win them their rights as loyal citizens of the empire, when appeals to Ottawa and Whitehall alike fell on deaf ears, the Sikhs turned elsewhere. Though the relationship had its own vexations, insofar as British Indians identified themselves politically with a formal party to lend them succor in their struggles, it was with the socialists of British Columbia. Yet neither the IWW, which was almost entirely concerned with local matters, nor the Socialist Party of Canada, which struggled admirably, but for the most part in vain, to make the working class see the light on the issue of immigration, proved adequate to the task at hand: incorporating the Indians into the working class as equals. Thus it transpired that the Indian radicals settled on the US-Canadian borderland looked to establish a new association of their own. Around 1912, they founded the Pacific Coast Hindustani Association, which came to be referred to colloquially as the Ghadar party.

Chapter 4

Ghadar: The Comet in the Political Firmament

Hunkered over a copy of Kant or Hegel, Hardayal must have stuck out amidst the sun-seekers on Waikiki Beach.¹ The late summer wonders of Honolulu formed a spiritual forest of austerities (*tapovana*), where he lived as an ascetic (*sannyasi*), in a cave, on a diet of raw vegetables and wholemeal bread, as he reflected on what to do with his life.² Disenchanted with the ineffectiveness of the Extremist version of Indian nationalism, Hardayal had rather abruptly left behind the creature comforts of life in the French capital, giving up his role as editor of the newspaper *Bande Mataram*, sometime in the fall of 1910. After decamping first to Algiers, then to Martinique, he toyed with the idea of altogether giving up his work for the nationalist cause in order to study Buddhism at Harvard. Restive and indecisive was Hardayal when the young Sikh scholar Teja Singh interested him in the difficulties of their countrymen on the West Coast.³

Years later, the novelist Jack London would immortalize Hardayal, with whom he came to be well-acquainted in California, as “a revolutionist, of sorts,” who was doggedly focused on seemingly disparate ambitions, “one, a new synthetic system of philosophy; the other, a rebellion against the tyranny of British rule in India.”⁴ However, when Hardayal travelled out West in 1911 to see things for himself, there was little to indicate that, within a short while, in the midst of a catastrophic war, he might be implicated as one of the chief architects of a worldwide

¹ Hardayal wrote to Hanwant Sahai that, while he lived in Hawaii, he studied Shankara, Kant, Hegel, and Marx. See Dharamavira, *Lala Har Dayal and Revolutionary Movements of his Times* (New Delhi: Indian Book Company, 1970), 147.

² Emily Brown, *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975), 91.

³ Hardayal later spoke of the stale stew of philistinism and hypocrisy for which Oxford, Cambridge, and Harvard were so famous. See Har Dayal, “India and the World Movement,” *Modern Review* 13, no. 2 (February 1913):186.

⁴ Jack London, *The Little Lady of the Big House*, in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 94–95.

conspiracy to overthrow the British Empire in India and establish a social-democratic republic. Hardayal also had no reason to think, at the time, that he might never return to India.⁵

Around the summer of 1912, a group of Sikh workmen from the mill towns of Bridal Veil, St. John, and Linnton, held a conclave in Portland to combine into a new organization, encompassing the various different clusters of Indian migrants whose trail now stretched from British Columbia to California. Sohan Singh, a native of the village of Bhakna, led the proceedings. Although the attendees had disagreements with one another over whether to constitute themselves as an explicitly political group, the men who were there on that occasion nevertheless became the charter members of the Pacific Coast Hindustani Association. Albeit without a consensus on what direction their new organization ought to take, the members reached the decision to start an Urdu newspaper, tentatively titled *Hindustan*.⁶ A suitable editor had to be found.

Hardayal, who had built a reputation as someone active, capable, and politically astute, was nominated in absentia to edit the *Hindustan*; others also valued his capacity to express himself pointedly as a writer in Urdu and English. Around Christmas in 1912, when he was slated to be on break from Stanford, Hardayal was invited to come up to St. John but, for one reason or another, was reluctant to be roped in. It was only in late March that Hardayal convened with the chief members of the Pacific Coast Hindustani Association. The activities of the Industrial

⁵ Hardayal applied for amnesty on a number of occasions, the first time in 1919, which was rejected. Then in March of 1924 he requested permission to visit England, but his request was refused in the belief that it might be the first step toward a request to return to India, Home Political Deposit, file 53 /II.

⁶ Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party: A Short History*. (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1977-1978), 2:168.

Workers of the World, the International-Radical-Communist Anarchist Club at Stanford, and his latest venture, the Fraternity of the Red Flag, were preoccupying Hardayal.⁷

Meanwhile, the Indian compatriots in British Columbia were at loggerheads preparing an agitational delegation to London and India. Nand Singh, one of the delegates who left Vancouver in March of 1913 to interview the imperial authorities in London on the issue of Indian immigration to Canada, was an acolyte of Hardayal and one of the original Guru Gobind Singh Scholars.⁸ If the mission was unable to achieve their object in London, some of the members of the deputation intended take the issues before the Khalsa Diwan at Amritsar, Punjab.⁹ But the idea of appealing to the Sikh religious authorities was itself controversial amongst the immigrants in British Columbia. At a gathering to discuss the delegation, held at Dominion Hall on February 22, the socialist Hussein Rahim referred to the loyalist Sikhs as “war dogs who were sent to butcher the Chinese.” Teja Singh walked out. Rahim walked back a bit by explaining that “we who are domiciled in Canada have the interest of this country at heart,” and “I challenge anyone to show me satisfactorily why it would harm Canada for our wives and children to enter.” For Rahim the issue was about the authorities persecuting the downtrodden working classes, rather than an opportunity to stoke the moral outrage of the Sikhs in India.¹⁰ Another man apparently interjected into the proceedings, “We are determined to get our rights! It may mean a little work, but we will get them.”¹¹ Apart from the delegation, Bishen Singh filed a suit against

⁷ Hardayal was giving lectures for the California Club, a radical women’s club, on “Modern English Literature: Robert Browning.” See *San Francisco Call*, Feb 2, 1913. Regarding the International Radical Club, see “Radical Club Dinner,” *San Francisco Call*, April 6, 1913.

⁸ Hopkinson to W. W. Cory, Deputy Minister of the Interior, April 29, 1913, in Home Political B, August 1913, file 37-39.

⁹ Hopkinson to W. W. Cory, Deputy Minister of the Interior, April 29, 1913, in Home Political B, August 1913, file 37-39.

¹⁰ H. W. Gwyther in Home Political Deposit, June 1913, file 5-17.

¹¹ Unidentified Canadian newspaper article titled “Canada’s Exclusion Policy Denounced,” typed out in Hopkinson’s letter to Cory, on or about March 1, 1913, Home Political Deposit, June 1913, file 5-17.

the Nippon Yusen Kiasha to show cause as to why they would not sell him a direct ticket from Calcutta to Hong Kong and from there to Victoria, BC, when they had steamers plying these routes.¹²

While he temporized about going north, Hardayal was in communication with Sundar Singh of Victoria, BC, who wanted to start publishing a broadsheet of his own, the *Sansar* (“World”)¹³. Launched in May 1913, as a bilingual newspaper in Gurmukhi and English, *Sansar* lamented the treatment of Indians in Canada and blamed the Indians for indifference as to the plight of their own countrymen who were unable to win admission into Canada. Whereas in the US naturalization was a possibility, in British Columbia no Indian enjoyed the right to vote, despite the fact that Indians were themselves British nationals, subjects of the same sovereign as Canadians.¹⁴ When a Sikh, Hindu, or Muslim reached the shores of Canada, immigration officials didn’t ask about their faith, but excluded them as Indians. Unlike their Bengali, Madras, and Bombayite counterparts, Sundar Singh felt, Punjabis particularly, lacked nationalist sentiments and were self-involved in “religious feuds” and “party feelings.”¹⁵

With many years of experience in political disputes of all kinds, Hardayal had developed a knack for writing in the voice of an oracle. Movement itself was no measure of progress. Hardayal explained that history exhibited a circular motion, like that of a bullock at a water wheel; a retrogressive motion, as when someone is lost; and even a terminal, indeed fatal motion, like a moth that rushes toward a flame.¹⁶ The hallmark of the modern age, Hardayal wrote, was

¹² *Sansar*, May 1, 1913.

¹³ Hopkinson to W. W. Cory, February 17, 1913, Home Political Deposit, June 1913, file 5-17.

¹⁴ A man by the name of A. K. Mozumdar had been judged fit for citizenship by a judge in Spokane. It also noted that Sundar Singh was a solitary figure trying to win them their rights. Selections of *Sansar*, May 1913, in Home Political B, November 1913, file 62-66.

¹⁵ Selections of *Sansar*, May 1913 in Home Political B, November 1913, file 62-66.

¹⁶ Har Dayal, “Some Phases of Contemporary Thought in India,” *Modern Review* 12, no. 5 (November 1912): 469.

its restiveness and change. Old orders were dying everywhere but a new order was still in chrysalis. The *zeitgeist* “is in travail,” Hardayal noted, “but the Ideal, which shall be a Messiah to humankind, has not been ushered into light.”¹⁷ A solution to the Hindu-Muslim divide was at hand. Hardayal hypothesized that the Spirit of the age, together with a western education, would affect the reconciliation of what Akbar had attempted. Old differences based on custom and traditional institutions were set to dissolve under the unifying force of western culture.¹⁸ Hindus and Muslims were sure to “find them[selves] together in spite of themselves.” For no one can take up the code of Manu or the *shariat* of Islam as pointing the way forward. Governments and men would be unable to sunder such a bond formed by the Time-Spirit. Present circumstances weighed on the spirit of Indians, who were so burdened by the present-day as to be unable to see the future, which was growing out from underneath.¹⁹ The requisite conditions for participating in what Hardayal referred to as World-Life were as yet absent in contemporary India.²⁰

These ideas, together with the man who best articulated them, Hardayal, would have a great deal of influence in the founding of the Ghadar party. How Hardayal came to this perspective is, however, an important story in its own right, and not simply due to Hardayal’s biographical role in founding the Ghadar party. Without trying to reduce the story of Indian radicalism of the era to an autobiography of Hardayal, this chapter uses the vicissitudes in his life and thought to reconstruct the coherence of the political ideology of the Ghadar party, at least in its initial stages. The circuitous journey he followed as a student at Oxford into the secretive circles of Extremist nationalism, rejecting the applicability in India of liberal ideas of emancipation, and later self-identifying as a defender of cosmopolitan ideas, reveals the changes and stresses within

¹⁷ Har Dayal, “What the World is Waiting For,” *Open Court* 26, no. 3 (March 1912): 169.

¹⁸ Har Dayal, “Optimism,” *Modern Review* 13, no. 1 (January 1913): 12.

¹⁹ Har Dayal, “Optimism,” 9.

²⁰ Har Dayal, “Optimism,” 12.

the Indian nationalist party, as it struggled to make itself politically effective. Furthermore, his developing interest in anarcho-socialism on the West Coast of the United States, after his move there in 1911, anticipated a new chapter in the interconnections between Indian radicals and strains of leftist thought globally. Hardayal was self-reflective throughout, putting into words his differences with both mainstream Indian nationalism and the Marxist orthodoxies of the Second International, while propelling the Ghadar party into a realm of intrigue and international conspiracy at the outbreak of the Great War in 1914.

As detailed in the preceding chapters, radicals concerned with the Indian cause, in India and in Britain, were at something of a loss as the 20th century dawned. The Indian National Congress found itself divided, even as there was no apparent recourse forthcoming among those vying for the mantle of liberalism in the metropole. By 1907, Indian nationalism of the Extremist variety had been met with ambivalence by socialists of the Second International. The lack of clarity as to the correct path forward was especially disturbing given that the political stakes seemed to be increasing each year. Even if few could foretell the enormity of World War I, it was difficult to overlook the mounting tensions within and between the Great Powers—early indications that liberalism, and the system of international diplomacy built on its premises, would soon face a terrible crisis. It was in the context of this uncertain and anxious era that the Ghadarites determined to strike out and form their own organization. The millenarian strain in anarcho-radicalism, and certainly in the Ghadarites, was justified—and, if anything, understated. Hardayal is an acute expression of the ideas, impulses, and attitudes that made setting out on such a path appear necessary and desirable. Hardayal would be an important figure in any work about the Ghadar party. However, it is in this sense that Hardayal's life fits into this history of

Ghadar and, more generally, of the political developments in radical Indian nationalism before the Great War.

Hardayal the Student

After displaying a flash of his promising intellect as a student in Delhi and Lahore, Hardayal, the son of a modest *kayastha* (caste of scribes) household, raised in the shadows of the Mughal monuments of Old Delhi, was chosen, in 1905, for a scholarship to Oxford; he was the first state scholar from the Punjab.²¹ Hardayal pledged, as a condition of the scholarship, to serve the British Indian state on his return. Hardayal was shadowed nonetheless by the suspicion that, at heart, he was sympathetic to the nationalists preaching noncooperation. And in truth, even as a young man, Hardayal had been drawn to the Indian nationalist cause. Yet when inquiries were made into his background, his teachers, who were probably unaware of his Extremist affinities, refuted the accusations. Unsurprisingly, a file held by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), with evidence that Hardayal was radicalized as a student in Lahore, was either never transferred to the department responsible for granting the scholarship and completing his background check, or was simply lost in the thickets of inter-departmental files bundled with red tape that were a hallmark of the British administration in India.

Hardayal revealed himself to be both personally independent and politically minded upon joining St. John's at the outset of the 1905 Michaelmas session. Defying the expectation that he model himself on his father and three elder brothers in a legal vocation, Hardayal chose a dual-track course in Sanskrit and in modern history, specifically of Europe and British India. After he quickly won academic recognition as a Casberd exhibitioner and as a Boden scholar in his

²¹ Home Political, July, 1913, file 4-6.

subjects, he abruptly interrupted his studies to return to Delhi to collect his wife, Sundar, over the objections of their closest relatives. It was then that he confided to Gobind Behari Lal, who, later on, himself came to be involved with the Ghadar party in California, that he had no intention of going into the Indian Civil Service after completing his degree. Back in Oxford, Hardayal ventured beyond his tutorials, participating frequently in theological debates, joining other Indian students on their visits to India House in London, and performing “pilgrimages” to see the aristocrat-turned-anarchist in exile, Kropotkin, whose ideas had found the unlikelyst of admirers in the Marxist H. M. Hyndman, the head of the Social-Democratic Federation (SDF), and the Fabian socialist George Bernard Shaw.²²

Though he later wrote that he was more heterodox than radical at Oxford, even as a student Hardayal was intrigued by anarchism. With his distrust of the state, a millenarian faith in revolution, and an emphasis on rationalism,²³ Hardayal found anarchist thought appealing in the abstract, based on a sense that the liberal tradition, on which the British rule in India was supposedly founded, had entered into severe crisis. Anarchism was promising precisely as a means to redeem liberal values. Positioned to the left of both the Liberal party and the socialists in the SDF, anarchists favored immediate action to emancipate the colonies while emphasizing that there was a rational order to modern society underneath the excesses of imperialism. Hyndman, the veteran India reformer and socialist, once made the passing but astute observation that, despite the influence of Kropotkin, “anarchist after anarchist” in Britain was joining the Liberals.²⁴ The insightful quip was equally applicable to Indian nationalists like Hardayal who,

²² Emily Brown’s otherwise meticulously researched biography of Hardayal mistakes Peter Kropotkin for his brother Alexander, who died in 1890. *Har Dayal*, 21.

²³ Har Dayal letter to Van Wyck Brooks, December 23, 1913, University of Pennsylvania.

²⁴ H. M. Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 265.

despite their disenchantment with the inaction of the Liberal party, were still, in a sense, closer to left-Liberals than to full-throated socialists.

Before he had finished his first exams at Oxford, Hardayal wrote to a friend in the Sialkot district to express his own developing anarchistic worldview, professing “the more I think about it, the more I realize that half measures are of no use [politically].” A reason why the Indian National Congress had failed to win broad support was that, instead of speaking plainly, it was guilty of practicing sophistry; moreover the INC was close to the Liberal party in Britain and had inappropriately borrowed a “western phraseology” of “Constitutional Government” and self-rule within the limited confines of the empire. Laying an axe to the crux of the matter, Hardayal remarked, “Our object, is not to reform Government, but to reform it away, leaving, if necessary, only nominal traces of its existence.”²⁵

Hardayal felt a forceful attraction to the kind of radicalism that was percolating at India House, at Highgate, the epicenter of a new wave of Indian nationalism. Dubbed the “Extremists,” the members of this new wave sought to counterbalance “the Moderates” within the INC, while questioning the effectiveness of the Congress as a party. When he visited Britain in 1905, Lajpatrai was one of the first residents of India House, where Gandhi found respite in October 1906, as he campaigned at Whitehall against the notorious Black Ordinance in the Transvaal. Although Gandhi later modeled the character of the Extremist editor in *Hind Swaraj* on the owner of India House, at the time he wrote glowingly about it, particularly the fraternal idealism that inspired its openness to everyone, “whether Hindus, Muslims, or others.”

Guided by Shyamaji, India House fostered in Hardayal a skepticism of empire in the tradition of Herbert Spencer and his school of Positivist sociology. Apart from broad statements about the

²⁵ Home Political, 1936, 29/14/R36.

imperative of resistance to aggression and injustice, some of which were reprinted on the masthead of the *Indian Sociologist*, Spencer had written to condemn aspects of British rule of India, such as the cunningly “despotic use of native soldiers to maintain and extend native subjugation,” the British monopoly on staple commodities such as salt, and its harsh treatment of the *ryots* (cultivators). Shyamaji, while giving a speech to endow a slew of scholarships for Indian students in his name, noted that Spencer referred to Britain as “sociophagous,” a society-eating nation.

Furthermore, in and through the framework of his Positivist sociology, Spencer sought to explain what he referred to as the “re-barbarization” of society, that is, the slide of industrial society back into a militant one. With the spread of industrialism there was a “tendency,” Spencer observed, to break down “the divisions between nationalities” that were now held together by “common organization: if not a single Government, then under a federation of Governments.”²⁶ Yet it was evident to Spencer that instead of peacefully giving way to commerce, civilian rule had been subordinated to militarism in British India; meanwhile, on the Continent, Bismarck threatened to trench on the voluntary cooperation of industrial society.²⁷ The viceroy of India, Spencer held, was increasingly forced to obey the orders from Whitehall that were shaped by the militaristic imperatives of Britain. Although Britain had suffered through the convulsions of the Industrial Revolution to rise as a modern nation, its empire and militarism harkened back to what Spencer referred to as militant societies, which were primarily oriented toward war.²⁸ Locked in a fight either for their own existence or in predatory wars to enslave others, militant societies understood freedom as preserving their mode of life, while defense

²⁶ Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1898), 2:615.

²⁷ Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, 2: 590.

²⁸ Spencer, 2:591.

made “compulsory cooperation” a priority for everyone.²⁹ A vanquished man was unable to return into the collective fold under the penalty of death.³⁰ Militant societies were moreover based on status. “From the despot down to the slave,” Spencer wrote, “all are masters of those below and subjects of those above.”³¹ Yet, “corporate action, combination, cohesion, and regimentation,” as Spencer noted, “imply a structure which strongly resists change” and “the life of each man is held subject to the needs of the group; and, by implication, his freedom of action is similarly held.”³²

Though militant societies were industrious, industrial societies differed from militant ones in their promise that “individuality, instead of being sacrificed by the society, had to be defended by the society.”³³ Freed from the constant threat of war, men were able to sustain themselves by their own labor, enter into contracts to trade with others, and form new kinds of combinations. For moderns, an autocratic ruler “is an aggressor on citizens,” someone who restrains their wills.³⁴ Modern industrial societies had been “developing within themselves organizations for producing and distributing commodities, which have little by little become contrasted with those proper to militant activities.”³⁵ Patriotism had ebbed as result. Spencer held that when it came to neo-militarism and colonialism, then, the issue was the “re-barbarization” of society in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. To what degree had industrial society truly superseded militant society? Had the former merely papered over the latter? Does the apparent re-barbarization of society imply that, for the work of emancipation to succeed, society still requires forms of

²⁹ Spencer, 2:574.

