

This article was downloaded by: [82.23.162.189]

On: 11 March 2014, At: 04:44

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fich20>

'A Serious Menace to Security': British Intelligence, V. K. Krishna Menon and the Indian High Commission in London, 1947-52

Paul M. McGarr

Published online: 09 Aug 2010.

To cite this article: Paul M. McGarr (2010) 'A Serious Menace to Security': British Intelligence, V. K. Krishna Menon and the Indian High Commission in London, 1947-52, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 38:3, 441-469, DOI: [10.1080/03086534.2010.503397](https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2010.503397)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2010.503397>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Versions of published Taylor & Francis and Routledge Open articles and Taylor & Francis and Routledge Open Select articles posted to institutional or subject repositories or any other third-party website are without warranty from Taylor & Francis of any kind, either expressed or implied, including, but not limited to, warranties of merchantability, fitness for a particular purpose, or non-infringement. Any opinions and views expressed in this article are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor & Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Taylor & Francis and Routledge Open articles are normally published under a Creative Commons Attribution License <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>. However, authors may opt to publish under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial License <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/> Taylor & Francis and Routledge Open Select articles are currently published under a license to publish, which is based upon the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial No-Derivatives License, but allows for text and data mining of work. Authors also have the option of publishing an Open Select article under the Creative Commons Attribution License <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>.

It is essential that you check the license status of any given Open and Open Select article to confirm conditions of access and use.

'A Serious Menace to Security': British Intelligence, V. K. Krishna Menon and the Indian High Commission in London, 1947–52

Paul M. McGarr

Recently released Security Service (MI5) documents offer new insights into the Indian government's vulnerability to communist subversion after 1947, and the extent to which this threatened British national security. Existing historical works have noted MI5's concern over the links between Indian nationalists and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) during the inter-war period. Absent from the current historiography, however, is an account of the British government's response to V. K. Krishna Menon's appointment as India's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom in 1947. This article examines the nature of Menon's relationship with the CPGB, the risk that communists working for him within India's High Commission posed to British security, and the strategy that MI5 developed to meet it. Taken as a whole, as this article illustrates, the Attlee government's conviction that India, and more particularly, Krishna Menon, represented a weak link in the Commonwealth security chain, opens up new perspectives on Anglo-Indian relations post-1947.

Recently released Security Service (MI5) documents offer new insights into the Indian government's vulnerability to communist subversion after 1947 and the extent to which this threatened British national security. Existing historical works have noted MI5's concern over the links between Indian nationalists and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) during the inter-war period. Absent from the current historiography, however, is an account of the British government's response to V. K. Krishna Menon's appointment as India's high commissioner to the United Kingdom in 1947. This article examines the nature of Menon's relationship with the CPGB, the risk that

Correspondence to: Paul M. McGarr, School of American and Canadian Studies, University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham, NG7 2RD, UK. Email: Paul.Mcgarr@nottingham.ac.uk

ISSN 0308-6534 print/1743-9329 online/10/030441-29

DOI: 10.1080/03086534.2010.503397 © 2010 The Author(s). Published by Taylor & Francis.

This is an Open Access article. Non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly attributed, cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way, is permitted. The moral rights of the named author(s) have been asserted.

communists working for him within India's High Commission posed to British security and the strategy that MI5 developed to meet it. Taken as a whole, as this article illustrates, the Attlee government's conviction that India, and more particularly Krishna Menon, represented a weak link in the Commonwealth security chain opens up new perspectives on Anglo-Indian relations post-1947.

British governments came under increasing domestic pressure during the 1930s to grant India greater political autonomy. Indian nationalist organisations in the United Kingdom, Labour politicians such as Stafford Cripps, Aneurin Bevan and Michael Foot and intellectuals including Bertrand Russell and Harold Laski all pressed the case for Indian self-government in some form.¹ One individual, however, above all others, transformed the British-based campaign for Indian independence from an uncoordinated and ineffectual movement into a cohesive and dynamic political force. Between 1932 and 1947, as secretary of the India League, Vengalil Krishnan (V. K.) Krishna Menon set the Indian nationalist agenda in Britain. In the process, Menon's strident anti-imperial rhetoric and links to the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) brought him to the attention of the British Security Service and its sister organisation Indian Political Intelligence (IPI). Marked out as 'one of the most important Indian extremists in the country' prior to 1947,² Menon's political activities were seen as a direct threat to Britain's position in South Asia.

In MI5's view, however, the threat that Krishna Menon posed to Britain's national security did not end once India had acquired dominion status in August 1947. Rather, it assumed a new and more serious dimension. With the onset of the Cold War, MI5 became increasingly concerned that the Indian government was vulnerable to communist subversion. In particular, given his connections to British communism, MI5 opposed New Delhi's decision to appoint Menon to the post of Indian high commissioner in London.³ 'As long as Menon and his associates remained in the High Commissioner's office', MI5's deputy director-general, Guy Liddell, observed in 1949, 'there could be no reasonable guarantee of [Commonwealth] security as far as India is concerned.'⁴ Equally, Clement Attlee's post-war Labour administrations looked, in part, to preserve Britain's status as a global power, by retaining strong political, economic and, as far as possible, military links with India.⁵ As a consequence, between 1947 and 1952, the British government attempted to foster close Anglo-Indian relations, while at the same time containing the threat that India, and most especially Krishna Menon, posed to Commonwealth security.

Over the past decade a growing body of literature has begun to address the imperial dimension of Britain's intelligence history. More especially, path-breaking studies have shed light on the previously neglected part that British intelligence services played in the process of decolonisation. MI5's operational remit encompassed imperial counter-intelligence as well as domestic security. Accordingly, from the turn of the twentieth century, it worked closely with local security agencies across the British Empire to monitor and contain challenges to colonial authority presented by nationalist organisations and their leaders. Notably, in an African context, Richard Rathbone has provided compelling evidence of the influence wielded by Britain's security agencies in the run up to independence in the Gold Coast in 1957.⁶ Likewise, Philip Murphy has

detailed how, between 1954 and 1963, MI5 invested heavily in the creation and maintenance of a Federal Intelligence and Security Bureau within the ill-fated Central African Federation.⁷ Moreover, from an Indian perspective, studies by Richard Popplewell and Philip French, among others,⁸ have emphasised the significance of the surveillance that MI5 conducted against Indian nationalists based outside South Asia prior to 1947. French, in particular, has argued persuasively that the hitherto largely overlooked work performed by MI5's subsidiary, Indian Political Intelligence, proved instrumental in helping to preserve British authority inside India until almost the very last days of the Raj.⁹

Equally, as Britain's imperial possessions marched inexorably towards independence during the latter half of the twentieth century, MI5 took on a new role. By forging liaison relationships with the security services of former British colonies¹⁰ and providing them with much valued training and technical support, MI5 ensured that, in an intelligence sense at least, Whitehall retained a measure of global influence in the post-colonial world. Most recently, Christopher Andrew's authorised history of the Security Service¹¹ has opened up a new, and previously inaccessible, window into the development of MI5's imperial role during the Cold War. From an Indian viewpoint, Andrew's work is especially significant in offering up valuable information on the evolution of MI5's relationship with India's security service, the Delhi Intelligence Bureau (DIB or IB), after 1947.¹²

The political career of Krishna Menon has also received scholarly attention.¹³ The recent declassification of intelligence records held at the British National Archives has, however, revealed for the first time the degree to which MI5 saw Menon as a threat to Britain's national interest after Indian independence. MI5 files detail the extent of Menon's collaboration with the CPGB during the 1930s and 1940s. The nature Menon's links to British communists convinced senior MI5 officers that, if not a dyed-in-the-wool Marxist, Menon was politically suspect.¹⁴ Moreover, the Indian high commissioner's mercurial character and eccentric behaviour encouraged British and Indian officials alike to question his emotional stability, reinforcing the perception that Menon was unsound. Equally, as MI5 documents make clear, the Attlee government was conscious that, as an intimate of India's premier, Jawaharlal Nehru, Menon's position as high commissioner carried important implications not only for dominion security, but also for Anglo-Indian relations as a whole.