³⁰ Spencer, 2:571.

³¹ Spencer, 2:573.

³² Spencer, 2:576; 2:579.

³³ Spencer, 2:607.

³⁴ Spencer, 2:608.

³⁵ Spencer, 2:618.

organization that characterized ancient militant society? Though Spencer was far from nostalgic for a militant society, he held little faith in socialism or communism, both of which, to his mind, reverted to an artificial imposition of “compulsory cooperation.”³⁶ Spencer was invested instead in trying to cash in the unfulfilled promissory notes of industrialism. What was the best means to redeem the insufficiency of 18th century liberalism under the conditions of 19th century industrial capitalism? By exchanging and producing our way to freedom—or by fighting?

Yet even Spencerian liberalism came to seem implausible to Hardayal. The anti-liberalism of Tilak, who had outlined his own vision for a “new party,” was to exercise an important influence on his thought. When the Moderate G. K. Gokhale tried to recruit the promising young Oxford student to his organization, the Servants of India, Hardayal balked at the oath of loyalty to the British Government that all of its members had to take. And, reportedly, when Gokhale reportedly tried to explain his stance on an “evolution” toward independence, Hardayal cut him short, protesting that this was no way to “enthuse people for freedom.”³⁷ Hardayal felt comfortable enough in the third week of January 1907 to conclude a letter to Shyamji, on the subject of suitable Muslim candidates from Punjab for a Herbert Spencer scholarship funded by India House, with the words, “P.S. Can I be of any service to the *Sociologist*?”³⁸ And promptly thereafter, Hardayal threw himself into the nationalist cause in the spring of 1907 and led the effort at India House to collect funds for the Lajpatrai–Ajit Singh Memorial Fund.³⁹ He soon wanted to launch a magazine, *Swarjaya*, modeled on the *Indian Sociologist*, while proffering himself to the service of the new party as a *bhakta* (devotee). After proposing to surrender his India Office scholarship, Hardayal wrote to Shyamji to declare that instead of pursuing a BA, he

³⁶ Spencer, 2:604.

³⁷ Quoted in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 27.

³⁸ Har Dayal to Krishnavarma, January 21, 1907, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML).

³⁹ Har Dayal to Krishnavarma, August 8, 1907, NMML.

was going to devote himself to studying the history of revolutionary movements and the socioeconomic condition of India, preparing a textbook on Indian politics, and getting a closer look at the work of radical emancipatory movements in America, England, Ireland, and on the Continent. It was imperative for their new party, he counseled Shyamaji, that “we must work quietly till until the party was well-organized enough to withstand opposition.”⁴⁰ A degree from Oxford “seems to be a mere academic decoration” that was of little use politically.⁴¹

Hardayal the Extremist

Throughout the half decade 1905 to 1910, in which thousands of his compatriots came to embrace the West, Hardayal tacked in the other direction. Increasingly hardened in his nationalist outlook, Hardayal came to reject his own Oxford education as well as the applicability of “western” liberal values to India. However, in order to launch himself politically, once he reached the West Coast in 1911, he would have to forsake some of his own Extremist views. That is, before he reached California, Hardayal was already struggling to reconcile the kind of cultural chauvinism he had assimilated as an Extremist with his own sense of what the future of India as a democratic republic might hold. At Oxford, however, Hardayal had not yet confronted the limits of Extremism.

After quitting Oxford in the fall of 1907, Hardayal was initiated at India House into the Abhinava Bharat (Young India), a circle of extreme nationalists, led by the Maharashtrian VD Savarkar. Like others who identified with the culturalist ideals of the “new party,” Hardayal railed at the allegedly deleterious effects of western materialism, upholding instead what he saw as a rationalist universalism rooted within the Hindu tradition itself. The English, he believed,

⁴⁰ Har Dayal to Krishnavarma, July 8, 1907, NMML

⁴¹ Har Dayal to Krishnavarma, August 28, 1907, NMML.

had neither exhibited some superhuman sagacity nor cunningly outwitted the natives; instead of conquering India through warfare the English had sought to peaceably strengthen their commerce through “the social conquest of the Hindu race.” Hardayal thus willingly took up the standard of chauvinistic Hinduism, applauding violence, disassociation from the mendicant INC, and self-sacrifice to the nation, even going so far as to argue that if Hindus shirked their responsibilities for protecting cows, their deities might abandon them,⁴² and imploring Indians to refrain from polluting themselves by going to the land of *mlechhas* (outsiders).⁴³

At the outset of 1908, Hardayal returned to Lahore, giving voice to his Extremist views in a series of articles for local newspapers. Most of his articles dealt with the relative demerits of an English education; instead of preparing Indians for self-government, their English education had been perniciously “stripping them of those habits and virtues which enable a nation to rule itself,” while promoting irreverence, provoking disunion in their ranks, injuring custom, and dampening enthusiasm for the glory of traditional Hindu civilization. Moderate nationalists welcomed such an education, pleading with the authorities to devote more resources and to make it compulsory, but Hardayal now held that the system of English education was poisoning the nation.⁴⁴ “The British established schools and colleges in India with the object of strengthening *their* hold over the country.”⁴⁵ Government schools were a ploy to displace traditional village schools financed by enlightened native rulers. “Its ulterior motive, however, was that natives might be so imbued with English civilisation that they should forget their old ways.”⁴⁶ The *Arya*

⁴² *Hindustan*, November 27, 1908, *Selections from Native Newspapers Published in the Punjab* (SNNPP), Vol. XXI, no. 49, 740.

⁴³ “Sri Krishen and Lala Har Dyal,” *Hindustan*, November 20, 1908, *SNNPP*, Vol. XXI, no. 48, 726.

⁴⁴ *Hindustan*, June 26, 1908, *SNNPP*, Vol. XXI, no. 29, 435

⁴⁵ Dayal, “The Real Objects of British Educational Policy,” in *Our Educational Problem* (Madras: Tagore and Company, 1922) 13.

⁴⁶ “National Education,” *Hindustan*, 15 May, 1908, *SNNPP*, Vol. XXI, no. 22, 318.

Gazette ran an article by Hardayal in which he claimed that India had civilized the entire world and taught mankind the different arts and sciences. It was a religious obligation of Indians, therefore, to study the ancient wisdom so as to know themselves.⁴⁷ “Again and again, the officials who ruled in India in the first half of the 19th century [had hoped],” Hardayal wrote, “that British schools would be a bulwark of strength to their empire.”⁴⁸ Hardayal chafed at the views of Charles Trevelyan, ex-governor of the Madras presidency, who had written in 1838 that “acquisitions made by superiority in war were consolidated by superiority in the arts of peace,” as well as the views in Macaulay’s minute about growing a class of “Indians in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect.”⁴⁹ The English themselves, he argued, had warned each other that when patriotically minded natives are “left to brood over their former independence, their sole specific answer for improving their condition is the immediate and total expulsion of the English,” while projecting that, though a “Mahratta or a Mohammedan despotism might be reestablished in a month,” it could take more than a century to ready Indians for self-government.

Hardayal also cautioned that while young Indians were fond of studying theories of the state through Bluntschli, who had once remarked that “society” was a concept that had originated with the Third Estate, a nation-state first required national institutions and needed to be fed more than “speeches, aspirations, arguments, imagination, cosmopolitanism, and insubstantial stuff.”⁵⁰ A properly national system of education would be based on idealism rather than crass materialism. “Indeed modern history resolves itself only into a record of the assertion of nationalities of their separate consciousness as against the encroachment of some ‘imperial’ power.” The development

⁴⁷ *Arya Gazette*, May 14, 1908, *SNNPP*, Vol. XXI, no. 22, 317.

⁴⁸ Dayal, “The Real Objects of British Educational Policy,” 14.

⁴⁹ Har Dayal, “The Process of Assimilation,” in *Our Educational Problem*, 22.

⁵⁰ Har Dayal, “The Effects of the British Educational System,” in *Our Educational Problem*, 46.

of a nation required that its citizens acquire an education that treated them as gregariously minded animals rather than individualistic ones. Solitude, Hardayal remarked, was fine for saints and for those who had turned back into animals, giving up their social instincts and moral nature. If men are to be more than “moral and intellectual pygmies, contemptible creatures whose lives are short, miserable, and brutish,” education had to be oriented toward *dharma*, understood less in the theological terms of a “duty to God,” than as a “duty toward mankind.” It was impossible for an individual to realize the ideal of *ahimsa* or self-less compassion; instead, this ideal was the result of extended historical development and rooted in customs, religion, and education.⁵¹ What this required was faithfulness to historical tradition, which imparted a love for national manners and customs and modes of thought. Cosmopolitanism, while a noble aspiration, Hardayal held, was presently unachievable, since presently India relied on an educational system and institutions that were of “a type of character which does not accord with the social environments or the institutions of the nation [and so] will be a cause of disintegration and disorganization.”⁵² Quoting Herbert Spencer, Hardayal noted that the value of an education was not limited to what “aids in direct self-preservation” or what led to “the gaining of a livelihood.” If it was to be adequate to the nation, an education had to be more than a means to an income or career success; “everything had to be subordinated to *dharma*.” The *dharma* of *ahimsa* was thus related to national existence as the abstract to the concrete, the general to the particular, the ideal to the actual. Education had to engender “social solidarity which is the basis of all progress.” England was bent on vampirically squeezing out the life-blood of native Indian arts and industries.⁵³ “The British educational system serves to convert the sons of our bankers, traders and land-owners

⁵¹ Har Dayal, “Thoughts on Education,” in *Our Educational Problem*, 4.

⁵² Dayal, “Thoughts on Education,” 4.

⁵³ *Hitkari*, June 1, 1908, *SNNPP*, Vol. XXI, no. 25, 357.

into dependents of the bureaucracy while the field of industrial and commercial enterprise is left open for the European settlers in India.” The Swadeshists called on native capitalists to invest their resources into indigenous industries and boycott British manufactures; the British maligned their efforts as malicious attempts to “set class against class and foment race-hatred!”⁵⁴

Hardayal went further than the boycotters. “If I had followed nature, if our whole life had not been rendered ridiculous, artificial and miserable by this educational system,” he once lamented, “I should have written in Sanskrit to appeal to my countrymen in Bengal, Bombay or Madras (an aspiration which has not altogether been abandoned.)”⁵⁵ Furthermore, the Indians ought to reclaim historical achievements through new textbooks and revive Sanskrit literature, traditional medicine (*ayurveda*), and religion (the *Upanishads* and *smritis*). Did Etonians, he asked, study history from books written in Chinese? “A nation, which has only lost its national state, is not crushed, it is under a merely temporary eclipse.” But one that is demoralized is in a state of serfdom rather mere political subjection. “Education, religion, and social customs should form the sacred circle within which all unalloyed foreign control is inadmissible.”⁵⁶

Hardayal extended this ethical critique of lost authenticity to a sociopolitical one of the Indian National Congress. “As for our ‘Congress-men,’ they seem to have lost the primary instincts of self-respecting nations,” accepting their lot of an inferior status to Englishmen. Hardayal wondered therefore whether the Congress was a sign of political progress or decay. Did it represent an advance or a retrogression in the political life of the nation?⁵⁷ The reason that the INC had come about in 1885, rather than in 1820 or 1860, Hardayal submitted, was that it

⁵⁴ Hindustan, May 22, 1908, *SNNPP*, Vol. XXI, no. 22, 316.

⁵⁵ Har Dayal, “The Effects of the British Educational System,” in *Our Educational Problem*, 48; also see *Hindustan*, June 26, 1908, *SNNPP*, Vol. XXI, no. 29, 435.

⁵⁶ Dayal, “The Effects of the British Educational System,” 54.

⁵⁷ Har Dayal, “The So-Called Awakening,” in *Our Educational Problem*, 62.

unequivocally represented decay rather an advance; it was an instance of the saying that “empty vessels make much noise.” “Maharashtra boasts many newspapers, dailies, and weeklies, but are the [militant] Gurkhas politically in a worse condition than the Bengalis simply because they cannot discourse on the blessings of liberty?”⁵⁸ And he criticized the attempts by the INC to rouse the British electorate, quipping that the newspaper *India* issued by its British Committee was read only by the statesmen in London who sought to figure out how to best tighten rather than relax their grip on India.⁵⁹ Agitation through words alone was never going to succeed in getting the Government to relinquish its privileges. Government service, on this view, only strengthened the grip of British rule over Indians.⁶⁰ A career in the Indian Civil Service was thus seen as selfish and selfishness was itself an obstacle to Swaraj⁶¹; since “conciliation and consolidation go hand in hand,” the British periodically invited a small number Indians, typically aristocrats, into the administration of the state. Without the right to arms, Hardayal believed, the Indians were defenseless.

Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab Michael O’Dwyer recalled rumors that Lajpatrai himself had mentored Hardayal, who now kept the company of a circle of radicalized students promoting Swadeshi.⁶² Yet Hardayal was already outstripping Lajpatrai; later, Hardayal lampooned his mentor as an “unstable weather-cock,” who vacillated between the “moderates” and the “new party.”⁶³ The *Arya Gazette* of June 25, 1908 reported that crowds of young men flocked to pay Hardayal a visit and found themselves in raptures at his preaching.⁶⁴ Hardayal excoriated those

⁵⁸ Dayal, “The So-Called Awakening,” 63.

⁵⁹ *Hitkari*, 1 June 1908, *SNNPP*, Vol. XXI, no. 25, 357.

⁶⁰ *Hitkari*, June 15, 1908, *SNNPP*, Vol. XXI, no. 27, 394.

⁶¹ *Hitkari*, 22 June, 1908, *SNNPP*, Vol. XXI, no. 28, 411.

⁶² Michael O’Dwyer, *India as I Knew It, 1885-1925* (London: Constable and Company, 1925), 185.

⁶³ Har Dayal, *Bande Mataram* 1, no. 1 (September 10, 1910): 4.

⁶⁴ *Arya Gazette*, 25 June, 1908, *SNNPP*, Vol. XXI, no. 30, 457.

nationalists who “are misled by superficial analogies” to conditions prevailing in Europe.⁶⁵

“Political efficiency,” he held, “is the sign and symbol of the health and strength of the social organism.” Therefore, the Extremists, who wanted full independence from British rule, ought to work separately from the reform-minded Moderate party who had shown themselves to be completely ineffective; the Moderates were, in his words, like birds of prey that took refuge in nests at the first sign of rain.⁶⁶

When he left India in the middle of August to return to London, Hardayal could scarcely have anticipated how, in short order, drastic events would both sharpen these divisions and necessitate new alignments. After Savarkar was linked to the assassination of William Curzon Wylie, aide-de-camp to the Secretary of State for India, at a conclave hosted by the Indian Association in London, Scotland Yard rushed to close down India House in the summer of 1909. Shyamaji mustered a reluctant endorsement of assassination in the *Indian Sociologist* that was seen as a sign of weakness. And with India House shuttered, Shyamaji lost his edge to radicals based across the Channel, Madame Cama and SR Rana, whose new zine, the *Bande Mataram*, revived the title of the Calcutta broadsheet that was founded in 1905 by Bipin Chandra Pal and later edited by Aurobindo. Appointed the first editor of *Bande Mataram*, Hardayal, who had relocated to Paris, wished to shape the new organ into an instrument of the “new party.” The first issue, while praising the assassin for giving a “deathblow to English sovereignty in India,” was not simply an action-ist manifesto.⁶⁷ Hardayal outlined a three-stage view of historical development, in which an era of self-education to instruct Indians on governing “an efficient

⁶⁵ Dayal, “Public Life and Private Morals.” *Hindustan Review* 18, no. 107 (July 1908): 626.

⁶⁶ *Hitkari*, 20 July 1908, *SNNPP*, Vol. XXI, no. 31, 465.

⁶⁷ Subsequent issues of *Bande Mataram* would offer a critique of Bipin Chandra Pal. “What are constitutional methods?” Weekly Report of the Department of Criminal Intelligence, December 18, 1909 in Home Political B, February 1910, 120-27.

social organization” had to come first, followed by a war to abolish the old regime and to establish a sovereign and democratic state, which set the stage for the final movement into actual independence and reconstruction. “Exile has privileges,” Hardayal presciently noted, permitting Extremists “the right of preaching the truth as it appears to us.” “History cannot alter its course for India,” Hardayal concluded. “After Mazzini, Garibaldi; after Garibaldi, Cavour. Even so it must be with us.”

Westward Bound

The ostensible reason that Hardayal forwent Harvard to move to California, other than repose, was to advocate on behalf of the Sikhs who labored out West.⁶⁸ Yet, almost twelve months on, with the exception of getting a sympathetic Sikh rancher to fund scholarships for Indian students to study at the University of California, Berkeley, Hardayal had little to show for his efforts.⁶⁹ At first appearances, the Sikhs struck him as simpletons still yearning for their villages, who were but “temporary sojourners in this land of Goshen.”⁷⁰ Furthermore, these Sikh rustics, some of whom still wore their turbans as a symbol of their faith, were unable to “quickly adapt themselves to the ways and manners of a highly developed and complex social system.” On closer examination, however, the peculiarity of the situation of the Sikhs on the West Coast, who were involved in peaceably trying to redeem their rights as workmen as well as British subjects, forced Hardayal to reconsider his own chauvinistic nationalism. This encounter and these initial endeavors, though of limited immediate success, educated and prepared Hardayal to lead the Ghadar party politically beyond the Moderate–Extremist divide of the INC.

⁶⁸ Har Dayal, “India in America,” *Modern Review* 11, no. 1 (July 1911): 7.

⁶⁹ The selection committee of the Guru Gobind Singh Scholarship Fund that vetted applications included Hardayal; Arthur Upham Pope, who taught philosophy; and Teja Singh.

⁷⁰ Dayal, “India in America,” 3.

Several thousand Sikhs had settled in the states of California, Oregon, and Washington, which made them, Hardayal reckoned, in the first of a series of articles in which he recorded his impressions of the United States for the *Modern Review* of Calcutta, the largest group of “sons of Bharatvarsha under the hospitable Stars and Stripes.”⁷¹ Sikh men—turbaned, tattered, most of them illiterate—had “landed at San Francisco or Seattle in search of a livelihood,” but sometime into their sojourn, Hardayal remarked, “an internal revolution occurs within [them].” Outside of British India, the Sikh was now able to think about a career beyond a *risaldarship* (a native cavalry officer) and to “respect himself,” as “his economic and moral poverty disappears.” Sikhs who lived stateside quickly became patriotically inclined, which manifested itself in “deeds of kind service” to their countrymen, their readiness to subscribe sums for “the corporate welfare,” and an interest in world affairs. Ballasted by their ascetic labor, the Sikhs were sought after as reliable workmen, who generally took less pay than others. When an outcry against the Sikhs was “artificially manufactured,” Hardayal wrote admiringly, these men had battled their adverse circumstances with “silent resolve rather than by tall talk and empty bluff.” Like a lost and sickly antelope that thrives when it finds the forest, the Sikhs had flourished in their new environs.⁷²

Like the Sikhs, with whom he formed a formal association in 1912, Hardayal came to see the United States as the lodestar in “the cause of liberty against despotism.” India “is groaning under frightful evils, [and] the whole world is one vast charnel-house,” Hardayal wrote shortly after his move to California, but the New World was “an ethical sanitarium” for anyone escaping tyranny. America was where liberal ideals flourished well after Britain had seemingly turned its back on those ideals by trying to paternalistically lord themselves over a sprawling Indian empire. It was

⁷¹ India in America was written while he was in Berkeley. It is dated April 28, 1911. India in America, 11.

⁷² India in America, 4.

a “mighty alchemist, wonderful magician of the modern age, lodestar of all and everybody whom the overburdened mother earth has rejected, [everyone who is] groan[ing] under tyranny.”

Anyone “who breathe[s] beneath the Stars and Stripes,” Hardayal wrote, “is lifted to a higher level of thought and action.”

Hardayal was neither blind nor unsympathetic to the injustices evident in the United States. Able to acknowledge the contradictions rife within the unfinished project of the United States—such as the fraught attempts since the Civil War to overcome the stain of racism and the nation’s own expansion into an overseas territorial empire—Hardayal nevertheless believed that America, which was still a young nation in his estimation, also stood for a worthwhile ideal. Although all nations claimed to be special, exceptional, and superior, such claims were typically articulated in terms of “blood and soil,” rather than “ideals,” much less the ideal and actuality of freedom. Only the British and the French also had this “idealism” undergirding their national identity, but both had manifestly abandoned these foundations. Although there was a caricature in India of the United States as the nation of “Washington, Emerson, and negro-lynchings,”⁷³ he wrote, she was in fact the land of “unity, liberty, tolerance, and individual progress,” rather than “racial self-assertion.”⁷⁴ She was a nation that was formed in a revolution to overthrow British imperial order. The abolition of British rule had swept away aristocratic privilege from this side of the Atlantic, whereas Indians were still servants in their own household, subjects without status under the Union Jack.⁷⁵ The implication of his view of the contemporary US was that, insofar as the revolution of 1776 was the expression of a British Empire in crisis, the over-ripeness of that crisis was particularly evident in India, where the promising effects of the democratic revolutions

⁷³ Dayal, “India in America,” 1

⁷⁴ Dayal, 4.

⁷⁵ Dayal, 1.

of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were never properly felt. The “over-swollen capitalists” of Lancashire had impeded the transformation of India into a democratic republic.⁷⁶ Later, surveying the significant achievements of civilization after the World War, Hardayal would rank the American Declaration of Independence on a list of the most important world-historical events, a list that included the advent of Buddhism, Greek sculpture, the music of Beethoven, and the Shakespearean corpus.⁷⁷ Hardayal wrote without hyperbole, “we are all impelled by the same spirit [that led Columbus to America], all of us who believe that life is meant for achievement and not enjoyment.”⁷⁸

Though Hardayal’s low opinion of Sikhs in India appear tinged by prejudice and chauvinism, one may still read his observations on Sikhs in America profitably, in terms of understanding how immigrant Sikhs adapted to their new lives and, in the broadest sense of the term, *inhabited* the environment of the North American West Coast. For, without trying to essentialize anything about Sikhs in India, or Sikhs generally, it is true that the kind of radicalization the Pacific North American Sikhs undergo during this period was idiosyncratic, if not unique. This would suggest that Hardayal was correct at least in sensing something was different about the North American Sikh immigrants, from which the majority of the Ghadar party would later count its membership.

If new life was to be breathed into India, Hardayal now held, she had to look outwards to revitalize herself. The unvarnished truth was that India, despite her ancient achievements, was

⁷⁶ The French, he felt, still lamented the territories lost to the British in India and, based on their rivalry with the British, the Germans kept an eye on India, though their primary fascination was with ancient India.

⁷⁷ Har Dayal, *Forty-Four Months in Germany and Turkey, February 1915 to October 1918: A Record of Personal Impressions* (London: P. S. King and Son, 1920), 5-6.

⁷⁸ And on that list of “all,” Hardayal included Dayanand, Aurobindo Ghose and Tilak, Vivekananda, and Lajpatrai, and Bhai Parmanand. See Dayal, “India in America,” 10.

now out of the fight: politically insignificant and seemingly beyond the reach of the Spirit of history.⁷⁹ Further, in a series of statements sure to have made even Macaulay blush, Hardayal remarked, “the West has no use of *taddhita* suffixes and *bahuvrihi* compounds.” Grammatical insights from Sanskrit “cannot be made a marketable commodity now.” Although the sciences—algebra, geometry, astronomy, and medicine—once flourished in India, moderns “can have only an antiquarian interest in the *Sulva Sutra* and the *Surya Siddhanta*”; moreover, “no one will learn astronomy from *Aryabhatta* or medicine from Charaka.” Sanskrit plays and poetry might never be rendered obsolete, but their aesthetic quality was half lost in translation, not simply as a function of geography, but of time. The task of producing metrical translations, as the sophomoric efforts by RC Dutt testified, was itself best left to Orientalist scholars. French was more useful than Farsi and German more so than Sanskrit.⁸⁰ For “all earnest thinkers in India,” Hardayal had this bit of advice, “look *forward* and *outward*, and not *backward* and *inward*.”⁸¹

Even more sharply, in contrast to his earlier views, Hardayal identified custom as the chief obstacle to revivifying India. With a touch of self-criticism of his nationalist self, he wrote, “Our medieval home-life and manners and customs, which some short-sighted nationalists admire as emblems of national individuality, are really so many obstacles between India and Europe.”⁸² Instead of playing with “effete ideas and customs now, we should face the world clad in the newest equipment of civilization.”⁸³ Yet rather than lament what was lost, Indians should accelerate change, since the reverence for antiquity was more suited to dilettantes than to hard-headed men involved in “fighting the battle of the perishing millions against the tremendous

⁷⁹ Har Dyal, “Indian Philosophy and Art in the West” *Modern Review* 12, no. 4 (April 1912): 420

⁸⁰ Har Dyal, “India and the World Movement.” *Modern Review* 13, no. 2 (February 1913): 186.

⁸¹ Dayal, 187.

⁸² Dayal, 187.

⁸³ Dayal, 187.

odds in this ruthless age.”⁸⁴ India “still quarrels over doctrines and modes of worship and the comparative merits of revealed books, as the Europeans used to do in the middle ages.”⁸⁵

“Instead of old-world divisions,” there were new “-isms” to argue over: socialism, [D]arwinism, syndicalism, and feminism. While pronouncing India “half-dead,” Hardayal reformulated the Sanskrit dictum, “without knowledge there is no emancipation,” as “without Europe there is no emancipation.”⁸⁶

Hardayal thus acknowledged what had been well known to the likes of Hyndman, Naoroji, and Lajpatrai: India had to look outward, toward the metropole, for its own redemption. Whereas Hyndman had repeatedly sought to underscore to Naoroji how important a revolution in Britain was to the fate of India, Lajpatrai had returned from England in 1905 with the sense that the socialists in Britain were too weak to lead a revolution in the metropole and the nationalist party in India lacked the capacity to mobilize the masses. After the cultural chauvinism of the Extremists showed itself to be a dead-end politically, Hardayal inched closer to a different kind of radicalism, which was to overlap with but diverge in different ways from the views of the Moderates and Extremists, as well as from orthodox socialists such as Hyndman.

Hardayal reevaluated his stance on Indian religion in light of his new radicalism. Though he lauded the efforts of the Sanskritist JH Woods at Harvard, who introduced students to Indian thought, Hardayal felt that Woods had failed to separate Indian philosophy from religion. “The student of sociology knows,” he remarked, “that religion is only a safety-valve for our higher culture.”⁸⁷ Though impressed by the work accomplished by the swamis, who as missionaries of Vedanta had taught “overfed, self-complacent Americans” the value of restraint and self-

⁸⁴ Dayal, “India and the World Movement,” 187.

⁸⁵ Dayal, 187.

⁸⁶ Dayal, 188.

⁸⁷ Har Dayal, “The Wealth of a Nation” *Modern Review* 12, no. 1 (July 1912): 48.

mortification, Hardayal stated that he was no Vedantin and he himself believed that metaphysics was as erroneous as superstition. The different schools of Indian philosophy, Advaita, Dvaita, or Sankhya, had to be separated from recondite concerns about the status of the Vedas and Upanishads as *Sruti* (“what is heard”/ revealed scripture such as the Vedas) or *Smriti* (“recollection”/ works that are memorized). The Buddha had cautioned in vain against shallow metaphysics, which was “the curse of India,” in that “its upas tree-like shadow destroys all [that is] independent and fruitful.”⁸⁸ Against the efforts by revivalists such as the Arya Samaj to revitalize a traditional Indic education, Hardayal noted that European intellectuals, such as the socialist Bebel, the French dramatist Eugene Brieux, and the naturalist Haeckel, had turned their attention to things other than “composing treatises on Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas,” parsing the Pentateuch, and rhapsodizing on the poetry of Beowulf.⁸⁹ The task before Indians was to throw themselves into the works of Rousseau, Voltaire, Plato, Aristotle, Spencer, Haeckel, Marx, Comte, and the like.

“Sociology is the source of wisdom, not metaphysics or theology,” Hardayal speculated, in a sense going back to his roots in Herbert Spencer. Political science and economics were but the most important branches of sociology for India. If, as Francis Bacon had remarked, “Histories make men wise,” Hardayal reasoned that the task was to approach history critically—*not* out of antiquarian interest.⁹⁰ Ancient Hindu sages looked on history and science phenomenally as things, and fixated on individual realization rather than social regeneration. Political concerns—representation, tariffs, the state, and class struggle—meanwhile figured nowhere in their ideal of renunciation. Yet the answer to India’s woes was not temperance, vegetarianism, or caste purity.

⁸⁸ Dayal, “The Wealth of the Nation,” 45.

⁸⁹ Dayal, 46.

⁹⁰ Dayal, 46.

India was not going to ruin, Hardayal stated, on account of some Indians who ate meat or drank wine, “but because her economic situation is desperate”—a situation that needed to be understood sociologically and rectified politically.

Against the sorts of claims he had once made about modern civilization giving rise to moral anomie, Hardayal was now open to the idea, almost Nietzschean in essence, that there had been a transvaluation of values. Moralists such as St. Francis and St. Dominic arguably lead thirteenth century Europe, he noted, “but we are happier in the twentieth century though the sum-total of moral energy is less now than it was in those days. A little science now confers more happiness on mankind than all the uninstructed piety of the middle ages.”⁹¹ All the exhortations of the church to kings and rulers had not secured good government, but the simple device of representative institutions had done away with all the abuses, which passionately argued sermons could not check in the slightest. St. Francis loved the destitute and would have forsaken his life for them, Hardayal wrote, “but he did not understand that poverty was due to feudalism and capitalism, which should be abolished.” It was thus the French Revolution, which was led by men who were inferior to the men of the church in personality, that forged the way forward, instead of all the efforts of the clergy, as the latter “did not go to the root of things.” Europe in the eighteenth century turned from prayers, sermons, and threats of excommunication to laboratories, parliaments, and socialism. And the conquest of that revolution was still in progress.

From the shores of Honolulu, thus, Hardayal turned his back on the chauvinistic Hinduism that was once inseparable from his nationalist views. Hardayal remarked that he was now indifferent to those patriotically minded countrymen who kept an eye on census statistics and fretted about the strength of the Hindu majority without *Sudras* or outcasts, while worrying over

⁹¹ Dayal, “The Wealth of the Nation,” 48.

election contests with Muslims. “I acknowledge no caste system,” he wrote, “nor am I anxious about the inroads of Christian missionaries at the rear-gate of the Hindu citadel.” Instead Hardayal championed a brotherhood of man. The impact of these new ideals led him to recoil at the idea of imparting religious education at the new Benaras Hindu University, floated by Madan Mohan Malaviya, the Hindu nationalist who held the presidency of the INC in 1909. It was curious, Hardayal retorted, that well-wishers of India were satisfied to “ransack the already bankrupt treasury of Sanskrit learning instead of bringing to India the accumulated riches of the whole world.”⁹² Ancient Hindu or Greek thinkers simply had no answers or concepts adequate to the issues wrought by a modern civilization, whose complexity was beyond anything they could have imagined.⁹³ Should moderns treat Manu’s ideas about a council of eight ministers as sound political theory? What of his dictum that women should never enjoy independence?⁹⁴ Should Hindus shut their eyes to the ballot box and representative institutions that did not exist when Hinduism first flourished?

Hardayal faced a swift backlash after publishing his views in India. A critic, replying to “Some Phases of Contemporary Thought in India,” held that the *Arthashastra* and Shantiparva of the *Mahabharata* might be profitably read by contemporary statesmen.⁹⁵ Hardayal’s riposte was emphatic. “What enlightenment can a young man receive from the writings of Ramatiratha and Vivekananda on the cosmos and chaos? There is more wisdom in one of Tilak’s speeches than in

⁹² Har Dayal, “Some Phases of Contemporary Thought in India,” 473.

⁹³ Har Dayal, 474. Gobind Behari Lal, a student at the University of California, trotted out a passage from a speech Gokhale had made to the Fabians in London on that fateful INC mission of 1905, expressing much the same modernist assumptions that undergirded Hardayal’s article “Wealth of the Nation.” Gokhale had stated on that occasion that, whereas a vibrant Indian civilization had flourished when the English still had no conception of civilization itself, the ancient Indians, while progressing in various fields, “did not develop a love of free institutions.” The Indian were now paying a price politically for their indifference. Gobind Behari Lal, 6 October 1912, in “The Hindus’ Lack of Interest in Politics,” *Modern Review*, December 1912, 649.

⁹⁴ Har Dayal, 474.

⁹⁵ Har Dayal, “Mr. Har Dayal on Some Present-Day Movements,” *Modern Review*, November 1912, 553.

all the Upanishads. We do not want our young men to search for Brahman,” Hardayal railed, “we want them to search for freedom.”⁹⁶ Aurobindo Ghose was more adequate to present-day realities than the likes of Ramakrishna, who never had to concern themselves with the merits of representative versus despotic rule, and who certainly never had to concern themselves with Indian monetary policy. (Quickly qualifying his endorsement of Aurobindo, Hardayal wrote that despite all of his politically rich insights, Aurobindo had committed himself to complete renunciation and thus rendered himself politically irrelevant.) Against Hardayal, another critic wrote that India would evolve in its own peculiar way, and “not like western countries.” Hardayal replied that, while there is no royal road to progress, “I cannot imagine what this mysterious peculiar way is.”⁹⁷

Further on, in the same riposte to his critics, Hardayal even ventured to fault the *Bhagavad Gita*, which had the status of a biblical text for the nationalists. After Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay first sought to establish its theological significance beyond its central role in the Vaishnavite-Hindu tradition, BG Tilak, Aurobindo Ghose, and Lajpatrai, all wrote commentaries that lent a distinct Swadeshist color to the *Gita*. Although the extremists invested the *Gita* with significant importance, Hardayal characterized it as maze-like, without rhyme or meter, obscurantist, and syllogistic. For the extremists, its core concerns—release (*mukti*), devotion (*bhakti*), ethical obligations or rules of action (*dharma*), desire-less action, and self-cultivation—were, after some liberal reinterpretation, applicable to the Swadeshi struggle.⁹⁸ The *Gita* was held up as the source of the idea that self-sacrificial devotion to the nation was a dharmic obligation. But Hardayal objected that the *Gita* was all things to all readers. “I have absolutely no

⁹⁶ Har Dayal, “Mr. Har Dayal’s Rejoinder,” *Modern Review*, December 1912, pg. 648.

⁹⁷ Har Dayal, 648.

⁹⁸ Har Dayal, 648.

use for that compendium of metaphysical jargon and contradictory theories which is called the *Bhagvad-Gita*. It is too antiquated a book for India today.”⁹⁹ The *Gita* bred lifeless spirituality that was inadequate to spurring a virtue of vigor, affection for society, an interest in statesmanship, anger at oppressors, compassion for the downtrodden, and respect for societal rules. “I am preparing a new *Gita*,” Hardayal wrote, titled “*Navina-Bhagavad-Gita*.”¹⁰⁰

After some time, and with further refinements in his own thinking, Hardayal was to find a more sympathetic reception on the other side of the Pacific. After gaining some local publicity giving talks at the Theosophical Society of San Francisco, on issues such as “The Problem of Evil in Hindu Philosophy,” Hardayal was invited to teach Indian philosophy at Stanford, without pay, in the spring of 1912.¹⁰¹ Van Wyck Brooks, a colleague who taught English and with whom Hardayal maintained a correspondence into the 1930s, recorded that Hardayal lived as an ascetic, in a studio near the railroad tracks (fittingly, at an address on Kipling Street), furnished with a single chair that he kept for visitors. Together with Brooks, himself a fellow traveller, Hardayal had leapt headfirst into the leftist milieu. Brooks recalled in his autobiography that in those days the local he frequented was run by immigrant intellectuals, primarily Jewish, “whose minds were full of Karl Marx, Freud, Krafft-Ebing, Nietzsche, Bakunin, and Kropotkin.” Bill Haywood, the head of the Industrial Workers of the World, the militant industrial union, as well as other radicals, also stopped in on occasion. “One of my friends was a district leader of the revolution of 1905, who had been arrested for reading aloud... the American Declaration of

⁹⁹ Har Dayal, 648.

¹⁰⁰ Comment and Criticism, *Modern Review*, December 1912, 649.

¹⁰¹ “Theosophical Meetings,” *SF Call*, December 17, 1911, pg. 76 and December 24, 1911, Page 42. “Persons in the News,” *SF Call*, March 2, 1912, pg. 14.

Independence... by torchlight, in the Russian woods,” Brooks once boasted. (The friend, after daringly escaping from Siberia, apparently came to teach economics at Stanford.) It was “in this circle [of romantic exiles],” Brooks wrote, “that I encountered another type that was new to me, the Hindu revolutionist Har Dayal, who was teaching Indian philosophy at Stanford[,] but mainly in order to conceal his real life-work as an organizer of Indian rebellion.”¹⁰²

That summer, in a letter to Brooks, Hardayal referred to the sensation of over-stimulation. Within a short span, Hardayal had pledged himself to a Free Love association, decrying the slavishness and hypocrisy of “the marriage system.”¹⁰³ Developing an interest in anarchism, he wrote to Brooks, “I am trying to choose, [whether I should write on] Labor in the XIX century, or the Feminist Movement, or the Essentials of Anarchism, or the Elements of Sociology, or Education and Anarchism.” The one he thought would be most useful in propagandizing work would be titled “The Essentials of Anarchism in Theory and Practice,” though he was also interested in the book on sociology, which he believed would have a wider audience. With summer vacation upon him, he sought to build a link to the Sikhs who worked in the area of Stockton, but before going off, Hardayal had written to Brooks, “I am a revolutionist first and everything else afterwards.”

Brooks later articulated some doubts, suggesting that Hardayal taught Indian philosophy as a means to dissimulate what he had affirmed privately, “that international social revolution was his only interest.” Furthermore, Brooks had a hunch that Hardayal never saw nationalism and internationalism as antithetical, implying that Hardayal never forsook his nationalist views. Yet, whatever the case, Brooks believed Hardayal “perfectly exemplified” the standpoint in Bakunin’s *Revolutionist’s Catechism*, which defines a revolutionist as someone who had “no

¹⁰² Van Wyck Brooks, *An Autobiography* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1965), 208.

¹⁰³ Quoted in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 104.

interests, no affairs, no feelings, no attachments of his own, no property, not even a name.”

Brooks wrote that Hardayal “had insinuate[d] himself everywhere and turned everyone everything and everyone to his purpose, like the character of Verhovensky in Dostoevsky’s *The Possessed*, that, as I knew him, to the life, was Har Dayal.” “Whether an Indian nationalist [or] an anarchist internationalist, he was a revolutionist at every moment with a shrewd psychological knowledge of the value of the martyr’s role for attracting and retaining disciples to carry out his work.”¹⁰⁴ After resigning from Stanford over his Free Love beliefs in September 1912, Hardayal founded the Bakunin Institute, which he referred to as the first monastery of anarchism.¹⁰⁵ Brooks noted then that he combined in a curious way “the opposite types of a yogi and a commissar.”¹⁰⁶



Figure 4.1 Portrait of Hardayal in London, April 1934. Hardayal mailed this photograph to his friend Van Wyck Brooks. Courtesy of the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania.

¹⁰⁴ Brooks, *Autobiography*, 209.

¹⁰⁵ “Har Dayal Leaves Stanford,” letter to the editor, September 17, 1912, in *San Francisco Call*, September 19, 1912. Also see “Savant Sponsor of Free Love,” *San Francisco Call*, September 17, 1912.

¹⁰⁶ Brooks, *Autobiography*, 210.