From a security standpoint, India's transition from British colony to Commonwealth partner takes on a different complexion from that presented by the current historiography. Significantly, MI5's files disclose the pivotal role it played in limiting the flow of dominion intelligence to India after 1947. MI5 records thus offer new insights into the history of British decolonisation in South Asia. This article, underpinned by recently declassified MI5 and IPI records, examines the character of Krishna Menon's association with British communism and MI5's involvement in investigating it. It goes on to discuss the British response to Menon's appointment as India's high commissioner to the United Kingdom and the subsequent concerns which arose over India House's susceptibility to communist subversion. As we shall see, the counter-subversion strategy adopted by the Attlee government encompassed plans to remove

Krishna Menon from office. Thereafter, the impact of British attempts to neutralise the security threat posed by Menon will be analysed, before, finally, the impact of his tenure as Indian high commissioner is assessed in the context of wider Anglo-Indian relations. By addressing these various themes, this article seeks to add to our understanding of both the Anglo-Indian intelligence relationship, and Britain's broader post-colonial interaction with India. Post-war British governments cultivated strong ties with India, in part to mask an unwelcome attenuation of their global power. As the Cold War set in during 1947, however, Whitehall's security concerns denied India full membership of the Dominion club.

I

Krishna Menon first gained notoriety as an advocate of Indian home rule while studying under Harold Laski at the London School of Economics in the late 1920s.¹⁵ By 1928, Menon had been elected general secretary of the Commonwealth Group of India in 1928, and set about re-organising and rebranding the organisation into the more militant and activist India League. Under Menon's leadership, the league's 'vicious' anti-colonial propaganda became a thorn in the British government's side.¹⁶ As early as 1932, the league's call for immediate dominion status for India was generating sufficient concern within IPI, for the Home Office to approve the interception of Menon's mail and telephone calls, and those of the India League's offices at 146 Strand.¹⁷

On the Indian subcontinent, Menon's transformation of the India League was noted by the Indian National Congress (INC). Significantly, having first met Jawaharlal Nehru in London in 1935, Menon went on to develop an intimate rapport with the Indian nationalist leader.¹⁸ By 1938, Nehru had taken Menon under his political wing. Brushing aside complaints from Britain's Indian community over Menon's high-handed and authoritarian direction of the India League, in August that year Nehru made it clear that he:

would not consider any proposal that might tend to bring about a cleavage between either Congress or himself and the India League, and . . . openly stated that he was satisfied with the work done by the League on behalf of the Indian National Congress in this country.¹⁹

For his part, Menon worked assiduously to promote the impression within British left-wing circles that he was 'Nehru's right hand man in London'. He took on the role of Nehru's literary agent and acted as a political chaperone to his daughter, Indira, while she studied at Somerville College, Oxford.²⁰ 'Menon is very jealous for his own prestige', the IPI noted. 'He has pointed out that he alone has any authority to speak for NEHRU and that he is invariably advised by the Congress Socialist Party on matters of importance.'²¹

MI5 became interested in Menon after the India League established links with the CPGB. In October 1931, MI5 had assumed responsibility for investigating domestic communist activity. Up until 1936, however, there appeared 'no evidence of any cooperation worth mentioning between the [India] League and the Communist

Party of Great Britain'. The seeds of future CPGB-India League collaboration had been sown in the summer of 1935, when the Comintern's Seventh Congress directed communists to enter the anti-imperialist struggle.²² In response, the CPGB offered to work with the League against the passage that year of the Government of India Act, which, despite granting India's provinces greater autonomy, fell well short of nationalist demands for self-government. Concerned that Britain's communists would seek to subvert his control of the league, and having been subjected to their barbed criticisms throughout the early 1930s, Menon rebuffed the CPGB.²³ Following the passage of the Government of India Act, however, Menon resolved to widen the India League's political base and raise its public profile. Reaching out to the CPGB, and its 15,000 members, appeared an obvious means of doing so. As a first step, Menon set about co-opting leading British communists onto the Indian League's executive committee and struck up friendships with the CPGB's secretary general, Harry Pollitt, and Rajani Palme Dutt, its principal theoretician.²⁴

Menon subsequently drew heavily upon CPGB support to pack the India League's hitherto poorly attended meetings and to supply speakers for its public events. Moreover, the CPGB's newspaper, *The Daily Worker*, with its daily circulation of nearly 40,000, acted as an important outlet for the league's propaganda. By the end of 1936, collaboration between the India League and the CPGB had become sufficiently close for IPI to suggest that Menon 'took no important action of any kind in regard to the Indian situation without prior consultation with the higher Communist Party leaders'.²⁵ The following year, IPI went further, arguing at one stage that Menon's ultimate goal was the establishment of a 'soviet system for India'.²⁶ Although not a member of the CPGB, to Britain's security services Menon appeared well on the way to becoming so. Or, as one intelligence report put it, Krishna Menon was a 'near communist'.²⁷

The Labour Party leadership felt much the same way. From its inception, the India League had nurtured links with Labour's left wing, and in 1934 Menon had been elected as a Labour councillor for the north London borough of St Pancras. Labour's leadership, however, became increasingly uncomfortable with Menon's association with the CPGB. Moreover, in November 1939, his standing within the wider parliamentary Labour Party plummeted when, minded of the India League's reliance on communist support, he refused to condemn the Soviet invasion of Finland.²⁸ In a bid to re-establish his Labour credentials, Menon stood as the prospective Labour candidate for a parliamentary constituency in Dundee, a city with strong links to India's jute industry. Given his links to the CPGB, MI5 found the Dundee Labour Party's endorsement of Menon 'really rather remarkable'.²⁹ Labour's National Executive Committee agreed, and in November 1940, after the national agent had concluded that Menon held a 'double loyalty', he was summarily de-selected and thrown out of the party.³⁰

In fact, Menon's relations with the CPGB were often strained. Rank and file communists, in particular, questioned his flaky ideological credentials and disdain for Marxism.³¹ To the CPGB's hierarchy Menon's politics were largely immaterial. Rather, his value was as a conduit between British communist leaders and the INC leadership, and, more especially, Jawaharlal Nehru. Likewise, as has been indicated,

Menon sought communist support for the India League out of political necessity and not a sense of shared dogma. Tellingly, in the absence of a common strategic purpose, the India League's relationship with the CPGB began to unravel under the pressure of international events in the early 1940s.³² Once a 'frequent visitor' to its London headquarters at 16 King Street,³³ Menon's association with the CPGB soured following the Nazi invasion of the USSR on 22 June 1941. Once the Soviets had joined Britain in the fight against fascism, to Menon's fury, the CPGB stopped attacking British colonialism and began emphasising the need for allied unity.³⁴ Simmering tensions between Menon and Britain's communists reached a head in December 1941, as the *Wehrmacht* stood before the gates of Moscow. In a succession of private exchanges with communist leaders tired of his posturing, Menon was taken to task for 'behav[ing] as if it [the India League] existed in a vacuum, seeing everything only from the point of view of its own immediate advantage'.³⁵

The CPGB's disenchantment with Menon had little impact on the India League's propaganda activities. In early 1942, with Britain reeling from Axis advances in North Africa and the Far East, the league managed to redouble its efforts. Working around the clock, its presses churned out literature excoriating the British government for its double standard in professing to fight for the democracy and justice, while denying Indians their freedom. IPI observed with concern in May 1942 that the India League's activities were 'quite definitely having a slowing-down effect on the war effort amongst Indians in this country'.³⁶ In response, Roger Hollis, head of MI5's F1 section, responsible for communist surveillance, attempted to disrupt its work by drafting Menon for national service. Approaching the Ministry of Labour in January 1942, Hollis enquired whether, as 'a leading light on the India League, an organisation with very close affiliations with the Communist Party', Menon could be conscripted in some capacity.³⁷ To Hollis's frustration, however, efforts to register Menon for National Service ran into the sand.³⁸

In India, Menon's activities provoked even greater British concern. The Raj had come under severe pressure in 1942, as the Cripps Mission floundered and the INC's 'Quit India' campaign of civil disobedience gathered momentum. Confronted by an explosive internal situation, India's viceroy, the Marquess of Linlithgow, badgered the India Office to intern Menon. Writing to the secretary of state for India, Leo Amery, that November, Linlithgow lamented:

that it has not been found possible to accept the suggestion which I have I think made once or twice that we should take pains to break up Menon and break up the India League with him. I am certain that so long as he is there he will be a focus of discontent and difficulty, and I should myself have thought that he was really worth taking a little of a chance.³⁹

Amery rejected Linlithgow's appeal, explaining to a fellow conservative MP that Menon was 'very clever and takes good care . . . to keep sufficiently within the law . . . but between ourselves we are watching him carefully'.⁴⁰ Unlike his fellow Indian nationalists on the subcontinent, Menon remained one step ahead of the British for the duration of the war, and out of their prisons.