Several weeks into the summer, Hardayal toured the San Francisco Bay Area, giving speeches as a member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the syndicalist industrial union. After speaking on “The Future of the Labor Movement,” in the first week of July, Hardayal wrote to Brooks to declare his own satisfaction. Although he hinted that his talk might rankle some at Stanford, speaking publicly on such subjects, he felt, had helped him clarify his own views. “I hate hole-and-corner hypocrisy and silence,” he wrote to Books, even as he begged him for an invitation to Carmel. That there was a new dawn in his thought was reflected in the fact that he now reckoned the date in new notation, 41 PC, a reference to the era since the passing of the Paris Commune of 1871. Hardayal then inquired whether Brooks was also “approaching some synthesis and coordination in ideas and ideals?” “Action is impossible without a coherent view of things,” he wrote, as “thought and aspiration are only sickly, puny things compared with action.” Action, or rather “objective action” alone, Hardayal contended, was spiritually satisfying.¹⁰⁷ A month later, once again to Brooks, Hardayal spoke of his series of lectures on the “social revolution” as his “frank confession of faith.” A vacation to see Brooks in Carmel had to be tabled, as Hardayal had been “in the country,” preaching his philosophy of action to the Hindu ranchers near Stockton.¹⁰⁸

It was at Stanford that Hardayal completed his article, “Karl Marx: A Modern Rishi,” in which he marked out where he, as an anarcho-socialist, was parting ways from Marx himself. Believed to be the first biographical sketch of the Old Moor to appear in India, the article was cribbed in substantial measure from a book written by John Spargo, but included a synopsis of the sorrows of Marx’s domestic life even as it lauded his radical commitments. Hardayal

¹⁰⁷ Har Dayal to V. W. Brooks, July 12, 1912.

¹⁰⁸ Har Dayal to V. W. Brooks, August 14, 1912.

understood Marx to be single-mindedly fixated with trying to answer one query: Why are the masses of modern Europe impoverished and miserable?

The Neolithic revolution, Hardayal wrote, “when the miracle of agriculture was wrought,” was the first to offer mankind the means to feed itself. Humankind thus elevated itself above other animals that lived in a state of chronic starvation and accompanying civil war. Yet the revolution in commerce and manufactures of the late-eighteenth century formed a new kind of a riddle: the advent of abject poverty in the midst of plenty and a war of all against all. The industrial revolution ought to have solved the issue of poverty, as science improved agriculture and industry beyond the wildest visions of the utopians, but instead there was poverty everywhere. How was it, Hardayal wondered, that England was the richest country in world, but a full one-third of its inhabitants confronted starvation yearly, and that thousands of workingmen were dying of consumption from a lack of fresh air? “Let the young men of India reply why one man like Andrew Carnegie can donate £36,000,00 to charity?” Furthermore, what explained “the strange anomaly,” Hardayal inquired, that, while shareholders of companies were sure to rise from millionaires to multi-millionaires, the lowest workers were fated to remain the Lazarus layers of society? Such inequity, as he had remarked with his characteristic disdain, “cannot be solved by the study of any of the sixteen systems of philosophy mentioned in the *Sarva-darshana-sangraha*.¹⁰⁹

Though the majority of men in the civilizations of antiquity lived in vile poverty, the ancients “saw this horrid spectacle, and remained silent.” Even in India, where philosophy claimed to explain everything, the *rishis* never condescended to explain the cause of poverty. A system of philosophy that emphasizes *mukti*, *nirvana*, or salvation, without an attendant emphasis on

¹⁰⁹ Har Dayal, “Class-Psychology and Public Movements,” *Modern Review* 14, no. 2 (February 1914): 168.

economics, Hardayal noted, was a structure without a secure foundation. Against the prejudice of “vulgar worldliness,” moderns were indebted to Marx for laying bare the contradictions at the heart of modern society, and pointing a way forward.

The soundest achievement of *Capital*, which Hardayal referred to as a *shastra*, was that it ingeniously fleshed out an analysis of surplus value. Though Hardayal voiced his own impatience at the level of theoretical detail—surplus value for him boiled down to the capitalist paying workers less than the full value of their labor—he was able to recognize that the exposition of value in *Capital* flew in the face of orthodox political economy. Marx was therefore proffering a critique of the scientific pretensions of political economy. Moreover, Marx and Engels sought to extend these insights into the political realm through their involvement with, and at times interventions in, various radical organizations, which included the German Social Democracy, and especially the First International. Socialists before him had fancied that communism would “come from above”; “this is the idea,” Hardayal remarked, “still found in such groups as the Fabian Society of England or ‘Christian Socialist’ association.” Marx, by contrast, was the first to issue “the formula that the emancipation of the working-classes must be achieved by themselves.” And he sought to restore “the latent manhood in them, of which they themselves were not conscious,” when he exhorted: “Workingmen of all countries, unite!” If the Social Contract by Rousseau had established the doctrine of sovereignty of the General Will, Marx’s notion of class-struggle and theorization of value harmonized with the ideals of the working-classes, and it was in this sense, Hardayal reached the conclusion, that what Marx had done for the lot of the masses in the nineteenth century was an extension of what Rousseau had done for them in the eighteenth.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Har Dayal, “Karl Marx: A Modern Rishi.” *Modern Review* 11, no. 3 (March 1912): 286.

Despite his insight into Marx's self-conscious inheritance of earlier bourgeois radicalism, Hardayal differed from Marx and Engels on a number of theoretical points. "I am one of those," Hardayal confessed, "who do not attach much importance to these theories [of capital] and regard them as one-sided and defective."¹¹¹ Hardayal outlined what he saw as the shortcomings in Marx's work: it was one-sidedly materialistic and ahistorical. Influenced by French sociology, Hardayal held that cooperation across classes was ideal, while reprising the standard syndicalist criticism that Marx and Engels were themselves not workingmen. Communism first communalizes land, Hardayal noted, but "that is only half the solution." The other half involved the abolition of capital—although Hardayal seemingly thought that capital was the same as money. Just as when men lusted for rank and intrigued for power, when a despotic monarchy existed, the appetite fed on its object. "Production and distribution had to be carried on by a universal republican state." Hardayal believed that by prioritizing the latest iteration of the class struggle, wherein traditional hierarchies had boiled down into opposing camps made up of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, Marx was guilty of anachronistically projecting this form of opposition and struggle back onto all of history. "There have been classes and class-wars," Hardayal wrote, "but that is not the essence of history, nor indeed its mainspring." A "materialistic conception of history" emphasized the influence of economic conditions over sociopolitical institutions and even the realm of ideas and ideals. Yet this outlook, Hardayal retorted, "is only a half-truth." The mistake was the same one Herbert Spencer had made: both theorists had held a "fatalistic" conception of social evolution. But painting himself as an Idealist, Hardayal wrote, "society is not an agglomeration of molecules, and man is not a

¹¹¹ Hardayal, "Karl Marx: A Modern Rishi," 282.

machine.” Unlike Hegel, he concluded, “History reveals no law or even a tendency. Change is the only law discernible there. The rest is chaos, which men try to turn into cosmos.”¹¹²

Around Christmas of 1912, Hardayal was aflutter at the news that someone had tried to assassinate the viceroy, Lord Hardinge, on the occasion of the formal transfer of the capital of British India from Calcutta to Delhi. The episode, in which a nationalist radical threw a homemade explosive into the viceregal howdah, refocused Hardayal on the Indian cause. Word of the incident, when it reached him at Berkeley, led Hardayal and others to celebrate with cries of “Bande Mataram!” Several Indian students nevertheless took exception to the feast Hardayal held to commemorate the attack.¹¹³ Undeterred, Hardayal at once wrote a tribute to the bomb-thrower, in a circular titled *Yugantar*—itself a reference to a banned Bengali newspaper—that heralded the start of a “new era.” The incident at Chandi Chowk, wrote Hardayal, had thought-provokingly interrupted the spectacle by which the British were “step[ping] into the shoes of the Grand Mogul.” The deeds of the revolutionaries highlighted the seriousness with which British were trying to establish the permanency of their Indian empire in the imagination of their subjects by parading about the heart of Old Delhi on elephants in the castoff clothes of the Mughal emperor. The explosion broke the hypnotic spell of the imperial state; when Caesar referred to himself as the son of God, Hardayal remarked approvingly, he had to be reminded by others that he was but the son of man. The use of a bomb thus “enters the service of democracy,

¹¹² Hardayal, “Karl Marx: A Modern Rishi,” 282.

¹¹³ Report of S. N. Ghose to A. Carnegie Ross, the British Consul at SF who relayed it in a letter to the British Ambassador, Jan 6, 1913. Records of the Office of the US Attorney, Northern District of California Neutrality case files, 1913-15, Record Group 118, 118-72-001/118-73-001.

as an indispensable instrument,” speaking for the voiceless multitude, in a tongue that “is the Esperanto of revolution.”¹¹⁴ The conciliations on offer, reforms and concessions, were now inadequate to save British rule in India, which had itself sought to imitate the despotism of Oriental rulers.

Part of what had made life in California so appealing to Hardayal was that he could largely dispense with the kind of cloak and dagger secrecy that was needed elsewhere. Just after his arrival in 1911, Hardayal remarked, “we bewilder [spies] by the self-evident sincerity of our utterances.” What would spies report back to the India Office, he mused, other than the importance of industrial progress; the fruits of democracy; and meanness of Theodore Roosevelt; and thankfulness for the necessity of education, liberal and technical, and for the uplift of Indians? Yet WC Hopkinson, a special agent in the service of the Canadian Ministry of the Interior, was able to rely on a number of informants who reported to him regularly.¹¹⁵ Hopkinson, who had left the Calcutta Police in 1907 to spy on Indian “agitators” first in Canada, then in the US,¹¹⁶ sought to use Hardayal’s connection to Delhi to link him to the failed assassination of Lord Harding.¹¹⁷ If that charge failed to stick, Hopkinson hoped that the *Yugantar Circular* might be enough to convince the immigration authorities in California to deport Hardayal for misrepresenting his views on anarchism when he first reached the US.¹¹⁸ At the end of the first week of January 1913, Hopkinson left British Columbia for San Francisco, though not before the Hindus there supposedly threatened him, should he insist on poking into

¹¹⁴ “Yugantar Circular: The Delhi Bomb” in Home Political B, August 1913, file number 37-38, NAI.

¹¹⁵ SN Guha, Swami Trigunatita, Henry Edward Pandion; see telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, February 13, 1913. Home Political B, June, 1913, file 5-17, NAI.

¹¹⁶ Around the time that Hardayal was giving his talks on the future of labor, Hopkinson had floated the idea that he should be stationed in SF for months. W. S. Marris note of April 16, 1913, in Home Political, Deposit, June 1913, file 5-17.

¹¹⁷ R. Hughes Buller, note of May 3, 1913, in Home Political Deposit, June 1913, file 5-17.

¹¹⁸ R. Hughes Buller, note of May 1, 1913, in Home Political Deposit, June 1913, file 5-17.

the activities of their countrymen in California.¹¹⁹ Hopkinson called on the Consul General Carnegie Ross, who told him about the Christmas banquet. He then left for the Hindu temple, where he met Swami Trigunatita, whom he had cultivated as an asset. Hopkinson then interviewed Henry Edward Pandit, one of the Gobind Singh Scholars, who informed him that the students there were in fact “anarchists” carrying “on a propaganda of sedition against the British Government in India.”

Hopkinson, who stayed in San Francisco until the end of the month, was even more alarmed to discover that Hardayal was now a secretary in a local branch of the IWW. The concern filtered up to the Viceroy of India. At the talk by Hardayal, on “The revolutionary labor movement in France: its lessons and dangers,” at Jefferson Square Hall, on January 24, Hopkinson heard Hardayal refer to the IWW as the one organization that bore the “closest resemblance” to the anarchist society to which he himself belonged when he lived in France. The substance of his speech was that the contemporary revolutionary movement in the US was still in its infancy in comparison to the syndicalist upsurge in France. The oratory ranged widely, but Hardayal spoke out for internationalism (the anarchists stood for the flag of no country), and mounted a defense of politically motivated assassination. Despots who tyrannized and oppressed were, he said, fair targets for all revolutionaries. But he stopped short of a eulogy on the virtues of violence. The use of dynamite, he added, might in fact be detrimental to the interests of the anarchists. Hopkinson was shocked to see copies of *Mother Earth* and the *Industrial Worker* sold at the lecture. Half-jokingly, Hopkinson reported, “my regret is that I shall not be there to hear him [deliver his next lecture, on ‘Socialism in Germany’].” Hopkinson also relayed that Hardayal was close to members of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners—much to the ire of

¹¹⁹ Hopkinson to W. W. Cory, January 11, 1913, in Home Political B, June 1913, file 5-17.

the Asiatic Exclusion League and the Trade and Labor Council in San Francisco.¹²⁰ Everything added up for him to be able to conclude that, “of all the Indian agitators who have visited the States and of those of whom I have knowledge, I am led to believe that Har Dayal is the most dangerous.”

Despite such reports, British Indian authorities were always of two minds about what ought to be done with Hardayal. The Viceroy was forced to admit to the Secretary of State for India, “the advantage of removing him from Berkeley may be counterbalanced by the difficulty of keeping him further under observation.” Moreover, there were no pending warrants for his arrest. Hoping he might be repatriated to Martinique,¹²¹ Cecil Spring-Rice, the British ambassador, wrote in exasperation to explain to Whitehall that, although Hardayal had made no secret of his views and the US authorities had marked him “as a dangerous anarchist,” the anarchists of all nations worked with the IWW—an organization that was, in his words, practically involved in a war against the US in Colorado. It was unclear what recourse the British had.¹²²

The influence of the IWW, together with the effect of trying to radicalize working-class Sikhs, started to show on Hardayal. “Amid all the doubts and difficulties of sociology and philosophy,” Hardayal wrote in an article on class psychology, “one truth stands out clear and certain: that there are [different] classes.” The divide separated those who labored and those who lived parasitically on the toil of others. With wealth came health, education, art, and all the necessities and conveniences of life, while immiseration brought illness, squalor, and

¹²⁰ Hopkinson to W. W. Cory, Feb 17, 1913. Home Political B, June 1913, file 5-17

¹²¹ Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, May 5, 1913, in Home Political B, June, 1913, file 5-17.

¹²² Cecil Spring Rice to Sir Edward Grey, Feb 9, 1914, in Commerce and Industry, Emigration, April 1914, File 22 Part B.

stupefaction. All movements, whether national or international, that failed to recognize this fundamental chasm were perniciously shallow. Talk of humankind as one race, one nation, or one church, obscured this fundamental truth. Hardayal polemically remarked: Would a Muslim landlord absolve a Muslim tenant of paying rent, or a Hindu moneylender excuse anything short of a full repayment of a debt from another Hindu, or a Sikh princeling suffer a pang of conscience about squandering the surplus exacted from a Sikh cultivator?¹²³

But more than a narrow self-interest or a selfish concern with preserving property was responsible for class-separation. The psychology of class—consciousness—was itself rooted in what Hardayal referred to as “class-activities.” And it was from the experience in and through those activities that men formed their “class-ideas” that were then the “unconscious source of their opinions and ambitions.”¹²⁴ Surveying the nationalist scene, Hardayal found that, although it had “its left and right wings,” its “terrorist” section and those invested in passive resistance, the Indian National Congress remained “a typical middle-class institution.” It was patently obvious that neither the peasantry nor workingmen would be better “fed, clothed, housed, and educated because more Indians [were] admitted to the [Indian] Civil Service.” The taint of class was equally evident in the demands that nationalists made for more spaces for Indians on elected councils. Would the election of more attorneys or merchants to the representative assemblies make an iota of a difference to the millions of villagers who desperately needed a reduction in land cesses, a raise in their wages, a supply of fresh water, and relief from starvation, the plague, traditional forced servitude, and the local *tehsildar*? “‘Public’ opinion in India seems to be only middle-class opinion,” Hardayal wrote.¹²⁵ That Hardayal highlighted the rise of an Indian middle

¹²³ Dayal, “Class Psychology,” 168.

¹²⁴ Dayal, “Class Psychology,” 169.

¹²⁵ Dayal, “Class Psychology,” 171.

class in and through the INC's *modus vivendi* with British rule was a remarkable historical artifact. Yet the peculiarity of the Indian middle class was its very dependence on British rule. It was thus neither independent, nor, therefore, valiant; in fact, Hardayal wrote, "cowardice is second-nature to them." And since property always defends itself first, a middle class that had no ideals other than land and its own wealth was sure to play the marplot, if there were there a revolution in India. Still, in the absence of an alternative, this was the class tasked to lead India. Though the rise of this middle class was inexorable, its energies had to be funneled into the right channels, lest it consolidate itself as a new caste. Of course, what this implied is that someone had to lead them.

A congress of workingmen and the peasantry—though Hardayal noted the difficulties involved in trying to organize illiterate men—would make different sorts of demands. Yet Hardayal highlighted an additional obstacle to such a party: Equality was another idea alien to the classics of Hindu thought. Social inequality, particularly in the shape of caste, was the norm in India. Accustomed to the sclerotic hierarchical structures that regulated society, Hardayal held, Hindus had no conception of abstract equality. The Buddha, the Sikhs, the Vaishnavas, and others sought to rebuke the caste-system, but were unable to offer a "fundamental cure for the evils of inequality," inattentive as these reformers were to institutions. A common faith was no assurance of equality. The idea of equality, as Hardayal understood things, involved the non-subjection of one man to another. Equality was based on right: there can be no equality when servants are dependent on sufferance of their masters. Freedom of work was therefore its first condition; without economic equality, the possibility of fraternal brotherhood was but a chimera.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Har Dayal, "Meaning of Equality," (San Francisco: Hindustan Gadar Party, n.d.).

Though a new middle class was ascendant in the cities, the peasantry still formed the bulk of India. Yet the peasantry was more than a sociologically based category for Hardayal. It included urban artisans, such as weavers, shoemakers, and smiths, carpenters, and masons, as well as the servants—the sweepers, scavengers, the *kahars* and *doli*-bearers, the cooks and *khansamas*, and the *syces* and coolies. In short, Hardayal saw the peasantry as the immense underclass of India that “long[ed] to break its chains.” The class that formed the *anna-dātā*, providing everyone with food, also worshipped Vishnu, who maintained the order of the whole. But, within the prevailing kingdom of labor, Hardayal wrote, there “reigns a stillness of death” over this class. The sociology of the four-fold caste system had inverted the natural order. Labor lost its self-respect as a result. Who was going to lend them a voice or write epic poetry on their behalf?

Toward *Ghadar*

Hardayal was no doubt aware that others had previously tried and failed to rouse the Sikhs to the nationalist cause. Apart from the case of Taraknath Das and Gurudatta Kumar, both of whom had failed to win over the Sikhs in British Columbia, there was the example of Thakur Das (alias Ghulam Hussain), near Portland. Around 1912, Madame Cama, the radical firebrand who financed *Bande Mataram*, deputized Thakur to sow disaffection amongst the Sikhs on the West Coast. It was therefore unsurprising that Hardayal, whose own interests had led him in a different direction politically, should have refused an initial invitation to work together with the likes of Thakur Das. Political discontent was already evident amidst the Sikhs, particularly in Canada, where the issue of their status within the empire was of more immediate concern than in the US. But it was still a stretch ideologically to move from trying to redeem their rights as citizen-subjects of empire to fighting for Indian independence. The Sikhs, Gobind Behari Lal wrote,

were reluctant to endorse Extremist nationalism, as their primary concerns were to ensure their right to remain in the US and Canada and to own property.¹²⁷ As the case of Hussein Rahim and others in British Columbia showed, the Sikhs were in fact open to socialist ideas, even if the Canadian socialists were themselves ambivalent about the possibility of unrestricted migration from British India, preferring instead that the Sikhs return to fight British capital in India itself. If the Sikhs and the nationalists were interested in getting Hardayal involved, he had to be able to lead them, which itself raised the issue of a party.

At a closed-door session with the leaders of the Pacific Coast Hindustani Association, held in May, Hardayal apparently rallied the officers of the association to his own view of things by speaking about the need for a new kind of approach: organizing a non-sectarian party, one able to take advantage of the fresh air that only the US could afford them. It was this party that took up the informal name Ghadar (“revolt” or “revolution”) after its own newspaper. The objective of the association had to be more than to win the vote in the US and Canada, or even independence for India. It ought to be imbued with the spirit of 1857, Hardayal felt, but also be democratic and aim to establish a republic, the United States of India, based on universal enfranchisement.¹²⁸ What was the historical significance of 1857? Hardayal wanted no truck with trying to restore the Mughal emperor at Delhi, as the sepoys of 1857 had tried, but the revolt was remarkable in other respects, not least of them the fact that Hindus and Muslims had fought side by side. It was an ecumenism that was conspicuously absent in contemporary India, despite the fact that Hindus and Muslims were dying of plague, starvation, and excessive land revenue and water rates, the first issue of the *Ghadar* newspaper noted.¹²⁹ What was more, the new party offered the Sikhs a

¹²⁷ Quoted in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 141.

¹²⁸ Josh, *Hindustan Gadar Party*, 1:168-69.

¹²⁹ *Ghadar*, December, 1913.

chance to overcome the widespread prejudice that Sikh regiments had helped the British suppress the revolt, as one Hindu told Hardayal.¹³⁰ Sohan Singh Bhakna was elected head of the party and Hardayal secretary, in addition to which the vote ratified Hardayal in his role as editor of the newspaper, *Ghadar*.

A formal declaration that Hardayal was now the main spokesman for the Pacific Coast Hindustani Association (referred to colloquially as the Ghadar party) came on June 4, 1913. At the Finnish Socialist Hall in the section of Astoria, Oregon, referred to as Uniontown, Hardayal spoke about the oppressiveness of British rule in India. Although the speech was primarily of standard stock, in it he adumbrated that, within a decade, there would be a revolution of the downtrodden masses. “Foreign capital should therefore,” Hardayal cautioned, “fight shy of India.”¹³¹ It was the first of a slew of scheduled speeches up and down the Pacific Coast. The speech underscored the role of British capitalism in India, her qualifications for self-government, and the failure of British imperialism to evolve liberal rule in India: there was a lack of infrastructure spending, impoverished wages, no schools, no personal liberty, no trial by jury, torture, unequal legal representation for natives and Englishmen, unfair contracts, underpaid native sepoys, no right to assembly—there was the British Vampire, rather than a British Empire, Hardayal wisecracked.

However, distinguishing himself from the nationalists, Hardayal emphasized that the growing imperial crisis threatened not only the colonies, but also the metropole. “Imperialism is destroying England itself,” he stated as a matter of fact. While Britain had reaped enormous wealth, the costs of trying to maintain an empire were absorbed by British society at large,

¹³⁰ Jitendernath Lahiri in G. S. Deol, *The Role of the Ghadar Party in the National Movement*. Delhi: Sterling, 1969, 58.

¹³¹ “British Rule is Oppressive,” *Astoria Daily Budget*, June 5, 1913.

impoverishing it greatly. How else to explain the existence of slum dwellers in England, mired in poverty with no direct benefit from the empire? Hardayal asked of the hundred Hindu millworkers who were in the audience.

A week after Hardayal spoke in Astoria, Hopkinson, who had since returned from England, reported that Hardayal was giving talks around Oregon and Washington and might apply for admission to British Columbia. If Hardayal applied for admission to BC, Hopkinson inquired of his superiors, was there a pending arrest warrant in India that might hold water in Canada?¹³² A report of the speech Hardayal made in Astoria was quickly relayed within a fortnight from the British Consul in Portland to the ambassador in Washington, DC, who then forwarded it on to the Secretary of State for India, Sir Edward Grey¹³³.

While his enemies strategized, Hardayal and others set out to win over the Indian workmen on the West Coast. A succession of meetings that included comrades and sympathizers were undertaken in the spring of 1913 to spread the message of *Ghadar*. Often on the weekends, someone from the party would head to a ranch or milltown, preaching revolution. A tidy sum of 10,000 was quickly raised. Often on the weekends, someone from the party would head to a race or milltown, preaching revolution. It was the opinion of an informant that, since the men were illiterate, the Ghadarites relied on spreading their message through the medium of radical songs, the verses of which implored Indians to wake up from their metaphorical slumber and drive the British out of India. The men, the informant reported, treated the message of these songs “as a religion.” Hardayal wrote to Brooks, who by then taught in England, that the Indians had quickly raised enough cash to buy a printing press, establish an institute, and fund weeklies, all in connection with “our propaganda.” Through Brooks, Hardayal ferried letters and material to the

¹³² WC Hopkinson to W. W. Cory, June 10, 1913, Home Political B, November 1913, file 62-66.

¹³³ Cecil Spring Rice to Grey, June 17, 1913 in Home Political B, November 1913, file 62-66.

anarchist Guy Aldred, who received a report on the party's efforts to radicalize the men in North America and the thousands of Indian soldiers who were stationed in China.

After a number of delays, the first Urdu number of the *Ghadar* newspaper came off the printing press on November 1, 1913.¹³⁴ The first editorial heralded its appearance as the first sign of a new historical era. It was also the first occasion in which Hardayal spoke publicly of the existence of a Ghadar party. The association, party, newspaper, and ashram were all headquartered in San Francisco at the new Yugantar Ashram. While the party made no attempts to disguise its intentions nor its politics through front organizations, the first rule of the ashram was that the revolutionaries who lived there had to swear to maintain its secrets; anyone who spoke about its activities without authorization was to be killed. The party was ostensibly open to men and women. "This is not an *ashram* but a fort from which a cannonade on the English *raj* will be started. This is not a newspaper, but a cannon, which will spare no tyrant."¹³⁵ Aware of its primarily Sikh audience, Hardayal, playing on the words spoken by Guru Gobind Singh when he formed the fraternal order of the Khalsa in 1699, wrote that the words of *Ghadr* "will transform sparrows into hawks."

The Great War

The Ghadarites were filled with the ominous sense that an inter-imperialist world war was inevitable. Hardayal hoped a war in which the Germans challenged British supremacy globally might mark an opportunity for India to win her independence. *Ghadar* therefore set about promoting the idea of a strategic alliance with Germany to defeat their common nemesis, in a

¹³⁴ A Gurmukhi version followed a month later.

¹³⁵ Home Political A, January 1914, 42-43.

classic instance of the advice handed down in the *Arthashastra*, “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.”¹³⁶ Franz von Papen, the German military attaché, figured at one of the events Hardayal hosted in Sacramento, at the tail end of December 1913. With Germany now preparing to go to war with England, Hardayal reportedly stated on that occasion, Indians ought to return to India to make their revolution. Hardayal also read aloud selections from a book by Friedrich von Bernhardt, *Germany and the Next War (Deutschland und der Nächste Krieg)*, in which the arch-Prussian militarist referred to the “exploitation of India” by Britain since the industrial revolution and forecast that, were England embroiled in war, “revolutions might break out in India and Egypt” thus imperiling its “World Empire.”¹³⁷ Von Bernhardt stressed, in short, that “the state of things is growing ripe in India.”¹³⁸ After the speeches, Hardayal held a magic lantern show, projecting images of Mazzini, William Tell, Lenin, and Sun Yat Sen, amongst others. Meanwhile, the reach of the *Ghadar* had now stretched to Egypt, South Africa, Fiji, Canada, East Africa, and the British West Indies, with members who fanned out to the Philippines, Hong Kong, Thailand, Burma, the Dutch East Indies, Mexico, Panama, and Brazil.

Expecting that the outbreak of war was still some while off, Hardayal set about other tasks, until he was unexpectedly arrested on charges that he was an anarchist interested in the overthrow of the American state. British diplomats had hoped that US authorities might arrest him while he was in Washington, DC, in February 1914, lobbying against a bill that had been introduced to exclude all “Asiatics” from the US. For months the British had worked behind the scenes, pegging Hardayal as a “dangerous agitator,” who “for years has been attempting to stir up a revolution in British India.”¹³⁹ A warrant was issued for his arrest, though he was only taken

¹³⁶ *Ghadar* 1, no. 2 (December 1913).

¹³⁷ Friedrich von Bernhardt, *Germany and the Next War* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1914), 148.

¹³⁸ Bernhardt, *German and the Next War*, 22.

¹³⁹ Quoted in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 155.

into custody for questioning six weeks later, on March 25, when he tried to attend a socialist gathering after his return to San Francisco. Meanwhile, though Hardayal did not testify before the Congressional immigration committee, his views were entered into the official records of the Bureau of Immigration, as the opinions of an Oxford alum and a “cultured man.”¹⁴⁰ The immigration commissioner, Anthony Caminetti, himself a California native, challenged the statistics that showed there were only some 6,500 or so Indians in the US. Caminetti held that “there are at least 30,000 Hindus in California alone, and many in the states of Oregon and Washington.”

Hardayal submitted to a three-hour interrogation on Angel Island on March 26. Yet, rather than India, the bulk of the questioning centered on what Hardayal thought about the 1905 revolution in Russia. Hardayal had spoken about it in a speech on October 31, 1913. “I am a student of it, I have derived inspiration from it,” he replied. Questioned on his views on the use of violence, Hardayal remarked that, in the case of India, violence was “not the right method to carry on a revolution in India,” since, as in its condition, such a strategy would retard rather than facilitate the ambitions of his party. What was needed in India was more propaganda, since the kind of internationalist-inflected nationalism, the kind he was invested in, was still “in a stage of infancy.” From there the interrogation shifted to cover his views on the IWW and the accusations that some of its members faced for transporting dynamite. Asked whether he objected to the US administration and its system of government he replied that economic inequality was perverting the conditions for the three branches from properly performing their duties. He further stated that social progress in some countries, such as the US, depended on the abolition of those institutions responsible for perpetuating such conditions, “but I hold that in other countries, social progress

¹⁴⁰ Brown, *Har Dayal*, 154.

will be accompanied at first by upheavals called revolutions. I hold at the same time that the use of the method described as direct action should be very sparing as most terrorists are foolish and impulsive. I also hold that very little is gained by such individual acts and that to achieve results there must be mass movements.” Though he was against “individual” attempts to make a revolution, which he judged to be “retrogressive,” he was not shy to admit that he sought to invest in a different kind of revolution.

Although officials connected with the case intimated that the charges might be dropped, Hardayal fled for Switzerland, skipping bail.¹⁴¹ Fellow Ghadarites claimed he had left for Portland or was headed to Washington, DC, or had possibly even been kidnapped by the British.¹⁴² In truth, Hardayal rented three rooms of a suburban home in Geneva where he was reportedly planning to open a branch of the Yugantar Ashram. Hardayal wrote to Frieda Hauswirth, an acquaintance of his from Stanford who was interested in the Indian cause, about the underhanded intrigue of British spies that led to his arrest. The US, in trying to form an alliance with Britain, would shortly “insist that all this propaganda be stopped,” in anticipation of which he removed the newspaper to Germany.¹⁴³ About a fortnight or so in advance of that fateful night in Sarajevo that the Archduke was shot, precipitating the war, Hardayal (under the name of Israel Aronson) wrote to Van Wyck Brooks to say that, in spite of his own departure, “our work in California” was carrying on. Apparently he was dispatching articles from where he was to the ashram workers who “are keeping up the printing establishment alright.” But then he turned reflective, professing that he did not see things in a Manichean manner, as “an alternation

¹⁴¹ “May Release Hindu,” *Press Democrat*, March 29, 1914. Also see article “Har Dayal: The Hindu,” in the same issue, which identified him as the editor of a newspaper called *Revolution* and as the leader of the anarchist organization at Stanford called the Red Flag.

¹⁴² Brown, *Har Dayal*, 178.

¹⁴³ Brown, *Har Dayal*, 170-71.

between exploitation and emancipation.” Instead, “I lean more towards Voltaire, in emphasizing the necessity of ‘enlightenment.’” “That is why,” Hardayal concluded, “I am revolutionist first, and everything else afterwards.”

The outbreak of war on the Continent in August of 1914 short-circuited the intentions of the Ghadarites, even as the propaganda mill continued grinding. On August 4, *Ghadar* ran the headline, “India is our battlefield: the British are our enemies.” The trumpet of war has blared, the *Ghadar* exhorted its readers; “You cannot regain opportunities lost!” The front-page editorial counseled men to store their wealth in the Ghadar office and enlist in the ranks of the revolution. All told, some eight thousand heeded the clarion call to their homeland from the US, Canada, the Philippines, Hong Kong, and China.

At least for a while, American neutrality offered them a cover, and the Ghadarites pledged to work within the law. Of course, America was giving sanctuary to radicals of all stripes, the Irish, the Chinese, and Eastern Europeans.¹⁴⁴ Around Yugantar Ashram, there were signboards that read, “Do not oppose the Germans!”¹⁴⁵ While the idea was to win financial support from the Germans, the Chinese nationalists were the ones providing a blueprint of sorts for actual action. Chinese revolutionaries had trained on the West Coast to launch an assault on the mainland in support of Sun Yat Sen; there was the idea that Indians might be able to do the same for India. Padarung Khankhoje headed the “action” committee. The centerpiece of the attack was to

¹⁴⁴ As late as 1912, the USA had reaffirmed its openness when Congress defeated the Root Amendment, which sought to deport “aliens” who wished to use the US as a springboard for conspiracies to overthrow governments that the US recognized. The *Nation* ran an article applauding its defeat and commented: “This country is not yet ready to turn it back on its traditions; not yet ready to deny sympathy, comfort, and aid to refugees who plot for freedom.” Quoted in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 153.

¹⁴⁵ Brown, *Har Dayal*, 151.

subvert the loyalty of Sikh soldiers. Khankhoje wrote that the Chinese nationalist party led by Sun Yat Sen “offered its assistance to Indian struggles.” The blueprint was to mob railway stations, cut telegraph wires, and overwhelm local checkpoints. The idea was to organize an assault similar to the kind that Chinese nationalists had trained for before 1911.

Lajpatrai was also in the US while the Ghadar party was active. A lot had changed since he had spoken to the Anti-Imperialist League in Boston in 1905. He now formed the India Home Rule League, with its own organ in New York, as a counter to the Ghadarites out West.

“Wherever I have been in the United States of America I have tried to remonstrate with them [the Ghadarites] and to show to them the weakness and rather the hopelessness of their methods. Some have refused to listen to me; others have confronted me with the equal hopelessness of the Congress programme and Congress methods and between these I have failed to convince them of the practicability of the latter.”¹⁴⁶ Lajpatrai later recounted that the revolutionaries in the Ghadar party were filled with a wild-eyed hope of the German Empire as the savior of the cause of Indian independence.

Ahead of the conflict, the officers responsible for the war machine of the Kaiserreich had identified British India as a vulnerable target, potentially the Achilles heel of the British Empire itself.¹⁴⁷ At the Auswärtiges Amt, Max von Oppenheim, an archeologist who had worked in the Levant, headed a new center, the Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient, which was tasked with the responsibility of propagandizing the war effort in the Orient, in particular India and the areas

¹⁴⁶ Lajpat Rai, *Reflections on the Political Situation in India* (Lahore [?]: n.d.), 48.

¹⁴⁷ Heike Liebau, “The German Foreign Office, Indian Emigrants and Propaganda Efforts Among the ‘Sepoys,’” in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings: South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, edited by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2011), 96.

under Ottoman rule. Almost as soon as war credits were voted on, Virendrantah Chattopadhyaya and Abhinash Bhattacharya, students in Halle, heeded the call for anti-British colonials to come forward. Chattopadhyaya or “Chatto,” who, like Hardayal, floated into the orbit of VD Savarkar at India House in London, quickly took the lead and helped to form what came to be called the Indian Independence Committee (formed in mid-1915). The Indians there thus formed a swift condominium with the officials at the German Foreign Office, which was to loan them money and supply them with arms to fight for Indian independence, while the Indians would in turn propagandize on their behalf.

Berlin quickly formed the latest front in Indian anti-British activities. Given the kind of statements he had made in California, German diplomats hoped to recruit Hardayal, approaching him first in Geneva in September and again in Constantinople in October. Yet Hardayal was anxious to maintain his independence to continue in his capacities as secretary of the Ghadar party even as he submitted a schematic as “a preliminary to a revolution in India”¹⁴⁸ and left Switzerland at once to set up operations in Constantinople. But a frustrated German Consul General in the Turkish capital telegraphed to inform his superiors that, after accepting an invitation to Berlin, Hardayal had returned everything, “Geld und Reisebillet,” with a note explaining that he was unsuited for the mission and that the Indians in Berlin did not require his cooperation for their own work.¹⁴⁹ Soon after the first British Indian soldiers reached Lille, in October of 1914, Hardayal sent to the German ambassador in Constantinople a propagandistic leaflet addressed to the sepoys, exhorting Indians to refuse to fight for Britain, but it was rejected

¹⁴⁸ Har Dayal to Wesendonk [?] , November 2, 1914, Auswärtiges Amt.

¹⁴⁹ Generalkonsul Romberg to Auswärtiges Amt, October, 25, 1914, Auswärtiges Amt.

on account of its abstruseness.¹⁵⁰ Enchanted as he was by the Bosphorus, Hardayal left the ancient capital to return to Switzerland in the middle of October 1914, under the alias Ismail Hakki Hassan of Basra.

Baron von Wangenheim, the German ambassador in the Ottoman capital, remarked that Hardayal was objecting to the “Turkish-Mohammedan character of the propaganda supported by the Germans.”¹⁵¹ It probably suited them at the Auswärtiges Amt to think about his refusal to cooperate in the categories of a sectarian religious objection, but Hardayal was not objecting as a Hindu, but rather out of distaste for the strategy politically.¹⁵² After the Ottomans entered the war, their Sultan had called on Muslims everywhere to come to the defense of the caliphate, and the centerpiece of the German strategy was to win over Muslims to enter into an alliance against the British.¹⁵³ After his visit to Constantinople, where he had met some Egyptian nationalists, Hardayal had come to the conclusion that the Muslims of India and Egypt were mistaken “in identifying their cause with the fortunes of the Ottomans.” The Turks are predatory; the treatment meted to the Armenians and Greeks, was “neither Islamic nor rational,” but rather “unadulterated Ottoman savagery, worthy of Chengiz Khan Halaku.” “I learned [in Constantinople],” Hardayal wrote, “that the Turks have no real sympathy with other Muslim nations.” At the end of the day, he wrote, “they are not Pan-Islamists; they are Ottoman nationalists.”¹⁵⁴ Hardayal noted that the Turks had, of course, solicited Indian donations to raise funds for their Balkan wars, while

¹⁵⁰ See Heike Liebau, “The German Foreign Office, Indian Emigrants and Propaganda Efforts Among the ‘Sepoys,’” in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings: South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, edited by Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2011), 111 fn. 62.

¹⁵¹ Brown, *Har Dayal*, 184.

¹⁵² Har Dayal to Wesendonk [?], October 19, 1914, Auswärtiges Amt.

¹⁵³ This tactic started with Muslim POWs held at cantonments outside of Berlin. Von Oppenheim sought to ameliorate the conditions within the camp, plying the soldiers with minor comforts, and permitting them to continue practicing their faith. Most Indian POWs were interred at Crescent-moon (Halbmondlager) POW, in Wünsdorf, southwest of Berlin. See Liebau, “The German Foreign Office,” 110.

¹⁵⁴ Dayal, *Forty-Four Months*, 36.

millions of Muslim labourers in India starved.”¹⁵⁵ But “the most significant commentary on the Jihad claimed by the Turks has been furnished by the revolt of the Arabian tribes against Ottoman rule.”¹⁵⁶ *Ghadar* also repeatedly cautioned Indian Muslims against joining the Khilafatists.

Hardayal eventually left Geneva to decamp in Berlin on January 27, 1915, though he feared getting trapped there for the duration of the war. By then Mohammad Barkatullah, another Ghadarite, was also there.¹⁵⁷ Hardayal found it difficult to work within the limits of the confines the Germans had erected. Von Oppenheim sought to use Hardayal to rally Indian POWs interred at Zossen, the Crescent-moon (Halbmondlager) POW camp in Wünsdorf, southwest of Berlin. British intelligence reported that he indeed tried to inspire the POWs to take arms to fight the British while also apparently supplying them with copies of *Ghadar*.¹⁵⁸ Still, Hardayal stayed the course for a while, even after a number of schemes launched by the Ghadarites to incite a revolt by native soldiers in India fizzled out in the first months of 1915 and the shipment of arms (the *Annie Larsen - Maverick* affair) failed to materialize that spring.