II

In 1946, as Clement Attlee's Labour government struggled to rebuild a nation exhausted by six years of enervating conflict, Britain's control over its India empire began to fracture.⁴¹ Although committed to an early transfer of power, the Labour government's failure to advance a timetable for Indian self-government produced rumblings of discontent on the subcontinent. In February, with the illusion of British imperial power crumbling, the Royal Indian Navy mutinied in Bombay. The following month, with the internal situation in India threatening to spiral out of control, Attlee dispatched a cabinet mission to the subcontinent to negotiate terms for Britain's withdrawal.⁴² By 2 September, a transitional Indian government was in place, with Jawaharlal Nehru acting as its *de facto* premier and foreign minister.⁴³ Eager to initiate contacts between his interim administration and European governments, Nehru asked Krishna Menon to serve as his unofficial ambassador-at-large. As Nehru's emissary, Menon called on the foreign ministries of Paris, Copenhagen, Oslo and Stockholm.⁴⁴ It was his meeting with the Soviet foreign minister, Vyacheslav Molotov in Paris in late September 1946, however, that rekindled British interest in Menon.⁴⁵

Menon's meeting with Molotov had ostensibly been arranged to negotiate the sale of Soviet grain surpluses to India. Frederick Pethick Lawrence, Amery's successor as secretary of state for India, suspected that Menon's real agenda had been more sinister. As a fellow traveller, Pethick Lawrence argued, Menon had seized the first opportunity 'to make contact with, express sympathy with, and generally indicate India's desire to line up in the international field with, Russia rather than the Western bloc'. The idea that Menon was pro-Soviet had come to represent an article of faith within the India Office. Consequently, it was thrown into a panic late in 1946, when rumours surfaced on the subcontinent that Menon was manoeuvring to become India's high commissioner to the United Kingdom. Writing to the viceroy, Viscount Wavell, on 1 November 1946, Pethick Lawrence stressed that Menon 'would not be well received here . . . and if the suggestion [that he become high commissioner] were made to you by Nehru or one of his colleagues it might be as well to warn him'.⁴⁶ Taking the matter up with Attlee later the same month, Pethick Lawrence underlined Menon's 'disturbing' propensity to criticise British foreign policy. He would, Attlee was assured, 'influence Nehru against H.M.G. when he comes here'.⁴⁷

In fact, Menon's job prospects improved considerably in early 1947, after Attlee announced his decision to install Lord Louis Mountbatten of Burma as India's last viceroy. Mountbatten had befriended Menon in pre-war London, at a time when the British establishment treated Indian nationalists as social pariahs. In return, Menon never forgot Mountbatten's generosity of spirit.⁴⁸ As Attlee's confidence in Wavell drained away over the course of 1946,⁴⁹ it was Menon who championed Mountbatten as a worthy successor in Congress Party circles.⁵⁰ In turn, when faced with the formidable challenge of steering India to independence on terms acceptable to his metropolitan masters, the Congress Party and Muhammad Ali Jinnah's Muslim League, Mountbatten employed Menon as an informal back channel to Nehru and

other senior Congress Party figures. Menon's adroit performance as a political go-between over the spring of 1947 impressed Mountbatten,⁵¹ and in July he supported Menon's bid to become high commissioner in London.⁵² Writing to Attlee on 10 July, Mountbatten played up the importance of Menon's connection to Nehru. As one of the few individuals outside Nehru's cabinet with a 'good idea of what is in the minds of present Congress leaders', Mountbatten argued, Menon's presence in London would prove invaluable in the years to come.⁵³ Nehru made much the same point the following day, when informing Attlee that:

We [the Indian government] attach considerable importance to it [the post of high commissioner] as we do to the future relations of India with the U.K. We have therefore given a great deal of thought into [*sic*] the choice of a suitable person for this post. In consultation with the Viceroy and my colleagues we have decided to appoint Krishna Menon to this post. I feel sure that with his knowledge of both India and England and the intimate contacts he has in both countries, he will [be] of great help to us in the new conditions that we would have to face.⁵⁴

Attlee's subsequent decision not to challenge Menon's appointment drew howls of protest from the India Office.⁵⁵ Springing to his prime minister's defence, Mountbatten tartly informed a disgruntled Earl of Listowel, who had replaced Pethick Lawrence at the India Office in April 1947, that while "*persona non grata*" in many circles at home', as someone who enjoyed Nehru's 'complete confidence', Menon would be well placed to advance British interests in New Delhi.⁵⁶ MI5's director-general, Sir Percy Sillitoe, took a different view. Having got wind of Menon's posting through a chance conversation with an India Office official on 30 July, Sillitoe's first reaction was to send Nehru 'a friendly warning' regarding Menon's links to the CPGB. To Sillitoe's chagrin, however, his staff quickly established that Menon's appointment was a *fait accompli*, and he abandoned the idea. Instead, an irritated Sillitoe drafted a memorandum on Menon for presentation to the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). This emphasised MI5's disquiet that Britain had been saddled with an Indian high commissioner who had, 'close contacts with the Communist Party leadership in this country', and moreover was 'a warm supporter of Russia's foreign policy while equally opposed to that of our own'. In practical terms, Sillitoe's paper suggested that the flow of classified British material to the Indian High Commission be restricted once Menon was in post. 'Cabinet Ministers and other government officials with whom he [Menon] is likely to come into contact with [*sic*]', he cautioned, 'will have to be warned about him.'⁵⁷

MI5's unease over Menon's communist connections added spice to an ongoing debate within Whitehall over whether sensitive British intelligence could be shared with the 'new' dominions of India, Pakistan and Ceylon. On 6 August 1947, officials from the Foreign Office (FO), and the India Office's successor, the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), discussed whether D telegrams, containing 'the most important part of our consultation with Commonwealth Governments on foreign policy', should be withheld from the 'new' dominions. A precedent for such action existed. After 1922, the Irish Free State had ceased to receive FO circulars sent to the 'big four' dominions of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa.⁵⁸ In India's

case, the British reasoned that security weaknesses in Nehru's government militated against its receipt of D telegrams.⁵⁹ Moreover, as one official observed, 'Apart from anything else, the known Communistic bias of the prospective Indian High Commissioner in London, Krishna Menon, makes it probable that anything of importance [passed to India] will find its way into Russian hands.'⁶⁰

To conceal India's exclusion from the dominion intelligence loop, British officials considered implementing a system of informal censorship.⁶¹ With the FO's Russian Committee particularly concerned that India would leak information to the Soviets, the notion of establishing 'two circles' of dominion communication took root in Whitehall. In effect, this meant that at India House, Krishna Menon would receive some FO telegrams, 'but not so free a distribution as go to the four other High Commissioners', and be sent 'more carefully vetted' reports.⁶² British officials also deemed it prudent to revise the format of the fortnightly roundtable discussions which the secretary of state for commonwealth relations, Phillip Noel Baker, held with dominion high commissioners.⁶³ Once Menon attended these gatherings, it was felt, they would have to 'be less confidential and probably less frequent than formerly'. To round off matters, British missions overseas were instructed to 'be circumspect' in sharing material with their Indian colleagues, and ensure that information passed on was carefully screened, 'so as to be suitable for Indian reading'.⁶⁴

Contrary to some British expectations, once in London, Krishna Menon enjoyed a honeymoon period as India's High Commissioner.⁶⁵ In 1948, and early 1949, Menon played a pivotal role in the Anglo-Indian negotiations that made it possible for India to remain within the Commonwealth as a sovereign republic, under the terms of 'The London Declaration'.⁶⁶ 'It is curious,' Sir Stafford Cripps, Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer, wrote to Nehru at the time, '... that Krishna the revolutionary, the anti-British Indian Leaguer, has become one of the chief architects of the new and invigorated Commonwealth of Nations!'⁶⁷

Menon's efforts to foster Anglo-Indian goodwill took place against a backdrop of escalating cold war tension. In the spring of 1948, Czechoslovakia came under communist control, the western allies clashed with the Soviets over German currency reform and economic liberalisation and, in June, the Berlin blockade began. The spectre of renewed hostilities in Europe produced a groundswell of anti-communist sentiment in Britain. On the domestic front, the Labour Party prohibited cooperation with domestic communists and purged several of its more left-wing members. The following year, the Transport and General Workers Union expelled a number of its officials linked to the CPGB and barred communists from holding union posts.⁶⁸ Within Whitehall, Attlee established a secret cabinet committee, GEN 183, to look into subversive activity. This led to the introduction of 'negative vetting', under which the names of government officials working in sensitive areas were cross-referenced against MI5's files.⁶⁹ Although on nothing like the scale seen in the United States at the time, British civil servants found to have communist connections were subsequently sacked, forced to resign or transferred to non-sensitive posts.⁷⁰

From a commonwealth perspective, the deterioration in east-west relations encouraged Attlee's government to press ahead with a 'two circle' security system. Weaknesses

in commonwealth security been evident since September 1945, when the Russian defector, Igor Gouzenko, revealed that Soviet military intelligence, the GRU, had recruited agents inside Canada, including Fred Rose, a Canadian MP, and Alan Nunn May, a British atomic physicist.⁷¹ By September 1947, the controls governing intelligence sharing with India, which the British had thrashed the previous month, were in place. The amount of secret and top secret British intelligence dispatched to New Delhi was kept to an absolute minimum. Moreover, in an attempt to allay suspicions that they were withholding information, the British arranged for the Indian government to receive similar intelligence summaries to the older dominions, while ensuring that particularly sensitive material was hidden away in a confidential annex restricted to the 'big four'.⁷² In July 1948, concerned that the Commonwealth remained vulnerable to Soviet espionage, Sillitoe and Noel Baker convinced Attlee of the need to strengthen security further, in the first instance by convening a commonwealth conference. The inaugural meeting of commonwealth security officers, chaired by Sillitoe, ran alongside the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference, which Attlee hosted in London in October 1948. Jawaharlal Nehru was welcomed into the commonwealth leaders' club that October. Unlike the older dominions, however, India was neither invited by the British to participate in the concurrent security meeting nor informed that it was taking place.⁷³ MI5 felt more comfortable discussing security issues with India on a bilateral basis.⁷⁴

The Security Service's interest in Indian nationalism can be traced back to the turn of the century.⁷⁵ Significantly, however, while IPI remained nominally under the control of the secretary of state for India, from 1923 onward it became more intimately associated with MI5, and effectively began to function as the Security Services 'India branch'. At IPI's direction, MI5 officers kept leading Indian nationalists within the United Kingdom under surveillance, and, on occasions, placed intercepts on their mail and telephone communications. In addition, IPI liaised closely with the Delhi Intelligence Bureau, who monitored subversive activity within India on behalf of the viceroy. Located inside MI5's London headquarters, IPI served as a highly effective clearing house for the collection, analysis and dissemination of intelligence related to the security of British India. Moreover, for much of the time between 1923 and 1947, it did so on a shoestring budget and with only a skeleton staff of officers and their agents.⁷⁶

Once an interim Indian government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru had taken office in New Delhi on 2 September 1946, however, IPI's days were numbered. Crucially, the Home Ministry, to which IB reported, passed from British control and into the hands of formidable Congress Party stalwart Vallabhbhai Patel. Patel wasted little time in stamping his authority on India's intelligence service.⁷⁷ Meeting with Norman Smith, IB's director, shortly after arriving at the Home Ministry, Patel redefined the Delhi Intelligence Bureau's operational mandate. Surveillance operations against leading Congress Party officials were prohibited, although those targeting radical left-wing politicians and suspected communists were permitted to continue.⁷⁸ More significantly, Patel removed Smith's prerogative of direct access to the viceroy. Moving forward, Patel insisted that all IB reporting was channelled through his

Home Ministry. At a stroke, the British were confronted with an intelligence vacuum in India.⁷⁹ By the following spring, Whitehall had begun shutting IPI down, while back in New Delhi Smith had made way for a new Indian director of IB, Raobahadur T. G. Sanjevi Pillai, a 49-year-old district superintendent of police from Madras.⁸⁰

The British hoped was that some form of reciprocal intelligence liaison arrangement could be established with Nehru's government. Cabling Wavell on 15 March 1947, Pethick-Lawrence informed the viceroy that Guy Liddell was touring the Far East and would be stopping in Delhi later that month. The presence of MI5's deputy director general in India provided the opportunity to broach the intelligence liaison question with Patel. Accordingly, Sir Terence Shone, Britain's high commissioner in India, was instructed to arrange a meeting.⁸¹ Having met with India's home minister, on his return to the United Kingdom Liddell confirmed to the JIC that the encounter had gone off well. Patel welcomed Liddell's proposal to station an MI5 security liaison officer (SLO) inside the British High Commission in New Delhi and, in turn, agreed to post an IB officer to the Indian High Commission in London. On a less positive note, Liddell voiced the concern that in the process of replacing its core of British officers with Indians, the IB appeared to have undergone a troubling 'change of character'. Liddell noted that:

the Head of the [Intelligence] Bureau was a Hindu policeman from Madras without intelligence experience. The obvious choice had been a Moslem of long experience in intelligence matters. This and other incidents showed a tendency on the part of the Bureau to degenerate into a Hindi Gestapo, whose principal target would be the Moslem League. Liaison with the Bureau, therefore, was likely at first to be one-sided.⁸²

Nonetheless, Liddell discerned one silver lining in an otherwise gloomy assessment of IB's performance. This was the emphasis which it continued to place on combating communist subversion. On this question at least, Liddell advised, 'the Congress Party were showing particular interest'.⁸³

The SLO concept was not new. During the Second World War, MI5 had temporarily stationed SLOs, and in the case of overseas military bases defence security officers (DSOs), across the British Empire. The SLO's role was to provide advice and support to local security agencies, while at the same time acting as a conduit for the exchange of security-related information between London and Britain's imperial outposts. It was not to engage in acts of subterfuge or espionage. For its SLOs to remain effective, the Security Service believed that they needed to retain the trust of their host governments.⁸⁴ The first SLO to be posted to New Delhi in 1947 was Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Bourne, whose background included a spell in military intelligence in India.⁸⁵ Bourne's appointment came as a relief to Liddell, who had been appalled when Norman Smith had suggested to Patel that, at least initially, MI5's SLO 'should be someone who had no previous connection with the Indian Police or the Indian Civil service, so as to avoid any grounds for suspicion'.⁸⁶ Bourne remained in New Delhi for barely six months before being replaced by Bill U'ren, an ex-Indian police officer who had clocked up over twenty years of service on the subcontinent. The introduction

of an SLO in India proved a success, and was soon replicated in Pakistan,⁸⁷ and, as the Cold War developed in the late 1940s and 1950s, across the empire and commonwealth.⁸⁸ Moreover, the work performed by SLOs was instrumental in ensuring that under the 'Attlee Directive', the empire and commonwealth remained primarily the preserve of the Security Service, and insulated from the clandestine activities of SIS.⁸⁹

When the last SLO left India in the late 1960s, they did so not at India's behest, but as consequence of swingeing cuts forced on the Security Service by a Whitehall bureaucracy in desperate search of overseas economies. By 1965, with MI5 under pressure from the Treasury to implement annual cost savings of £100,000, the Security Service had already recalled SLOs from Tanzania, Ghana, Ceylon and Gibraltar, and started the process of shutting down its stations in Australia and Malta. In an effort to save its Indian SLO from a similar fate, the then director general of MI5, Roger Hollis, enlisted the support of John Freeman, Britain's high commissioner to India. However, Freeman's assertion that removing the SLO from New Delhi would 'risk destroying a liaison [with India] which it might be very difficult if ever to re-establish' cut little ice with the cabinet secretary, Sir Burke Trend.⁹⁰ It eventually fell to Hollis's successor, Martin Furnival Jones, to inform his opposite number in India, S. P. Varma, that the current SLO in New Delhi would not be replaced on completion of his tour. Reflecting on the benefits which had accrued to both sides from an arrangement which stretched back almost twenty years, Varma expressed deep regret that, by withdrawing the resident SLO in New Delhi, the British would sever 'the longstanding contact at a personal level which has proved invaluable to us'. In 1971, once the dialogue which had taken place in New Delhi had been repeated across the wider Commonwealth, MI5 closed down its Overseas (E) branch.⁹¹