Relations with the Auswärtiges Amt and the IIC continued to deteriorate.¹⁵⁹ Hardayal found it difficult to side with the adventurist Raja Mahindra Pratap, who sought to sell the war department on the idea of trying to raise an Indian regiment that might enter India through Afghanistan.¹⁶⁰ Questioning their seriousness, Hardayal wanted to form a new subcommittee,

¹⁵⁵ Dayal, *Forty-Four Months*, 37-38.

¹⁵⁶ Dayal, *Forty-Four Months*, 39.

¹⁵⁷ Barkatullah had left California after the outbreak of the war and was shepherded to Berlin by the German consulate in San Francisco. Barkatullah to Har Dayal, November 24, 1914, Auswärtiges Amt.

¹⁵⁸ Home Political, 1936, file 29/14.

¹⁵⁹ Actual committee headed by Mohammad Mansoor, a philology student. Roy suspected this appointment had to do with giving priority to Muslims in their relation to India. Manor was dispatched to Baghdad, Chatto was the secretary, and von Oppenheim was also on the committee.

¹⁶⁰ Liebau, “The German Foreign Office,” 104.

devoted to giving more substantive political direction to the work.¹⁶¹ When that failed, he wrote to open up a separate channel, pleading the case for the Ghadar party, which had funded the return of several thousand men to India; what was more, Hardayal noted, party men were also involved in the revolt in Singapore in February of 1915, and other uprisings in the Far East. “If the German Imperial Government does not intend to conclude peace with England within a month or two,” Hardayal wrote, “the Indian situation must be considered seriously.” Several men from his party had “claimed the crown of martyrdom in preliminary skirmishes and twenty-four had been sentenced to death at Lahore. The Ghadar Party now appeals to the German Imperial Government. I beg to suggest that a policy of skepticism with regard to the Indian Movement should be adopted, if the German Imperial Government intends to continue the war at least till next spring.”¹⁶² Hardayal also asked that 500,000 Marks be sanctioned to fund work by the Ghadarites. On October 14, 1915, Hardayal (under the name of Chandra Gupta) wrote to Wesendonk to inform him that the Ghadar party had opened its own office in Berlin, “for the furtherance of its aims and objects during the war.” By the outset of 1916 he had decided to retire to Switzerland for the duration of the war, even as he floated the suggestion that the Ghadarites should start a new organ in English, the *United States of India*—which was launched in July 1923 by the new, explicitly Soviet-inspired Hindustan Ghadar Party.

A Political Judgment of the Great War

The catastrophe that was the Great War worked to dispel whatever anarchist delusions Hardayal had entertained. Late in 1914, even as the centerpiece of the Ghadar strategy to foment a rebellion in India was still in motion, Hardayal confided to his friend Brooks that he felt “rather

¹⁶¹ Har Dayal to Wesendonk, December 20, 1915, Auswärtiges Amt.

¹⁶² Har Dayal to Wesendonk, October 9, 1919, Auswärtiges Amt.

dishearten[ed] to find the XX century opening on dismal nationalism in Europe.” Ensconced in Switzerland, Hardayal wrote in exasperation, “I feel cramped and choked in this atmosphere.” The war had forced him to start questioning himself and the tenets he had believed in without reservation—“the doctrine of progress,” “the use of sacrifice for enlightening others,” “the relation of the mass to the elite,” and “the relative value of propaganda.” Hardayal confessed that he felt queasy as of late. Speaking now as the kind of “cosmopolitan” he had once loathed, he chaffed at the chauvinistic “theory of national ‘cultures,’” which had mounted an “invasion of all the nooks and corners of intellectual life.” “Political liberty, which was still needed in the XIX century, was a middle class ideal and so could easily find singers,” he commented in a wistful voice; whereas the proletariat, “which now needs economic freedom,” had no inspiring minstrels of its own. Further, trying to distance himself from both sides, the Triple Entente and the Central Powers, he wrote, “I say ‘a plague on both of your houses.’ It is a war of rival commercial groups.” Though he hoped that “the race of Erasmus, Goethe, Marx” might survive, and that the war might affect a “redistribution of intellectual and psychological landmarks,” Hardayal never sounded particularly sanguine. “I don’t know,” he wrote presciently, “but I think that the next half century will be marked by incredible reaction all around.”

After he relocated to Berlin in the summer of 1915, the palpably obvious Prussianist ambitions for world-empire forced Hardayal to reconsider the whole scheme of trying to foment a revolution in India with the assistance of the German Foreign Office, all of which had now started to look not merely naïve, but downright sinister. “Hitherto we had looked upon Germany as [our] champion against British imperialism,” but the “Berlin to Baghdad” rallying cries had become “ominous to our ears.”¹⁶³ “And in that moment,” he recalled, “I saw clearly that India

¹⁶³ Har Dayal, “The Future of the British Empire in India,” Pt. 1, *The New Statesman* 12, no. 311 (March, 22 1919): 544.

would simply be overwhelmed by her old enemies and by new ones, if the German adventurers obtained a foothold east of Suez.”¹⁶⁴ Hardayal wrote, “India is the cynosure of all ambitious imperialists from Berlin to Tokyo.”¹⁶⁵ Teutonic imperialism was particularly insidious, Hardayal felt, because it was tinged with *Junkertrum*. “Germans have no tradition of freedom,” he noted biting, while positing, “the meanest English or French jingo cannot abolish the Magna Carta or blot out the words, ‘Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité.’”¹⁶⁶

Either in the late autumn of 1915, or sometime in the winter of 1916, Hardayal split with the India Independence Committee.¹⁶⁷ Though differences in personality figured, specifically the rivalry Hardayal had with Chatto, actual differences of opinion were what led to the rupture. After a revolt by Sikh soldiers radicalized by the *Ghadar* collapsed in the spring of 1915, Hardayal came to doubt the possibility of a swift overthrow of British rule in India,¹⁶⁸ while other Ghadarites—those who stayed on in Berlin to elude the dragnet stretching from San Francisco to Lahore—threw in their lot with the Indian Independence Committee, desperately plotting new schemes for a revolution in India, right until the armistice was inked in 1918. Much later on, Hardayal remarked that these were “the foolish intrigues [of] unprincipled adventurers.”¹⁶⁹ Hardayal never took to the idea of trying to combine forces with the Pan-Islamists in Constantinople, despite the efforts of the German Foreign Office to unite the Ghadarites, the Khilafatists, and the India Committee. The German Foreign Office made repeated entreaties to win him over, but a frazzled Hardayal spent the latter half of the war, under

¹⁶⁴ Har Dayal, 544.

¹⁶⁵ Har Dayal, 544.

¹⁶⁶ Har Dayal, 544.

¹⁶⁷ See Krüger, Horst. “Har Dayal in Deutschland,” *Mitteilungen des Institutes für Orientforschung* 10, no. 1 (1964): 141-169.

¹⁶⁸ Har Dayal, “The Future of the British Empire in India,” Pts. 1 and 2, *The New Statesman* 12, no. 311 (March, 22 1919): 542-544; 12, no. 312 (March 29, 1919): 573-575.

¹⁶⁹ Quoted in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 212

the alias Mizra Osman, in the expensive spas at Wiesbaden and at Garmich-Partenkirschen, trying to soothe his nerves.

In the fall of 1915, without the knowledge of the Berlin India Committee, and now operating under the pseudonym “Israel Aronson,” Hardayal ventured to The Hague, where the secretariat of the International Socialist Bureau had been forced to decamp. Hardayal later cryptically stated that he was there to offer the German side of the case to the socialists at the International.¹⁷⁰ Shortly thereafter, at the seaside resort of Scheveningen, he wrote to the anarchist Alexander Berkman in San Francisco, proposing that the latter find him “some real fighters, IWWs or anarchists.” The letters were predictably confiscated and later figured as evidence in the course of the San Francisco conspiracy trial, to establish a connection between Hardayal and various anarchists.

Late into the autumn of 1918, about a month ahead of the armistice, Hardayal finagled safe passage to Stockholm. Again picking up his correspondence with Brooks, he wrote, “I have suffered and learned and thought much since I wrote to you from Switzerland in 1914.” There he wrote a series of articles in which he renounced his opposition to British imperialism, writings that, ever since, some of his Indian comrades saw as sign of his apostasy. Yet, what on the surface might have appeared as a volte-faced retraction, was no more than a sober judgment, albeit surely a controversial one among other Ghadarites. Hardayal understood that the war had altered the conditions of possibility for radical change. Faced with war, “we must discard all *a priori* doctrines and abstract theories and fix our attention on the stern facts of the world-situation,” Hardayal wrote. The war had made it clear that the imperialism of the Hohenzollern

¹⁷⁰ Quoted in Brown, *Har Dayal*, 210.

and Hapsburg dynasties had to be abolished; furthermore, now that the United States was “put[ting] its hand to the work,” Hardayal concluded, “let it be done thoroughly.”¹⁷¹

It was far from clear, he hypothesized, whether the breakup of the British Empire could, at that moment, accomplish anything more than a change of masters for the inhabitants of India and Egypt, since neither colony “will be able to defend their countries against other sturdy European nations that may harbour ambitious designs of world-empire.” Further, he noted, “we are not equipped for the deadly rivalries and fierce struggles of this age of iron imperialism.” Though the causes of this weakness were manifold, above all, “the upper and middle classes of these countries are absolutely incapable and degenerate.” The middle classes—unpatriotic, without courage or religious faith—were unable to “administer or fight, or take the initiative in progressive movements, or discharge any of the duties that devolve on the aristocracy of all civilized countries.” They contented themselves with political bankruptcy and parasitically exploiting the peasantry and working men. “And if the shepherds are unfit,” Hardayal wondered, “what of the sheep?” Betrayed by an incompetent middle class that was “pass[ing] their days in ignoble ease and aimless sloth, while the society which they are supposed to lead [was] perish[ing] before their eyes,” the working classes were not yet able to organize themselves. India was still primarily an agricultural country, with an outsized peasantry, which “constitute[d] the nation.” Hardayal recalled Carlyle’s words to describe the other classes as “mere chaff which let the wind blow where it listeth.”¹⁷² With no real alternatives to offer, the peasantry was sure to uphold the rule of Britain, whose officers would, at least to some degree, “defend the frontiers and suppress thugs, cattle-stealers, and other enemies of the cultivator.” Hardayal, in short,

¹⁷¹ Har Dayal to Van Wyck Brooks, October 14, 1918, Van Wyck Brooks Papers, University of Pennsylvania.

¹⁷² Har Dayal, “The Future of the British Empire in India,” Pt. 2, 573.

retained rather than betrayed his liberal-anarchist views, and believed that the task at hand, within British India, was to organize politically so as to enable the peasantry to lead.

If there was no United States of India to be had, Hardayal favored India staying within the ambit of the empire, in a fortified British commonwealth. Yet Hardayal was interested neither in simply apologizing for the empire nor trying to affirm it as it was.¹⁷³ His vision for the Ghadar party centered on strategy, rather trying to deduce timeless principles, and whether right or wrong, his views were based on his assessment of political possibilities. “If the Empire is based on mere tyranny, exploitation, race-hatred, brute-force, and fraud, [or] if it cannot be mended in any way,” he wrote, “why then we must end it and say, ‘Down this abomination of abominations!’” Hardayal left no doubt that, “today English Imperialism is undemocratic,” paraphrasing the liberal dictum that a despotic system sows its own ruin: “We too have read our Cromwell and Hamden, Washington and Jefferson, Clarkson and Wilberforce, Cobden and Ernest Jones.” It was a noble ideal to raise the Indians, the Egyptians, the Burmese, and the Zulus to the status of the Englishman within this state. The areas of this new empire were to manage their internal affairs without mutual interference, or double standards, as “she cannot have one measure for the Boer and another the Brahman.” Added to this, “the Indians are not inferior in culture and capacity to the Australians and the Canadians, and they will insist on equality of rights within the Empire. Of course the defense of the Empire and another Imperial questions will be referred to a Central Imperial Council representing all British subjects.” It was to be, in his own words, a vast cosmopolitan association.

¹⁷³ The empire-builders, “Clive, Warren Hastings, Wellesley, and Dalhousie,” Hardayal added, “were surely no saints.” Har Dayal, “The Future of the British Empire in India.” Pt. 1, *The New Statesman* 12, no. 311 (March, 22 1919): 548.

It is understandable that Hardayal would be wary of encouraging a naively nationalist ethos. After all, even in the early months of the Great War, the daemonic narrowness of nationalism had been plainly revealed. “Certainly the principle of nationality,” Hardayal wrote, “would lead us to condemn the British Empire as a reactionary and indefensible institution.” Yet, “nationality is nothing but a catchword, if a national state cannot further the development of the mass of the people,” for “the state is [only] a means to an end.” Hardayal elaborated: “The nation-state, or the tribal state, is, properly speaking, a modern [out-]growth.” The nation-state was not to be idolized as the apex of wisdom and experience. The application of the so-called “principles of nationality,” Hardayal wrote, was inadequate to the realities faced in India and Egypt. “As a weapon against alien tyranny the theory of the nation-State can serve a good purpose. But all political theories are only tools to work with.” A large and progressive state was better, he hypothesized, than a number of small Oriental states. But, in the last resort, “East and West will be united in the British Empire [and] Kipling will turn out to be a false prophet. For East and West will surely meet, and they will meet in London, Oxford, Cambridge, Cairo, Delhi, and Khartoum. And a Parliament of the British Empire will pave the way for the Parliament of Man.”¹⁷⁴ On the whole, the Ghadarites were no doubt self-aware that Asia was, in the words of Lenin, “inflammable material.” As advocates of a democratic revolution in India, the Ghadarites understood, properly, that their failure might well erode the conditions of possibility of a revolution for their successors. For the working classes in the present-day, who are “the symbol... of helplessness and despair,” as Hardayal poignantly remarked in 1913, “the real epic of India remains to be written.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Har Dayal, “The Future of the British Empire in India- II,” *The New Statesman* 12, no. 312 (March 29, 1919): 575.

¹⁷⁵ Har Dayal, “The Indian Peasant,” *Modern Review* 13, no. 5 (May 1913): 508-09.

The war was a watershed that forced the members of the Ghadr party to exercise their judgment about the possibility, desirability, and necessity of change. Although he recanted his views, at least publicly, Hardayal wrote at the conclusion of the war to urge the Berlin Committee to consider joining the socialists. “Only the socialists, are really interested in freedom,” he remarked.

The Ghadarite Padarung Khankhoje found himself after the war in alliance with Virendranath Chattopadhyaya and G. K. Luhani, who submitted to the Comintern a work entitled, “Thesis on India and the World Revolution.” After his direct consultations with Lenin, which were also attended by M. N. Roy, Khankhoje considered himself “a Leninist for life.”¹⁷⁶ Still other figures in the orbit of the Ghadar party, such as Rattan Singh, Dalip Singh Gill, and Santokh Singh, concluded even more emphatically that the only way to redeem the radical liberal ideals that Hardayal had championed was by putting aside their anarchism to embrace the International. If, in the last instance, Ghadar is remembered only as a failed chapter in the nationalist struggle for independence, this is precisely because its radical liberalism gradually has receded from view.

¹⁷⁶ Savitri Sawhney, *I Shall Never Ask for Pardon: A Memoir of Pandurang Khankhoje* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2008), 215-219.

EPILOGUE

Ghadar on Trial

Final summations in the German-Hindu conspiracy trial, in which the workings of the Ghadar party as well as details of its involvement with the German Foreign Office were laid out into the open, were heard on April 23, 1918, at the federal courthouse in San Francisco. For months, the revelations unearthed in the proceedings had created sensational headlines about a worldwide conspiracy to overthrow British rule in India. The chief prosecuting attorney, John W. Preston, started by imploring the twelve men of the jury to consider the “the international importance of this case.” The defendants in the courtroom, together with the hundred or so others indicted in connection with the case, Preston reiterated, had masterminded what the evidence showed to be the centerpiece of this conspiracy: the ill-fated rendezvous of the tanker *Maverick* with the schooner *Annie Larsen*, which was carrying a cache of arms bought by emissaries of the Reich for the Ghadar revolutionaries, off Socorro Island in the spring of 1915. If the officers of the Reich that were on trial had flagrantly violated the neutrality statutes of the United States by purchasing and shipping munitions, “their catspaws,” Preston continued, “the Hindoo defendants before you[,] brazenly admit they are revolutionists.” Beyond the military enterprise to overthrow British rule in India, then, this was a case about US national defense, protecting the nation by “stamp[ping] out anarchists and revolutionary sects.” With the stakes thus ratcheted, he reminded the jury, “the effect of your verdict will be of tremendous weight.”¹

The defense for the German diplomats had rested quickly. After their strategy to use the evidence that the *Annie Larsen–Maverick* affair had come to naught failed to convince the judge

¹ “Preston Opens Final Appeal in in Hindoo Cases,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 23, 1918.

to throw out the conspiracy charge, the diplomats turned on one another over who had masterminded the scheme, with a number of the officers pointing the finger at Franz von Papen, the military attaché in Washington, DC. The Indians, on the other hand, tried a different tack, “pleading ‘utter helplessness’ in the midst of a historical trial.” Ramchandra, the editor of the *Ghadar*, against the advice of counsel sought to subpoena the erstwhile US secretary of state William Jennings Bryan; the judge refused a similar request to call the presiding US secretary of state to appear in the courtroom. It was a bold move. Years earlier, in the midst of the debate over whether the US should hold on to the Philippine islands, Bryan had written a trenchant critique of British rule in India. Though Bryan’s article was banned by the British, the Ghadar party had nevertheless translated it and tried to smuggle copies into India in numbers in the midst of the war. Ramchandra had hoped to depose Bryan publicly over his emphatic conclusion: “Let no one cite India as an argument in defense of colonialism.”

The desperate gambit of trying to get the secretary of state to indict British imperialism on the stand was frustrated when Judge van Fleet refused to order him to appear. Instead, Ramchandra wrote an open letter, the last of three such notes written in the course of the war, to President Wilson. “Through the clamor of a world in arms,” he held, “the voice of India,” sought to be heard. Wilson had himself laid out the right of subject nations to be made independent, but, Ramchandra wondered, was that right limited to nations like Serbia and Poland, rather than to Ireland, Egypt, and India? If it was a matter of geography or race, he hastened to remind Wilson, the US had already benefited from the creation of a republic in China; moreover, “the Hindus belong[ed] to the Indo-Aryan Caucasian race.” Besides, “Did the color of the black race congeal Lincoln’s sympathy, or stay his hand?” The Ghadarites, Ramchandra stressed in all three of his letters, were republicans, in the sense of democrats rather than anarchists, above all else. Without

a hint of malice, but in a sure sign of things to come, he then implied that the torch of republicanism was passing over to the new Soviet republics. The world, Ramchandra wrote, had no reason to doubt the sincerity of Leon Trotsky's "meteoric statement," given shortly before the conference at Brest-Litovsk, to the effect that, "If we [the Bolsheviks] were really logical we would declare war on England now for the sake of India, Egypt and Ireland."²

But the trial also laid bare the growing factional rupture within the Ghadar party. The resentment some party members had toward Ramchandra festered over the course of the trial, as details of his bank transactions were recounted for the jury, which brought to light sums he had received from the German diplomats.³ Before Hardayal fled to Switzerland, in January of 1914, he had made his deputy, Ramchandra, the editor of the *Ghadar*. Likewise, when Sohan Singh Bhakna left for India in August, the reins of the party fell to Ramchandra, who acted quickly to cultivate a link with the officers of the Reich consulate. It was Ramchandra who wrote the broadsheet, "Indian Solider: Do not Fight Germany!" for von Brincken. And he was the one responsible for getting the Ghadar party involved in the *Annie Larsen-Maverick* affair.

Whether by design or otherwise, the new link helped Ramchandra consolidate his authority over the party by providing him with the means to dispatch the secretary of the Pacific Coast Hindustani Association, Santokh Singh, to Siam in October 1915, the Pan-Islamist Muhammad Barktuallah to Berlin in November, and the radical Sikh cleric Bhagwan Singh to China in 1916. After Bhagwan Singh returned stateside some months later, a report to the Berlin-based Indian

² Ram Chandra to Woodrow Wilson, February 26, 1918, in *An Appeal of India to the President of the United States* (San Francisco: Hindustan Gadar Party, n.d., ca. 1918).