Intelligence liaison aside, after a sticky start, relations between the Attlee and Nehru governments had improved considerably during 1949. By then, Anglo-Indian friction generated by the Indo-Pakistani conflict over Kashmir, and Hyderabad's integration into the Indian Union in 1948, had eased somewhat.⁹² Furthermore, India's decision to remain in the commonwealth, and booming bilateral trade, augured well for the future. Writing to Britain's high commissioner to India, Sir Archibald Nye, on 15 March 1949, Noel Baker expressed his satisfaction that 'general relations between London and Delhi are improving'. The perennial dark cloud on an otherwise clear horizon remained Krishna Menon. With Menon looking set to stay in London 'for a considerable time to come', British officials fretted over the diplomatic storm that would ensue were India to discover the full extent of its exclusion from the dominion intelligence circle. Yet, as Noel-Baker reiterated, the British continued 'not in the least [to] trust the security or the general working of his [Menon's] Office'. The long-term prospects for Anglo-Indian relations would 'undoubtedly' improve, Noel-Baker mused, if Menon were replaced as India's high commissioner with 'someone sensible'.⁹³

Back at the end of 1948, with the Commonwealth Security Conference out of the way, MI5 invited Sanjevi Pillai to London for talks. Although Guy Liddell had initially derided Pillai for his lack of intelligence experience, the director of the IB went on establish close personal and professional relationships with senior Security Service

officers. Pillai valued the advice and support he received from MI5 and, moreover, shared its visceral distrust of Krishna Menon.⁹⁴ Having engaged in 'exhaustive discussions' with the IB director at their London headquarters, MI5 officers expressed satisfaction that he had returned to India 'fully primed' on the need to strengthen security. Moreover, Sir Philip Vickery, a former head of IPI, used Pillai's visit to underline to his Indian colleague the detrimental effect that Krishna Menon was having on Anglo-Indian intelligence collaboration.⁹⁵ Indeed, by making sure that Menon received 'practically nothing in the TOP SECRET categories',⁹⁶ the British inevitably found themselves on the wrong end of India's high commissioner. Writing to Attlee in March 1949, Noel Baker observed that Menon had been carping 'that our first reaction to help and co-operate with the Indian Government seemed to have faded. He spoke of difficulties with Departments . . . [and] reluctance of officials to take trouble to meet India's requests'.⁹⁷

In May 1949, having reviewed Menon's case file, Guy Liddell concluded that the time had come to act against India's high commissioner.⁹⁸ Since 1947, Menon had blotted his MI5 copy book by, among other things, opposing the Indian government's crackdown on domestic communists and continuing surreptitiously to support the India League's anti-colonial activities.⁹⁹ Of more concern to MI5, however, was Menon's long-term affair with Bridget Tunnard, an India League secretary connected to the CPGB. In Liddell's judgement, Menon's relationship with Tunnard suggested 'that anything of interest that MENON hears about will reach the Communist Party through her'. With MI5 having categorised India's high commissioner as a serious security risk, Liddell questioned whether, 'if it were at all possible, it would be better to cut our losses and get rid of MENON'.¹⁰⁰ Other MI5 officers disagreed, arguing that pushing Menon out of India House risked, 'driv[ing] him back into the Communist fold carrying with him Commonwealth Defence secrets which he must have acquired as Nehru's right hand man at the Commonwealth prime Ministers' Conferences'.¹⁰¹ Sillitoe found Liddell's argument the more persuasive. While Menon may have distanced himself from British communists since becoming high commissioner, MI5's director-general conceded, he remained 'at least' a fellow traveller and, as such, a considerable threat to commonwealth security.¹⁰²

Paradoxically, as MI5's position in relation to Krishna Menon hardened, the Security Service was busy dismissing the conviction held by some Whitehall officials that Britain's African colonies were vulnerable to communist subversion. In the Gold Coast, the communist connections of the nationalist activist Kwame Nkrumah had begun to trouble colonial officials in the late 1940s. As a student at the LSE in London in 1945, Nkrumah had founded the West Africa National Secretariat, a body which sought independence for the Gold Coast. While in London, he had also forged links to the CPGB, an association which first drew him to the attention of MI5. In February 1948, having returned to Africa, Nkrumah became embroiled in a wave of civil unrest in the Gold Coast, and was detained by the colonial authorities. On his arrest, Nkrumah was found to be in possession of an unsigned CPGB membership card, Communist Party literature and the manifesto of a secret organisation named the 'Circle', whose aim was 'to create and maintain a Union of African Socialist

Republics'.¹⁰³ Evidence of Nkrumah's ongoing relationship with the CPGB failed to impress MI5, who saw him as more of a political opportunist than an ideologue. His anti-imperial agenda, it reasoned, was driven more by a strong sense of nationalism and a raw hunger for power than by an affinity for communism. In June 1948, the Security Service argued that:

Although N'Krumah was undoubtedly actively connected with the Communist Party of Great Britain it is doubtful if he was accepted as a member. His interest in Communism may well be prompted only by his desire to enlist any aid in the furtherance of his own aims in West Africa . . . Although an undoubted nationalist, NKRUMAH's aims are probably tainted by his wishes for his own personal advancement.¹⁰⁴

Intriguingly, MI5 once again found itself at odds with certain sections of Whitehall opinion over its assessment of the Kenyan nationalist Jomo Kenyatta. In common with Menon and Nkrumah, Kenyatta was a product of LSE, and had formed close links with the CPGB in pre-war London. MI5 suspected that Kenyatta had become a member of the CPGB in 1930, and took note when, between 1930 and 1933, he had left Britain to attend Moscow's Lenin School and Communist University of the Toilers of the East.¹⁰⁵ When Kenyatta subsequently emerged as a powerful political figure during Kenya's Mau Mau uprising in the early 1950s, the colonies governor, Evelyn Baring, was quick to characterise the disturbance as a communist-inspired act of subversion. MI5 took a different view. Writing to his Central African SLO, Bob de Quehan, in August 1951, Sir Percy Sillitoe stated clearly that in his view Kenyatta had broken with his communist past, and 'at the most he should be described as a racially prejudiced African nationalist'.¹⁰⁶ In Africa, it seems, MI5 regarded the conviction held by some British government officials that a communist hand lay behind the rising groundswell of opposition to British colonial rule as overblown and misguided. As one Security Service officer noted:

at a recent meeting which I attended at the Foreign Office, Mr. Ingrams [an FO official] showed a . . . tendency to infer Communist intervention in African affairs from the fact that certain prominent Africans had received some training in Communism early in their careers. I quoted the case of . . . Kwame Nkrumah, in exposing the fallacy of this argument.¹⁰⁷

Broader political currents may help to explain why MI5 was prepared to emphasise the nationalist credentials, rather than the communist affiliations, of individuals such as Nkrumah and Kenyatta, while reversing this position in the case of Krishna Menon. MI5 came under unprecedented public scrutiny between 1949 and 1951, following a series of security scandals. In late 1949, on the heels of the Gouzenko affair, it emerged that a German émigré physicist, Klaus Fuchs, had passed British atomic secrets to the Soviets. Fuchs' exposure proved especially uncomfortable for Sillitoe, who struggled to explain MI5's failure to identify Fuchs as a security threat, when it held records which confirmed his pre-war membership of the German Communist Party.¹⁰⁸ In early 1951, Sillitoe was once more back on the defensive following the defection to Moscow of the British diplomats Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean.

Maclean had run the American desk at the Foreign Office, while Burgess had served as second secretary at the British embassy in Washington. For a contrite Sillitoe, Burgess and Maclean's exposure as Soviet agents represented a major embarrassment. More significantly, it threatened to undermine Anglo-American collaboration in the intelligence sphere, and beyond.¹⁰⁹

In this context, the prospect that Krishna Menon might precipitate another debilitating security scandal became a focus of intense anxiety for MI5. Crucially, at a time when Attlee's government was pressing Washington hard to reinstate Anglo-American collaboration in the atomic field, which the McMahon Act of 1946 had halted, MI5 was determined to keep a lid on commonwealth security. Revealingly, in July 1949, MI5 took strong exception to a report forwarded to the JIC by an Inter-Service Working Party on the Supply of Classified Information to the New Commonwealth Countries. This had concluded that security in the 'new' commonwealth nations 'appeared to be generally as good' as that in some 'old' commonwealth countries. As MI5's Martin Furnival-Jones made clear to the JIC, the Security Service disputed such a finding, and remained unconvinced that 'new' commonwealth nations were taking the problem of communist subversion sufficiently seriously. By way of example, Furnival-Jones emphasised that:

one factor which could not be ignored and that was the situation in the Office of the High Commissioner for India in London. If this situation was allowed to exist by the Government of India in London, the possibility could not be ignored that similar situations might exist in departments in India . . . In general it might be true that in terms of organisation and threat to security there was not much to distinguish between the new and old members of the Commonwealth, but before they could be treated on equal terms a high level approach [to India] should be made and the situation in the Office of the High Commissioner for India in London rectified.¹¹⁰

Keeping Britain's security concerns surrounding Menon out of the public domain, however, proved to be difficult. In March 1950, the London *Daily Graphic* broke the story that communists were on the payroll of India House. 'M.I.5 are concerned,' the *Graphic* trumpeted, 'at [the] possible leakage of Imperial defence secrets in London through Communist penetration of the offices of the High Commissioner for India.'¹¹¹ Fearful of the political fallout, both at home and abroad, that would follow on from India House's exposure as a nest of communist subversion, Whitehall, nevertheless, dithered over what to do. It was not until early 1951, with the whiff of Burgess and Maclean's treachery hanging in the air, and the CRO under new leadership, that a decision was made to tackle the security problem at India House head on.¹¹²

III

On 17 April 1951, Patrick Gordon Walker, who had replaced Noel-Baker as secretary of state for commonwealth relations,¹¹³ met with Sir Percy Sillitoe at the CRO. Sillitoe had with him an MI5 dossier documenting Krishna Menon's contacts with British communists stretching back to 1936. The dossier acknowledged that Menon had

never been a member of the CPGB. It made much, nonetheless, of his friendships with leading British communists, such as Harry Pollitt, and Rajani Palme Dutt. Dutt especially was portrayed by MI5 as having instilled a deep-rooted pro-Soviet prejudice in Menon.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, evidence which suggested that Menon had broken with the CPGB after becoming Indian high commissioner was downplayed by MI5. Gordon Walker evidenced less interest in Menon's past, however, than in the fourteen 'communists and fellow-travellers' whom Sillitoe listed as working for India House, one of whom, P. N. Hakaar, headed its external affairs department.¹¹⁵ Of even more concern to MI5 than Hakaar was Patsy Pillay. Pillay and her husband, a South African Indian, were former members of the South African Communist Party who had joined the Brondsbury branch of the CPGB on their arrival in Britain in January 1949. 'Much to the delight of King Street', one MI5 officer observed, Pillay had gone on to secure a job in Menon's private office.¹¹⁶ There was 'no doubt', in MI5's view, that the CPGB would exploit Pillay's access to classified information passing through India House, 'when it suited them'. Equally troubling for Gordon Walker was Sillitoe's revelation that MI5 had warned India's IB about the communist presence in India House on three separate occasions, in December 1948, July 1949 and December 1950. The Indian government had reminded Menon of the security risks involved in retaining communists on his staff, Sillitoe confirmed, but appeared either unable, or unwilling, to enforce a change in its high commissioner's employment practices. 'Taking everything into account,' Sillitoe concluded, 'Menon and the offices of the Indian High Commission represent a security risk.'¹¹⁷

On returning from the CRO, Sillitoe recorded that Gordon Walker had been 'entirely convinced' by the security case against Menon. The secretary of state, he noted, now regarded India's high commissioner 'as a serious menace to security', and wanted 'to get rid of MENON'.¹¹⁸ Gordon Walker had clashed repeatedly with Menon after taking charge at the CRO, and their mutual antipathy undoubtedly encouraged him to seek Menon's removal. At one stage Menon's, 'bitter tirades of personal abuse' and 'unprovoked attacks' on Gordon Walker prompted the CRO to take the exceptional step of complaining to the Indian government over the conduct of their high commissioner.¹¹⁹ The accounts of Menon's combustible personality and the lurid rumours surrounding his personal life that circulated in the corridors of Whitehall ensured that he was neither liked nor trusted by British officials, and only marginally more popular back in New Delhi.¹²⁰ As Sir Percy Sillitoe was well aware, many people shared his conviction that Menon was 'a first class intriguer' with 'a bad moral record', and as such would be only too happy to see the back of him.¹²¹ Such considerations may well have emboldened the Security Service to press home the case for Menon's removal.

Meeting again on 1 May, Sillitoe and Gordon Walker moved on to discuss the practicalities of extricating Menon from India House, the favoured option being a direct appeal to Nehru for Menon's removal. Three days later, Sillitoe called at 10 Downing Street to update Attlee on the Menon situation. Attlee's relations with Menon had a chequered history. They had first clashed in 1928, when Attlee sat on the Simon Commission, and in 1940 the British premier had been instrumental in

Menon's expulsion from the Labour Party.¹²² In contrast, Attlee had overcome an initial suspicion of the Security Service, and held Sillitoe and MI5 in high regard.¹²³ Menon's MI5 case file impressed Attlee. 'The Prime Minister was very interested in what I had to say,' Sillitoe noted, 'especially with regard to the Communists and Fellow Travellers on Menon's staff.'¹²⁴

In the past, Menon's 'intimate' relationship with Nehru had dissuaded the British from airing their concerns over India House in New Delhi.¹²⁵ Denouncing a senior Indian official, it was felt, and more so Menon, might be interpreted by Nehru as 'a direct criticism of his own judgement' and 'have the effect of irritating him and inviting him to take an entrenched position.'¹²⁶ Moreover, MI5 was conscious that, given Nehru's own experience as a political agitator who had frequently been branded a communist in the 1930s, he held a 'critical view' of intelligence professionals in general and British intelligence officers in particular.¹²⁷ When not languishing in their prisons before 1947, Nehru had been subject to oppressive British surveillance. This, as B. N. Mullik discovered when he replaced Sanjevi Pillai as director of IB in July 1950, had left India's premier with a 'natural' and 'strong prejudice' against some of the work performed by security services.¹²⁸

Indeed, when it came to Menon, although perturbed by the Indian high commissioner's communist connections, Mullik left the distinct impression that he was more than happy for MI5 to make the running in tackling a thorny security question, which in New Delhi threatened to prove politically toxic.¹²⁹ A former police officer, Mullik was personable, articulate and bureaucratically astute. On taking charge at the IB, he continued to nurture the close links that Pillai had established with MI5. Under Mullik, MI5 SLOs were encouraged to pay calls on IB stations not merely in New Delhi, but across India, while the presence of IB officers on MI5 training courses in London in the 1950s became a matter of routine.¹³⁰ Significantly, he also managed to win the confidence of Jawaharlal Nehru, and in consequence wielded considerable power and influence within India's government.¹³¹ Even so, Mullik proved reluctant to raise MI5's concerns over Menon directly with Nehru. In part, this undoubtedly reflected his aversion to challenging the integrity of someone so intimately connected with Nehru. However, Mullik's inaction may also have been influenced by Nehru's jaundiced opinion of British intelligence, and by reservations which the Indian premier voiced over the nature of IB's relationship with MI5. As Mullik subsequently acknowledged, Nehru believed India's intelligence service to be overly dependent on the British after 1947, with IB more often than not simply 'dishing out intelligence which the British continued to supply to it'.¹³² Revealingly, after arriving in India in 1955, MI5's SLO John Allen informed London that, while supportive, Mullik preferred to keep the Security Service's presence in New Delhi as quiet as possible. Were Nehru and officials from the Indian Ministry of External Affairs to get wind of the extent of IB's collaboration with MI5, Mullik had explained, it was likely that much of their current liaison activity would be curtailed.¹³³ Whatever his rationale, to the Security Service's chagrin, Mullik preferred to feed MI5 'evidence' of Menon's indiscretions, rather than to pursue the matter through Indian government channels himself.¹³⁴