³ Ramchandra received \$1000 a month from the local German consulate in addition to sums for travel of Ghadarites and other expenses. Deposits from 24th of March to 19th of August of 1915 totaled almost \$13,000 at Mission Bank. The split in the party was partly over differences of opinion but also partly due to Ramchandra's failure to account for how he had used the German funds. See Records of the Office of the US Attorney, Northern District of California Neutrality case files, 1913-15, Record Group 118, 118-72-001/118-73-001 Box 4, Folder 5.

Independence Committee was filled with speculation over whether the Ghadar party might fracture. Indeed, at the outset of 1917, the Ghadar party split.⁴ A formal acknowledgement came that spring, when the dispute spilled over into the newspapers, with Bhagwan Singh placing a notice in the *SF Chronicle* to the effect that Ramchandra had been relieved of his duties as editor.⁵ Further, in a statement that indicated the substance of their dispute, Bhagwan Singh clarified that the Pacific Coast Hindustani Association sought to disclaim responsibility for any debts Ramchandra had incurred or contracts he had signed.

At the start of 1917, against the background of a rift in the party and a seemingly interminable war, the *Ghadar* reminded its readers of its *raison d'être*. Against the primacy of action, the editorial pithily offered its own summation of the relationship of theory and praxis, “Right knowledge is necessary for right action.” Without this right knowledge, of what it takes to “accomplish the aims and objects of life,” the editorial continued, action toward those aims and life was impossible. Put even more straightforwardly, “in other words, *Ghadar* invites a full and scientific discussion of politics by everyone interested in freedom for India and by no means advocates blind and dogmatic action.” It was also why, the editorial elaborated, *Ghadar* sought to be less self-provincializing than others by giving space to events outside of India, providing an analysis of the international situation. If it had accomplished anything since the outbreak of war, the editorial concluded, “the *Ghadar* has created a hunger for political knowledge.” *Ghadar* therefore committed itself to raise its voice not only against British rule in India but also against the old political orthodoxy, in which *Ghadar* lumped both British sympathizers and naïve Indian nationalists. The editorial thus asked rhetorically, What of those anti-colonialists who thought,

⁴ See Records of the Office of the US Attorney, Northern District of California Neutrality case files, 1913-15, 118-72-001/118-73-001 Box 4, Folder 6.

⁵ “Legal and Official,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 7, 1917.

“The British are bad! And that is all we need to know. What need is there to read the *Ghadar*?” Such a Manichean view was a sign of ignorance; those who held this opinion had no knowledge of “which way the river of progress and freedom flows.” Such ignorance left them susceptible to being “led astray themselves by the current of foolish movements” that made mere emotional appeals. “Antediluvian ideas cannot be dispelled,” the editorial hypothesized, without a modern, radical philosophy “first thoroughly permeating the mind.” And “Ghadar means exalted ideas, those noble ideas that swords, cannons, daggers, or axes are unable to blunt. Ideas conquer arms.” The measure of its success was the extent to which *Ghadar* was able to communicate the possibility of a future beyond the crisis of the British imperial state in India, and to address that possibility practically.⁶ The question was not just what India should do regarding British rule, but how to lead India both in terms of the struggle for independence and *beyond* it. What India needed was a democratic republic—a United States of India—where class struggle could be fought to completion.

A fortnight before the trial ended, Ramchandra wrote a brief synopsis of the Ghadar party, in a belated plead for unity. Ghadar, he reiterated, means a revolt or revolution that is tied to a project of emancipation. Though the name harkened back to the revolt of 1857, its democratic outlook was oriented toward the future, he said, in that it celebrated “scientific achievement, industrial progress[,] and a broad vision of republicanism and brotherhood.” The party was headquartered at Yugantar Ashram, in the spirit of trying to usher in a new and modern era, Ramchandra explained.⁷ Surveying its achievements, he noted that, the sharp edge of the

⁶ Ram Chandra, “Our Name and Our Work,” *Ghadar* (February 1917): 2. See Records of the office of the US Attorney, Northern District of California Neutrality case files, 1913-15, Record Group 118, 118-72-001/118-73-001 Box 10, Folder 1a.

⁷ Ram Chandra, *Hindustan Gadar: A Brief History of the Gadar Movement* (San Francisco, Hindustan Ghadar, 1917), 8.

eponymous newspaper had functioned as a weapon for “pierc[ing] the mind of the masses.”⁸ It was undeniable that no other newspaper matched its circulation globally or was translated into as many different “dialects,” as he called them, “Urdu, Gurmukhi, Hindi, Gujarati, Pashto, Bengali, English, French, and German.” Prosecutors for the Crown in the Lahore Conspiracy case had it right, Ramchandra noted, “*Gadar* tickles the minds of the revolutionists.”

After a trial that had lasted months, involved fifteen separate defense attorneys, recorded thousands of pages of testimony from over a 150 witnesses, and come at an estimated expense of \$450,000 dollars to the US and \$2,500,000 to Britain, the thirty-two defendants—nineteen “Hindus” and twenty-one German nationals and two Americans—expected that a guilty verdict was inevitable.⁹ Judge van Fleet had called a brief afternoon recess in advance of giving the case over to the jury, when, in the words of an eyewitness, “tragedy rushe[d] in with [the] speed of film.” As the jury was headed out and the attorneys were still gathering their files, a man in a black turban—one of the defendants, Ram Singh—bent over as though ill. After a moment he emerged with a revolver he had smuggled in, raised it, and shot Ramchandra at least thrice. The marshal, James Holohan, later testified that he first heard the shots fired in the courtroom and when he looked over, the shooter was crouched down, gesturing with his revolver. “Just as soon as I got a glimpse of him,” Holohan recounted, “I saw that he had murder in his heart.” Judging that the shooter “was there to kill,” Holohan beelined toward Singh, but found himself blocked in behind a table. A defense lawyer reached for the shoulder of the assailant, grabbing him from behind, as Holohan fired a single bullet from a distance of seven or eight feet¹⁰ that hit Singh in the neck. The judge returned from his chambers to find the courtroom stained with murder, blood

⁸ Ramchandra, *Hindustan Gadar*, 10.

⁹ “Hindu Revolt Case Unique in State’s History,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 24, 1918.

¹⁰ Testimony of James B. Holohan, General Records of the Department of Justice, Record Group 60, Classified Subject Files 1914-41, File No. 9-10-3, Section 9.

pooling on the courtroom floor. Both Ramchandra and his murderer, Singh, were dead. The jury reached a swift verdict. All of the defendants, save a shipbuilder who had made repairs to the *Maverick*, were found guilty.

Aftermath

Its ranks hobbled by the German-Hindu conspiracy trial and the series of tribunals in Lahore that followed on its heels, the Ghadar party nonetheless survived. According to British Intelligence from late 1918, Ghadar had in fact “recovered from the effects of the conspiracy trials,” and it was predicted with confidence that the party would soon be more forceful than ever “as an agency for mischief.”¹¹ That estimate was based on the links the Ghadar party had to the Socialist Party of America (identified in British reports as the “American Labour Party”) and its connection to the Industrial Workers of the World. The Ghadarites worked with the San Francisco branch of the SPA in their campaign to win the release of Thomas Mooney, a onetime comrade of the IWW, who had been wrongly convicted in the Preparedness Day Bombing of 1916.¹² From British Columbia came reports that socialists linked to Hussein Rahim (see chapter 3) were involved in trying to recruit Indians in the “One Big Union” drive led by the IWW. Within the Ghadar party itself, the section led by Bhagwan Singh had “crushed out of existence the remains of Ram Chandra’s party, almost captured the Khalsa Diwan organization of Stockton, California, and collected ample funds.”¹³ What members there were patiently waited

¹¹ Weekly Report DCI, August 4, 1919, in Home Political B, August, 1919, file. 432-435.

¹² Weekly Report DCI, August 18, 1919, in Home Political B, August, 1919, file. 432-435.

¹³ Weekly Report DCI, August 4, 1919, in Home Political B, August, 1919, file. 432-435.

on the release of the party chiefs, Bhagwan Singh and Santokh Singh, both of whom received some of the lengthiest sentences handed down in the San Francisco case.¹⁴

Preoccupied with the fight to save these men from deportation after their release, the party worked on rallying sympathizers, the socialists and IWW unionists, to intervene with the courts on their behalf.¹⁵ A Ghadar leaflet even exhorted their leftists sympathizers that it was high time for the workers “of the whole world, India, America, and every other nation, to join together in a mighty effort to overthrow the system [that] forges the chains of over-recurring war and fraternal slaughter upon them.”¹⁶ A new organization, the Friends of Freedom for India (FFI), was formed in part to fight deportations. Headed by Robert Lovett, who taught English at the University of Chicago, but really led by his capable young secretary Agnes Smedley, the FFI hosted a dinner in May of 1919. Reportedly, the invitees included “Sinn Feiners, Bolsheviks, Industrial Workers of the World, radical socialists, and society women.”¹⁷ Lajpatrai and his Home Rule League, which was still ill-disposed toward the “Hardayalists,” chose not to oppose the deportation orders.¹⁸ Through their latest news magazine, the *Independent Hindustan*, which was backed by the FFI, the Ghadarites asked ruefully: “Does America still hope to retain her former prestige as an asylum of the oppressed of the world?”

Saved at last from deportation, the Ghadar chiefs nonetheless found it tough going on the West Coast at the outset of the 1920s. New differences over means rather than ends fractured the

¹⁴ Santokh Singh was sentenced to twenty-one months imprisonment. After he was released, in September 1919, he headed to Seattle, then rejoined Bhagwan Singh in San Francisco in November. T. N. Das was sentenced to twenty-two months, Santokh Singh 21 months, Bhagwan Singh eighteen months. Weekly Report of the Director, Central Intelligence, Simla, August 4, 1919, in Home Political B, August, 1919, file. 432-435.

¹⁵ “Note on Santokh Singh,” Home Political 1923, file 262/II.

¹⁶ Weekly Report of the Director, Central Intelligence, Simla, August 18, 1919, in Home Political B, August, 1919, file. 432-435.

¹⁷ Weekly Report of the Director, Central Intelligence, Simla, August 4, 1919, in Home Political B, August, 1919, file. 432-435.

¹⁸ Jensen, *Continuous Passage*, 241-42.

already thin and thinning ranks. A lack of resources forced the California Ghadarites to shut down their English monthly, the *Independent Hindustan*, in 1921. The *Ghadar* itself was halted in June of 1922, though both its Gurmukhi and Urdu editions were revived in September. Then, in October, Yugantar Ashram shut down temporarily. Still more troublingly, the United India League, a mainstream Indian nationalist grouping formed in New York after the war, had started to siphon off non-Sikh members of the party. A British memo on the activities of the Sikhs in Canada and California noted that, in spring of 1923, the Sikhs were the only supporters left of the Ghadar party¹⁹. The same note cautioned that the Ghadarites had been in communication with MN Roy, who was a well-known member of the Comintern, and that the party members hoped to revive the activities of the ashram on the return of their emissaries Santokh and Rattan Singh from their mission to the new Soviet republics in first months of 1923.

The Sikhs on the West Coast were themselves splitting, with important differences now evident in the communities in the US and Canada. At Stockton, the orthodox Sikhs of “the temple party,” still followed the example of Teja Singh by putting “religion before revolution,” while the chiefs of the Khalsa Dewan themselves “believe[d] in Hardayal’s old policy” and wished to affect “revolution at once by any means.”²⁰ A compromise was eventually worked out, stipulating that while the temple itself ought to remain apolitical, individual members were free to involve themselves in the Ghadar party. In response to news of the compromise, a British intelligence official retorted, “It is probably only a question of time before the Gurdwaras is hand-in-glove with the *Ghadar*.” And in an update on the situation remarked, while the majority

¹⁹ “Summary of Recent Activities Among Sikhs in Canada and California,” January 1, 1924, L/PJ/12/178.

²⁰ Weekly Report Director, Criminal Intelligence, August 12, 1919, in Home Political B, August, 1919, file. 432-435.

of Sikhs in the US overwhelmingly adhered to Hardayalism rather than orthodox Sikhism, in British Columbia, the Vancouver Khalsa Diwan had “not yet reconciled to the... *Ghadrists*.”²¹

The Ghadarite Santokh Singh was released from McNeil Island in the autumn of 1919 and returned to Yugantar Ashram. After his release, he told the judge in his deportation adjournment case that he remained “a revolutionist[,] but not an anarchist.” Several months on, in another indication of his ongoing self-assessment, Santokh Singh confessed to a friend, “my frank opinion is that India needs a revolution,” but an independent India with persisting socio-economic troubles, “does not appeal to my reason.”²² A secret report filed in November of 1920, noted that, at least privately, Santokh Singh had started giving others the advice to study Marxism. A mission of Indian delegates that included the Ghadar party members Barkatullah and Khankhoje had already reached Tashkent in the spring of 1919 with the objective of trying to establish a link with the Bolsheviks.²³ (MN Roy was in Mexico; according to the secret report “it is believed that Roy is only doing work for the Bolsheviks and Indian Workers of the World in order to maintain himself.”) Through some connections to the US Communist Party, Santokh and Rattan Singh attended the fourth congress of the Comintern in 1922 and the Congress of the Red International of Labor Unions. Santokh Singh saw Zinoviev and spoke at Second Congress of the Red Labor International.

Of the Ghadarites who turned to communism, the case of Dalip Singh Gill remains particularly curious. His tale, reconstructed from shards of evidence in British and German archives, attests to the difficulties of trying to track members of the Ghadar party after the war.

²¹ Weekly Report Director, Criminal Intelligence, August 12, 1919, in Home Political B, August, 1919, file. 432-435.

²² “Note on Santokh Singh,” Home Political 1923, file 262/II.

²³ “Pan-Islamism,” Weekly Report of the Director, Central Intelligence, Simla, June 30, 1919, Home Political B, August 1919, file 315-319.

Gill had studied alongside Teja Singh on the East Coast and was a sometime member of the Ghadar party in the US before he left for Berlin in 1915. Yet he faced accusations that he was a British spy and interned at the same camp together with Karl Liebknecht who, together with Rosa Luxemburg, led the dramatic Spartacist uprising in Berlin in 1919.²⁴ Gill was freed with Liebknecht and, reportedly supported by him and his party, grew close to “German and Russian communists, [with] Radek being one of his intimate friends. From then he conceived the idea of trying to introduce communism into India and himself became a communist.”²⁵ Gill established the Hindustan Sabha, which the British were to describe as Bolshevism supported by the Germans of the Independent Socialist Party.²⁶ When Gill made it to Moscow, the Soviets imprisoned him as a suspected spy, but the members of the Berlin Indian group, specifically Barkatullah, mediated his release.²⁷ Gill worked as a translator at the Soviet Foreign Office until he showed up in Reval, Latvia, where he carried out anti-British propaganda in the Baltic states, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, while keeping in touch with the Sikhs in Amritsar, from whom he was requesting material on the Akalis agitating for control of Sikh shrines. The British station in Liban (French Lebanon) reported that he was there in the spring of 1924, still associated with communists, but in the realm of practical activity was giving rather mild talks there on British rule in India.²⁸ Though he returned for a short stint to the US from the middle of 1925 to February or March of 1926, he never really resumed any connection to the Ghadarites. Gill

²⁴ Weekly Report of the Director, Central Intelligence, September 15, 1919, in Home Political B, September, 1919, file 454-457.

²⁵ Special Bureau of Information reports on Bolshevism, October 9, 1920, L/PS/10/887.

²⁶ Weekly Report of the Director, Central Intelligence, August 25, 1919, in Home Political B, August, 1919, file. 432-435.

²⁷ “Alleged British Spies,” November, 7, 1921, L/P&J/12/65.

²⁸ J. C. T. Vaughn, British Legation, Riga, May 30, 1924, L/P&J/12/65.

married a German woman and represented a series of German munitions companies right through the Second World War. Like many others, he later simply vanished into the aether.²⁹

Outside the Gandhian Indian National Congress

The Great War hastened a transformation in the Indian sociopolitical landscape. Led by Gandhi, who had returned to India in 1915 from his sojourn in South Africa, the INC morphed from a small congress of liberal constitutionalists into a mass party backed by native capitalists and the middle classes that was nonetheless capable of rallying the peasantry.³⁰ The transformation of the INC reflected the contradictions in the Indian experience of the war and its aftermath.

India had industrialized rapidly in the midst of World War I, giving rise to a new, native capitalist class, who, in the words of Nehru, “were greedy for more” when it came to commerce as well as political clout. *Independent Hindustan*, the Ghadar organ, rattled off relevant statistics in the fall of 1920, pointing out that, “in 1913-1914 there were 356 registered companies with an authorized capital of \$223,051,000. For the twelve months, April, 1919, to March, 1920, the number of companies registered was 906, with an authorised capital of \$915,670,000.” Looked at proportionately in comparison to the preceding year, the last year of the war, “the year 1919-20 witnessed company flotation on an unprecedentedly large scale, the number registered being over three times, and the authorised capital over thirteen times, that of the preceding year.” Cooperative societies had also mushroomed. Only 283 three such organizations were documented in 1905–06, with 28,629 members, and a mere \$43,735 in share capital and \$41,310

²⁹ P. Biggame to Charles Tagart, Intelligence Bureau, Government of India, July 29, 1926, L/PJ/12/65.

³⁰ Banaji, “The Comintern and Indian Nationalism,” in *National and Left Movements in India*, edited by K. N. Panikkar (Delhi: Vikas Publishing, 1980), 220.

in deposits; by 1914–15, however, there were 16,295 societies, with 761,935 members, \$4,372, 495 in share capital, and \$3,833,160 in deposits. Despite the fact that it had suffered a slew of bank failures in December of 1913, the Punjab alone had 3,267 societies (almost twelve hundred more societies than in Bombay), 154,065 members, and \$4,557, 577 in capital by 1919.³¹ All this confidence from native capitalists almost made it seem, the Ghadarites remarked, that independence was near.³² Yet, as another Ghadar editorial elliptically stated, “there is a difference between Independence and Independence.”³³

The Ghadarites were heartened not by the financial figures but by the rise of a fast proletarianizing working class that came with the new wave of industrialization. The *Independent Hindustan* excitedly took notice of the developments, reporting in its inaugural issue that, “since last January, i.e., in the first six months of the year 1920, there have been at least one hundred strikes involving more than 1,000,000 men, women, and children wage earners.” The largest of these strikes in Bombay involved 200,000 workers—growing out of the cotton mills to include “longshoremen, clerks, workers in municipal offices, employees of a petroleum company.” Though the British were already seeing specters of Bolshevism in these labor revolts in India, the editors of the *Independent Hindustan* saw in them the possibility of the destruction of British imperialism, thus giving, in turn, a spur to the worldwide progress of socialism.³⁴

For the Ghadarites the task in India was pretty clear: “Above all else,” the editorial in the *Independent Hindustan* held, “India needs education and organization of the working class.” For

³¹ “Growth of Cooperative Movements in India,” *Independent Hindustan* 1, no. 3 (November, 1920): 71.

³² “Industrial Progress in India,” *Independent Hindustan* 1, no. 3 (November 1920): 71.

³³ “There is a Difference Between Independence and Independence,” *United States of India*, vol. 1. no. 1, (July 1923): 5.

³⁴ “The Labor Revolt in India,” *Independent Hindustan* 1, no. 1 (September 1920): 22.