Before deciding whether to sanction a British approach to Nehru, Gordon Walker took the precaution of consulting Sir Archibald Nye in New Delhi.¹³⁵ To bring Nye up to speed on Menon, Sillitoe arranged for him to receive a briefing from Eric Kitchen, who had taken over from Bill U'ren as MI5's Indian SLO in June 1950.¹³⁶ Nye's advice, which Gordon Walker accepted, was not to approach Nehru on such a sensitive matter, but rather, to raise the issue of India House's vulnerability to communist subversion with India's minister for home affairs, Rajaji Rajagopalachari.¹³⁷ On 12 June, Nye secured an interview with Rajagopalachari. Having informed the Indian minister that several of Menon's staff had connections to the CPGB, Nye proceeded to suggest that, henceforth, the British government would prefer to channel sensitive information to New Delhi directly through the British High Commission and bypass India House. To Nye's disappointment, Rajagopalachari sidestepped his proposal, asking instead that he forward the names of communists working for Menon to Mullik.¹³⁸ News of Nye's encounter with Rajagopalachari soon reached Menon. Writing angrily to Nehru, he rubbished the charge that India House was susceptible to communist subversion. The Attlee government's scurrilous accusation, Menon raged, merely reflected its petty frustration that since 1947 India had proved willing and able to exercise autonomy in the conduct of its international affairs.¹³⁹

Discounting Menon's bluster, MI5 took heart from signs that the timing of Nye's intervention had coincided with a groundswell of Indian dissatisfaction over Menon's performance as high commissioner. In particular, Menon's decision to bypass formal channels and purchase jeeps for India's army from European suppliers had backfired spectacularly when the vehicles were declared unserviceable upon delivery. In the ensuing scandal, India's press accused Menon of landing New Delhi with a £3,000,000 loss, while pocketing a sizeable commission on the jeep deal.¹⁴⁰ In July 1951, Menon was fighting for his political life, prompting Alex Kellar of MI5's Overseas Division¹⁴¹ to reflect sanguinely that:

Something may come of this [Nye's] approach. Nehru, although so unpredictable, may in any event feel, and for other reasons, that a change in High commissioner in London is desirable . . . I understand that there is a good deal of talk in Indian circles that he [Menon] may go.¹⁴²

By the autumn, Kellar's optimism appeared well founded. Cabling London on 8 November, Nye confirmed that a well-placed source, 'under an oath of secrecy', had confided in him that Menon's days as high commissioner were numbered.¹⁴³ Nye's source was Mountbatten, who had become close to Nehru during his stint as India's last viceroy. No doubt in collusion with Whitehall, and having obtained Rajagopalachari's prior consent, Mountbatten had written privately to Nehru on 21 September, urging him to replace Menon with his home minister. Skirting around the security issue, Mountbatten instead used the pretext of Menon's failing health to press for his removal. Menon had a long history of physical and psychological infirmity. Following the death of his father in 1935, and the collapse of a long-term relationship, he had suffered a nervous breakdown and been hospitalised.¹⁴⁴ During the course of his rehabilitation, Menon became dependent on luminal, a barbiturate-based sedative, the

side-effects of which included confusion, loss of consciousness and paranoia.¹⁴⁵ After he had appeared incoherent in public on several occasions during early 1951, rumours began circulating that Menon had contracted tuberculosis, had a heart condition, was addicted to drugs and had experienced a second nervous breakdown.¹⁴⁶ By, in Nye's words, 'not telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth', Mountbatten had furnished Nehru with a plausible, and politically acceptable, excuse for terminating Menon's service as India's high commissioner.¹⁴⁷

Facing pressure from inside and outside India to recall Menon, in September 1951, Nehru dispatched his personal assistant, Mac Mathai, to London, to persuade Menon to take an extended leave of absence. On reaching India House, Mathai found Menon to be 'terribly under the influence of drugs ... an ill man ... almost mad'.¹⁴⁸ Ignoring Mathai's plea to stand down on the grounds of ill health, Menon instead sent Nehru a raft of medical certificates attesting to his excellent physical and mental condition and at one point, rather incongruously, threatened suicide were he to be forced from office.¹⁴⁹ Commenting on the unfolding drama from New Delhi, Nye confirmed to the CRO that 'Krishna Menon seems to have dug his toes in and is fighting a strong rear-guard action to remain in his present job. I am told that Nehru is rather disgusted with Menon's attitude.'¹⁵⁰ Nonetheless, Nehru was unwilling to risk a public schism with Menon, particularly with India's first general election looming large. Equally, with the Conservative Party having been returned to office that October, Nehru worried that sacking Menon would be interpreted as a sop to Churchill's government.¹⁵¹ Consequently, he resigned himself to a gradual transition of power at India House.

With Menon's term as high commissioner set to expire early the following year, Nye was equally pragmatic. The prudent course, he suggested to London, was now to sit out Menon's final months in office, rather than risk unnecessarily ruffling Indian feathers.¹⁵² The CRO was less eager to let the matter of Menon drop. Moreover, in Hastings Ismay, it had a new secretary of state who retained 'no shadow of doubt that that K[rishna] M[enon]'s removal would be in the best interests of both England and India'.¹⁵³ However, with Nehru occupied by pressing domestic issues in the first half of 1952, time ran out on the CRO, and thoughts of a second approach to New Delhi on the subject of Menon were shelved.

Similarly, by the spring of 1952, MI5's concern had switched to the possibility that, rather than return to New Delhi on leaving India House or accept another overseas posting, Menon would remain in London in a private capacity. Such an unwelcome development might then see him 'openly assume control of the India League and probably resume his King Street association and friendships'. Given his 'highly complex and unscrupulous character', MI5 officers speculated that, as a free agent, Menon could be tempted to 'pass information acquired during his period in office to the Communists'.¹⁵⁴ British unease grew during the spring of 1952, after Menon rejected Nehru's offer of a seat in his cabinet, the vice-chancellorship of Delhi University or the Indian Embassy in Moscow.¹⁵⁵ To MI5's chagrin, India's high commissioner appeared notably reluctant to leave Britain's shores.

Menon's successor finally arrived in London in July. An efficient, if staid administrator, Bal Gangadhar Kher, was a former governor of Bombay who had last visited

the United Kingdom forty years previously. Nevertheless, as the *Times* pointedly observed, 'among officials in London his appointment is evidently regarded as most welcome'.¹⁵⁶ Confirming MI5's suspicion that he would not 'sit quiet', however, Menon remained in London after Kher's arrival and announced plans to reconstitute the India League.¹⁵⁷ By appearing uninvited at diplomatic receptions and encouraging the impression that he continued to speak for Nehru, Menon proved to be 'a constant thorn in the flesh of his successor'.¹⁵⁸ Almost as keen as the British to find him an alternative form of employment, Nehru finally cajoled Menon into joining the Indian delegation at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, on the understanding that he would enjoy special responsibility for Korean affairs.¹⁵⁹ In the autumn of 1952, to MI5's considerable relief, Krishna Menon left Britain with a political whimper, rather than a diplomatic bang.

IV

British government documents on Krishna Menon reveal much about the character of Anglo-relations in the years immediately after 1947. Taken as a whole, they offer up new perspectives on both the security concerns which preoccupied British policy-makers as the process of decolonisation in South Asia dovetailed with the onset of the Cold War and the broader story of Britain's post-imperial relationship with India. Although it is difficult to quantify, the Attlee government's decision to institute a 'two circle' dominion intelligence system, and more particularly to seek Krishna Menon's removal as India's high commissioner to the United Kingdom, undoubtedly risked a rupture in Anglo-Indian relations. However, the impact of MI5's concern over India's susceptibility to Soviet espionage, previously neglected in the historiography of Anglo-Indian relations, stretches far beyond the early post-colonial period. The significance which MI5 attached to Krishna Menon's links to the CPGB continued to colour British perceptions of Indian foreign policy well into the Cold War.