“if India is ever to free and independent and to establish an ideal free state, it will be achieved primarily through the efforts of the workingmen and women, [together with] the farmers, and the subservient millions.” With respect to strike actions, as another article in *Independent Hindustan* explained, the issue was never limited to “a question of wages, as some economists think.” First there was the matter of wages, then the improvement of the conditions of life and work, and lastly—and ultimately most important—the control of industry. But, the same article warned, “it is no use ignoring the last aspect,” simply because “it is too difficult or yet too remote. We are not going to escape the trouble by running away from it.”³⁵ A revolution in India would be meaningless “if it is not for the emancipation and assertion of the workers.”³⁶

Yet industrial workers figured little into the calculus of the Gandhian INC. Gandhi instead followed the strategy of trying to mobilize the peasantry in numbers to win more concessions from the state, coupling this strategy to his program of non-violent non-cooperation—a strategy that some within the INC and others outside the fold, such as the Ghadarites, came to see as full of compromises. Of course, there were some within the INC who tried to reach out to this new industrial class, even as Gandhi was dispatching volunteers to the villages. Tilak toured Britain in the summer of 1919, trying to build a link to the Independent Labour Party, even going so far as to proclaim before the British socialists his view of “the British Government in India of being capitalistic and grinding down the workers.”³⁷ Lajpatrai meanwhile headed the All-India Trade Union Congress when it was formed in 1920.³⁸ Still grappling with the Gandhian outlook,

³⁵ “Labor Unrest in India,” *Independent Hindustan* 1, no. 3 (November, 1920): 64.

³⁶ “All-India Trade Union Congress,” *Independent Hindustan* 1, no. 2 (October, 1920): 42.

³⁷ Weekly Report of the Director, Central Intelligence, August 12/25, 1919, in Home Political B, August 1919, file 432-435.

³⁸ Lajpatrai remarked, in his first speech to the All-India Trade Union Congress, “My own experience of Europe and America leads me to think that socialistic, even Bolshevik truth is any day better, more reliable, and more human, than the capitalistic and imperialistic truth.” Militarism and imperialism, in his opinion, are the twin children of capitalism. T. R. Sareen ed., *Russian Revolution and India, 1917-1921* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1977), 38.

Nehru, who himself had hoped to make the INC more “socialistic,” was forced to admit that “the advanced sections of labour fought shy of the National Congress,” whose leaders the workers mistrusted and whose ideology the workers rightly construed as conservative.³⁹ Beyond the cities, in the heartland, particularly in the Punjab, Nehru wrote, resentments had festered over the forced enlistments into the war effort, numerous Ghadar-related conspiracy trials, and the suppression of the Sikhs who had returned angry after being refused entry into Canada on the ill-fated *Komagatu Maru*.⁴⁰ Furthermore, “the soldiers back from active service on distant fronts” had returned transformed, as these veterans were “subservient robots” no more but instead seethed, full of discontent.⁴¹

Political anger was thus set to boil over when, partly in response to the discontent in the Punjab, the authorities in British India enacted the infamous Rowlatt Acts, depriving defendants of the right to a jury trial in politically sensitive cases and permitting the authorities to detain suspects without a trial or legal defense. Gandhi sought to seize the occasion by putting forward a call for an anti-Rowlatt *Satyagraha*—his first Indian campaign for civil disobedience. After an anti-Rowlatt demonstration at Jallianwalla Bagh in Amritsar turned into the scene of a massacre, in the spring of 1919, Gandhi insisted that the INC symbolically convene in the Punjab. Nehru referred to the session, in his autobiography, as “the first Gandhi congress.”⁴² It was at that session that the majority of the delegates turned from Tilak to look to Gandhi for inspiration as the INC committed itself to his strategy of non-violent non-cooperation. Energized by the ferment in India, the Ghadarites nevertheless remained cautious about Gandhi, as the

³⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, *Toward Freedom: The Autobiography of Jawaharlal Nehru*, (New York: John Day Company, 1941), 148.

⁴⁰ Nehru, *Toward Freedom*, 47.

⁴¹ Nehru, 47.

⁴² Nehru, 51.

Independent Hindustan openly stated that the Ghadar party had important differences with his views. Gandhi, in its words, “appears to be altogether too saintly to lead successfully a movement against a gang of toughs, as the British imperialists are.”⁴³ There was, moreover, the danger that the masses, in lieu of political self-organization, would satisfy themselves with reverence for a charismatic leader.⁴⁴

Gandhi called off non-cooperation in the 1922, after the violent incident at Chauri Chaura, disquieting the leftists within and outside of the INC. The Ghadarites likened the dismissal of non-cooperation to the spontaneous self-combustion of a locomotive that had worked up a full head of steam; even more to the point, “it left India worse off than before.”⁴⁵ Although Nehru and Lajpatrai reconciled themselves to the decision to call of non-cooperation, the Ghadarites had a rather sterner riposte to those in the INC who tried to justify what seemed, to them, capricious and authoritarian. For example, when the President of the INC, C. R. Das, claimed, in December of 1922, that “‘democracy’ has also failed in the West,” the Ghadarites objected in their own newspaper. Even if what he had intended was to state the obvious, which was that democracy “was imperfectly realised even in the so-called democratic countries,” a Ghadarite remarked, a statement against democracy in the abstract was troublesome. The trouble with the strategy of non-violent non-cooperation, remarked an editorial in *United States of India*, was that only Gandhi “could carry it out or carry on,” suggesting instead that “the only way out of the difficult [situation] was to fight British tyrants and to allow full social co-operation with non-official Europeans, English included.”⁴⁶ “Gandhi is so bitter against European civilization and

⁴³ “A Life Sketch of M. K. Gandhi,” *Independent Hindustan* 1, no. 9 (May 1921): 8.

⁴⁴ “Gandhi! The Greatest Man in the World,” *Independent Hindustan* 1, no. 11 (July 1921): 6.

⁴⁵ “Fighting Spirit Needed,” *United States of India* 1, no. 1 (July 1923): 4.

⁴⁶ “Mr. C. R. Das and Democracy,” *United States of India* 1, no. 2 (August 1923): 5.

character,” the Ghadarites complained, but “this is not the time for liberal sentimentalists.”⁴⁷

“The defeat of the Mahatma [would be] but a reflex of the New India,” wrote an Irishman in the *United States of India* of September 1924; “the spinning-wheel of yesterday is supplanted by the mill” and with it “the mighty roar of the industrial machine.” For the Ghadarites, in the storm and stress of the fight against British imperialism, it was better to follow Ireland, which had, in their opinion, “rejected Gandhism for virile republicanism.” All of which left the Ghadarites, who held that “Gandhi and Gandhism are passing phases of the movement for liberty and progress,” outside the fold of the INC.

The specter of Hardayal loomed over the Ghadar party, even after the war. The party followed through on his old suggestion to start publishing an English organ titled *The United States of India* in 1923. It even took to republishing some of his old articles anonymously in the mid-1920s. But, even more significantly, its own vector in the 1920s never strayed too far the kind of internationalist outlook that Hardayal himself had outlined. From Stockholm, in the spring of 1920, Hardayal contributed an article on Indian labor to the *Labour Leader* of Manchester, an organ of the Independent Labour Party.⁴⁸ Hardayal resurrected the theme of the exploitation of Bombay textile mill workers and their inordinate extension of their workday. “It is high time,” he wrote, “that an ‘Indian Labour Party’ should be organised in order to defend the interests of the working-classes of India.” Such a party had to fight for the enfranchisement of labor, “so that ‘Home Rule’ for India may not result in the petition[ing] and consolidation of class rule in India.” The working classes of India had to have their own political organizations

⁴⁷ “India Progressing Toward Unity,” *United States of India* 1, no. 1 (July 1923): 4.

⁴⁸ “Indian Revolutionaries Abroad,” Weekly Report of the Director, Central Intelligence, August 12, 1919, Home Political B, August, 1919, file. 432-435.

but still work with other political parties of India.⁴⁹ Furthermore, rather than capitulating to nationalism, he added, “in my humble opinion it is now high time that a united Socialist Party of the British Empire should be formed, and the delegates from England, Australia, Canada, Egypt, India, Africa, and other countries should appear as a single body at international congresses.”⁵⁰ British socialists, he felt, “must organize a British Empire Section of the cosmopolitan Labour Movement which is destined to the rule in the future.” Instead of pinning their hopes on the British socialists, who were sure to arrive late to the rescue, the Ghadarites turned toward the new Red Star in the East.

Through some connections to the Communist Party, USA, Santokh and Rattan Singh attended the fourth congress of the Comintern in 1922 and the congress of the Red International of Labor Unions. After he left Moscow, Santokh Singh returned to the Punjab, where he founded the Kirti-Kisan Sabha (Workers’ and Peasants’ Party) in Amritsar. The Kirti-Kisan Sabha was believed to be “fostered and financed” by the Gadar party in the US with its revolutionary groups in Moscow and Kabul, and [its] propaganda agents in India.⁵¹ Santokh Singh was also responsible for publishing the *Kirti*, which saw itself as a “voice for the Indian workers in American and Canada,” who were referred to as Alnaschars, a reference to the fantastical dreamers from the Arabian Nights who had utopian visions of the future.⁵² The aims of the Ghadar party were neither opposed to, nor reducible to, nationalism; rather, by pushing forward

⁴⁹ “Indian Revolutionaries Abroad,” Weekly Report of the Director, Central Intelligence, August 12, 1919, Home Political B, August, 1919, file. 432-435.

⁵⁰ Weekly Report of the Director, Criminal Intelligence, September 13, 1920, Home Political Deposit, September, 1920, file 71.

⁵¹ Note on the Kirti-Kisan Sabha, File 825/26 PJ (S) 1013 (1932), IOR L/PJ/12/300. *Kirti* was established in February 1926, Santokh Singh died on May 19, 1927.

⁵² Ali Raza, “Looking Towards Moscow,” he Ghadar Party’s Engagement with Communism,’ in *Ghadar Movement: Background, Ideology, Action and Legacies*, edited by J.S. Grewal, Harish K. Puri and Indu Banga (Chandigarh: University of Punjab Press, 2013), 374 fn. 18.

the struggle for indolence, it hoped to move beyond “Home Rule” and “Swaraj” by posing the question socialist revolution.

West to East: The Call of the (Third) International

If, after their anarchist schemes in the Great War had come to naught, a section of the Ghadar party sought the Marxist fold, as a means to redeem their faith in democratic ideals, the socialists of the Third International brought socialism to Indian radicals more willingly than those at the Second International had at Amsterdam in 1904 or at Stuttgart in 1907. The incipient Bolshevik Commissariat of Foreign Affairs issued a “Blue Book on India” as early as 1918, the stated aim of which was to clarify “the role which the October revolution on its side, can play in the Indian revolution.” And it reiterated the sentiments that Indians themselves harbored for ages, the first of which was that “England lived by the exploitation of her colonies and especially India,” while the other was that “although England itself may be very democratic, English rule in India is no better than the Tsarist regime.” The British as well as conservative Indians were thus justifiably afraid of a “Soviet India”; the Bolsheviks made patently clear their intention of trying to undermine the British by supporting a revolution in India by direct or indirect means.⁵³ In the West, the Bolsheviks had “no fixed point: in the East, however, Bolshevik policy is concentrated on one definite and clear objective—India.”⁵⁴ Of course, as the India Office saw things, “the Bolshevik designs for a ‘Soviet India’ are only a single thread—though a very important one—in

⁵³ “Bolshevik Designs on India,” Memorandum by Political Department, India Office, November 19, 1920, IOR L/PS/18/B355. British officials recorded that mainstream Sikh reformers had articulated fears about the spread of Bolshevism in India in the *Khalsa Advocate* of February and March 1920. See Special Bureau of Information reports on Bolshevism, L/PS/10/887.

⁵⁴ “Report of Interdepartmental Committee on Bolshevism as a Menace to the British Empire[1]” Lenin: at third congress of the International on July 8, 1921. “We must use this breathing space in order carefully to prepare the revolution in capitalist states.” Road to world revolution! L/PS/10/866

their wider web embracing the East from Egypt to China.” The British accordingly stopped the circulation of rubles into India as their first direct action against the Bolsheviks.⁵⁵ From their viewpoint, all Indian nationalists were Bolshevik sympathizers, especially since Tilak, Lajpatrai, Malvia, and BC Pal were all considered to be printing “not ill-disposed” reports on Bolshevism.⁵⁶

For M. N. Roy, in 1922, the strength of capitalism in “the Western countries” showed that, as a force of world-domination, “it has not reached such a state of decay that its immediate collapse is inevitable.” The war had resulted in the United States supplanting Britain as a world power, Roy noted, but “the capitalist class of Britain does appear to [be] losing its grip on state-power.” Ever “since... capitalism entered upon its last and most highly developed stage—imperialism—its stronghold was no longer confined to the industrially advanced countries of Western Europe.” The ruinous effects of over-production, Roy held, had been temporarily avoided by imperial expansion, which had buttressed capitalists “with an additional *modus vivendi* and a weapon to defend [their] position at home.” The success of the scheme of imperial federation will not only “stabilise the position of the British bourgeoisie, but will reaction the international situation.” All of Europe might find itself “an economic dependency of this federation,” but “capitalism as a social institution will have its lease on life renewed.”

The *Independent Hindustan*, the new organ issued in the name of the Hindustan Ghadar Party, reported on the fabled Second Congress of the Third International, which “had a decidedly definite and distinct outlook in regard particularly to colonial policy of the imperialistic countries.” Though the editorial on the proceedings of the International sought to distance itself

⁵⁵ Eighteen million roubles were collected in India in December of 1919, Special Bureau of Information reports on Bolshevism, IOR L/PS/10/887.

⁵⁶ Special Bureau of Information reports on Bolshevism, IOR L/PS/10/887.

from responsibility for all of the views articulated by MN Roy at the congress, it approvingly cited his opinion that by putting forward a new policy on colonialism, the Third International “has rectified the gross blunder that was made by the Second International.”⁵⁷ Given the international scope of capital, “anything less than a world-wide revolution will not bring about the end of the present order and the triumph of the Western proletariat. The struggle of the latter, in order to be successful, must be co-ordinated with the revolutionary action of the toiling masses of the lands subjugated by capitalist imperialism.” However, the Comintern recognized only one party, the CPI, even as it continued to deal with the Ghadar-Kirtis, who for their part refused to accept the inordinate faith the Comintern had in the CPI and MN Roy. As a report in early 1936 acknowledged, “for the past twelve months or so there has been a continuous stream of the Moscow-educated Ghadr Party Sikhs (sent to Moscow from all parts of the world) returning to India.” Of the 70 students there, all but seven were Sikh Ghadarites. Sixty-three is a negligible number, to be sure, but then the entire CPI could count no more than a hundred or so in its ranks until the mid-1930s.⁵⁸

The remnants of the Ghadar party lasted well into the 1940s. At the outset of the Second World War, the Ghadarites offered to throw in their lot with the Indian National Congress, if the latter made the case for Indian independence as an “immediately realizable objective,” rather than as a concession to be had after the war. The Ghadar party favored the early declaration of civil disobedience and was willing to accept *shantimai* (non-violence), a British intelligence report remarked, “though its conception of non-violence is probably very different from that of

⁵⁷ “The League of the Oppressed Peoples,” *Independent Hindustan* 1, no. 2 (October, 1920): 27.

⁵⁸ Extract from Weekly Report, Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India, April 2, 1936, IOR L/PJ/12/284.

Mahatma Gandhi.”⁵⁹ Yet the Ghadarites faced disappointment from both sides of the nationalist party. Although hopeful at first that the candidate of the leftist section might win the presidency of the Indian National Congress in 1940, when the Ghadarites learned that Subhas Chandra Bose had switched over to the Axis Powers, the *Ghadar* of December 1941 sharply noted its disapproval.⁶⁰ As a British intelligence report remarked, “the Gadarites detest Hitlerism.” Still, the party hoped, at least until the Hitler-Stalin compact, that the war might enable them to strike the iron for Indian independence.

Although their operations in Canada as well as in the US had greatly diminished by the mid-1940s, the Ghadarites were never ones to throw over their own oars, as their activities in the course of Second World War were to show. Ghadarite Darshan Singh Sangha, referred to as Darshan Singh “Canadian,” who had worked for the enfranchisement of British Indians, remained in contact with Ben Bradley of the Communist Party of Great Britain throughout the war and sought to revive the banned Communist Party of Canada.⁶¹ A British intelligence report filed in the summer of 1943 nonetheless noted that “the influence of the Ghadr party continues to wane in California.” British officials were of the opinion that, while the *Hindustan Ghadr* had continued to appear regularly, its editorship was uninspiring, and its subject matter consisted of little more than nationalist poetry, puerility, and repetition.⁶² A California state senate committee that was tasked with probing “un-American activities” in the Second World War, took a

⁵⁹ Extract from Weekly Report, Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India, February 28, 1940, IOR L/PJ/12/286.

⁶⁰ Extract from Weekly Report, Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India, January 30, 1942, IOR L/PJ/12/286.

⁶¹ Darshan Singh had was the sole Indian delegate to the Labor Progressive Party led by Tim Buck the national secretary of the CPC. The unions had finally let in Indians and the International Woodworkers of America lent succor to their struggle for enfranchisement. Kuldip Singh Bains also joined the Int. Wood. Assocs. And labor Progressive party. Note of March 25, 1944, L/PJ/12/286.

⁶² It was edited by Puran Singh, Extract from Weekly Report, Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India, August 7, 1943, IOR L/PJ/12/286.

particularly acute interest in the party, “lest the Communist element in this organization” reveal itself to be “dangerous to the war effort.”⁶³ The committee on un-American activities saw, in the example of the Ghadarites, evidence of the internationalist ambitions of Soviet communism. It thus shrugged off the conclusion of the San Francisco Police Department that whatever active link the Ghadarites had once had to the American Communist Party had withered; its concern was that there were Soviet-returned Ghadarites active in California as well as the fact that, since the 1920s, Sikhs there had been recruited in groups to be “indoctrinated” overseas. The majority of these recruits, the report speculated, fed the underground party in India, but “some of them returned to California to secure additional recruits from the ranks of the Gadar party.”⁶⁴ The ones that returned had “trained at the Lenin School, some at the Frunze Military Academy, others at the Far Eastern University and the special Oriental School at Baku.”⁶⁵ As late as the summer of 1947, the state investigators found that a Ghadarite, who helped with the printing at Yugantar Ashram, had “surreptitiously” taught night classes at the Communist California Labor School in San Francisco and “assiduously” circulated Communist propaganda material to his Ghadar contacts. Another Ghadarite, identified as the party secretary, had apparently contributed articles to the local Communist organ *Daily People’s World*. It was also noted that a local leftist bookstore still sold copies of *Karl Marx—Articles on India* (1940).

The anxieties about the worldwide menace of communism aside, the Ghadarites kept aloof of the mainstream Communist Party of India (CPI) right through to Indian independence in 1948. The Ghadarites, unlike the CPI, never favored partitioning India, as it was anathema to their ecumenicism. A British intelligence report noted that the Ghadarites believed that the scheme to

⁶³ *Seventh Report on Un-American Activities in California*, 213.

⁶⁴ *Seventh Report on Un-American Activities in California*, 241.

⁶⁵ *Seventh Report on Un-American Activities in California*, 229.

create Pakistan was “a British trick” and that they roundly ridiculed religious sectarianism. Neither the individual Sikh nor the party, the report continued, felt any inclination to celebrate the 15th of August—“it was noticeable that the Ghadr party boycotted it entirely.” But after independence, the report continued, the party “founded originally with a view of the expulsion of the British from India, [now] find[s] some difficulty in justifying its existence.” The same report remarked that, while its rhetoric lacked “character, interest, or piquancy,” the *Hindustan Ghadar*, whose resolute editor “will countenance no pandering to communalism,” was sure to remain Marxist.⁶⁶

After independence, some within the party wanted to continue the struggle against imperialism in the capitalist structure of India, proposing to refashion itself as the Indian Democratic Party. For them, the ultimate and inevitable solution was to transform India on the Soviet model, based on a party of labor and the peasantry. Meanwhile in San Francisco, the property at Wood Street that belonged to Ghadar ashram had itself become “a scene of an acrimonious debate.” The socialists within the party insisted that the ashram continue to operate, since, despite formal independence, the *emancipation* of India was incomplete. Others thought it best to bequeath the property to the new Indian consulate. After “a sober look at what happened behind the Iron Curtain,” the authors of the report on un-American activities submitted, the Ghadarites had tired of Soviet-led “schemes for a Communist revolution in India, Chinese style,” the Ghadarites “wanted India to be free, but permanently, not temporarily.”⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Extract from Weekly Report, Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India, June 24, 1948, IOR L/PJ/12/286.

⁶⁷ *Seventh Report on Un-American Activities in California*, 244.

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