Throughout the 1950s, first as Nehru's international trouble-shooter and latterly as an Indian cabinet minister, Krishna Menon was widely rumoured to be a communist stooge in hock to Moscow and Beijing.¹⁶⁰ The absence of evidence to substantiate such charges failed to dent MI5's conviction that Menon was a security threat. In fact, following the expansion of Soviet intelligence operations in India in the early 1960s, KGB attempts to cultivate Menon met with a conspicuous lack of success.¹⁶¹ To a degree, this no doubt reflected the Security Service's wider paranoia over the menace that communist subversion posed to the United Kingdom. In the mid-1950s, MI5's registry contained the files of 250,000 communists or fellow-travellers. Or in other words, MI5 believed one in every 200 British residents to be a potential subversive.¹⁶² Into the mid-1950s, MI5 continued to caution a sceptical CRO that 'the negative state of our information and the inference that Menon has dropped his communist contacts does not necessarily mean that the danger of his abusing his potential position . . . can on that account be ignored'.¹⁶³ Doubts planted by MI5 in the minds of British policy-makers regarding Menon's political loyalties encouraged Whitehall to view India's habitual challenges to western Cold War orthodoxy in terms of his nefarious

influence. As late as June 1962, the then secretary of state for commonwealth relations, Duncan Sandys, was to be found carping that Indian diplomacy was hamstrung by 'Mr. Krishna Menon and the pro-Russian faction' in Nehru's cabinet.¹⁶⁴

In hindsight, it is clear that MI5 misjudged the nature of the threat that Krishna Menon posed to Britain's national security between 1947 and 1952. Menon's ideological roots were far shallower than MI5 cared to acknowledge. The alliance that Menon brokered between the India League and the CPGB in the 1930s, as British communists recognised, represented a marriage of mutual convenience more than a meeting of political minds. Prior to 1947, MI5 was overly influenced by Menon's readiness to collaborate with the CPGB in pursuit of Indian self-government. Following India's independence, it proved unduly dismissive of evidence that Menon had broken with King Street. As is evidenced by its handling of the African nationalists, Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta, given relatively benign conditions, the Security Service was capable of producing measured and balanced assessments of the risks individuals tainted by former communist associations posed to Britain's national security. In a different context, however, where the communist threat to British national security, and perhaps equally significantly its own organisational interests, was more pronounced, immediate and closer to home, as in the case of Krishna Menon, MI5's judgement proved less sound. In over-egging the security case against Menon, MI5 encouraged the Attlee government to run excessive risks with Anglo-Indian relations. Moreover, it left indelible question marks over Krishna Menon's attitude toward communism, which, in turn, adversely affected Britain's relations with India well into the Cold War. Paradoxically, the British were to play no part in Krishna Menon's political Waterloo. That distinction, after Menon, as India's defence minister, had been held culpable for his nation's ignominious defeat in a brief border war in late 1962, fell to, of all people, Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party.

Notes

- [1] For details of the support Indian nationalists received from the British political left, see Arora, *Indian Nationalist Movement in Britain*; Ahmed, *British Labour Party and the Indian Independence Movement*; Owen, *British Left and India*.
- [2] 'Krishna Menon', 15 May 1945, MEPO 38/107. Unless otherwise cited, all archival references are to the National Archives, London.
- [3] The post of Indian high commissioner in London was created in 1920. Menon is, however, commonly referred to as India's 'first' high commissioner to the United Kingdom. Garner, *Commonwealth Office*, 306.
- [4] Note by Liddell, 18 June 1949, KV 2/2512-1.
- [5] Attlee, Sir Stafford Cripps, his chancellor of the exchequer, and India's last viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, among others, argued that the retention of strong politico-military ties with India would secure Britain's status as a global power. Inder Singh, *Limits of British Influence*, 47; Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 152–53, 302–03.
- [6] Rathbone, 'Police Intelligence in Ghana', 107–28.
- [7] Murphy, 'Intelligence and Decolonization'; 'Creating a Commonwealth Intelligence Culture'.
- [8] See Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence*; 'Surveillance of Indian Revolutionaries in Great Britain'; French, *Liberty or Death*; Owen, *British Left and India*.

- [9] French, *Liberty or Death*, xx.
- [10] Richard Aldrich has provided much valuable context on the development of British intelligence liaison during and immediately after the Second World War, both in an Indian and in a wider Commonwealth context. See Aldrich, *Hidden Hand, Intelligence and the War against Japan*; 'Value of Residual Empire'; 'Imperial Rivalry'; 'American Intelligence and the British Raj'.
- [11] Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*.
- [12] A revealingly, albeit highly personalised account of MI5's presence in India in the mid-1960s had previously been provided by the service's former director general, Dame Stella Rimington, who worked for the resident SLO in New Delhi between 1967 and 1968. See, Rimington, *Open Secret*, 67–75.
- [13] The largely hagiographic accounts of Menon's career which have emerged from Indian scholars—notably, Arora, *V. K. Krishna Menon*; George, *Krishna Menon*; Ram, *A Personal Memoir*; Chakravarty, *Krishna Menon and the India League*; *Crusader Extraordinary*—contrast with Brecher's more balanced, although now dated, *India and World Politics*.
- [14] Sillitoe to Chief Constable, County Durham, 24 Feb. 1950, KV/2/2512-18.
- [15] Extract from New Scotland Yard Report, 28 Dec. 1927, File 49/1928, a (S) 49, Vedakay Karimpat Krishna Menon, Indian Political Intelligence Files, British Library (BL KM).
- [16] Arora, *V. K. Krishna Menon*, 27.
- [17] 'Vengalil Krishnan Krishna MENON', 23 Sept. 1932, KV/2/2509-11; 'K. Menon', 20 Nov. 1932, MEPO 38/107.
- [18] Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru, 1889–1947*, 202.
- [19] Scotland Yard report No. 122, 10 Aug. 1938, File 295/1926 Pt2, P&J (J) 295/26, Jawaharlal Nehru, Indian Political Intelligence Files, British Library (BL JN).
- [20] 'V. K. Krishna Menon', 18 July 1939, KV/2/2509-7.
- [21] 'V. K. Menon's views on the Political Situation in India', 1 Feb. 1937, P&J (S) 79, BL KM. In 1935, in an effort to counter growing factionalism among the London-based organisations campaigning for Indian home rule, such as the Indian Conciliation Group (ICG) and the Friends of India (FOI), Nehru stated that the Congress Party viewed the India League as its principal voice in the United Kingdom. Nehru was attracted to the League by its socialist credentials, his admiration for Menon and the fact that, unlike either the ICG or FOI, it was administered by an Indian. Nehru to Rajendra Prasad, 20 Nov. 1935, Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 7, 42–44.
- [22] Owen, *British Left and India*, 240.
- [23] Menon informed one communist in the late 1920s that he saw little merit in allowing King Street to exploit the League as 'a convenient stick for the Communists to beat their enemies'. Chakravarty, *Crusader*, 646.
- [24] In November 1939, Menon wrote to Pollitt thanking him for his 'loyalties and deep affection', and expressing his 'very great personal regard' for the CPGB general secretary. Menon to Pollitt, 14 Nov. 1939, Harry Pollitt Papers, CP/IND/POL, Correspondence, Misc., Communist Party of Great Britain Archive, Labour History Archives and Study Centre, Manchester (CPA LHASC), 'V. K. Krishna Menon', 10 June 1940, P&J (S) 1363, BL KM.
- [25] 'V. K. Krishna Menon', 10 June 1940, P&J (S) 1363, BL KM.
- [26] 'V. K. Krishna Menon', 1 Feb. 1937, P&J (S) 79 1937, BL KM.
- [27] 'V. K. Krishna Menon', 29 Nov. 1938, MEPO 38/107; 'V. K. Krishna Menon', 1 Nov. 1939, KV/2/2509-7; IPI note on Menon, 13 June 1940 P&J (S) 1363/40, f.126, BL KM.
- [28] 'Menon's plan to celebrate Indian Independence Day', 17 Jan. 1940, P&J (S) 138, BL KM; Owen, *British Left and India*, 257.
- [29] DVW to Hollis, 16 Dec. 1939, KV/2/2509-6.
- [30] 'National Agent's Opinion on the Parliamentary Candidature of Mr. Krishna Menon', 27 Nov. 1940, ID/IND/1/13, Labour Party Archive, Labour History Archives and Study Centre, Manchester (LPA LHASC). Arora, *V. K. Krishna Menon*, 38–40.

- [31] 'V. K. Krishna Menon', 10 Jun. 1940, P&J (S) 1363, BL KM.
- [32] Owen, *British Left and India*, 258.
- [33] 'COMMUNIST ACTIVITY', 11 Apr. 1941, KV/2/2509-3.
- [34] Curry, *Security Service*, 349.
- [35] 'V. K. Krishna Menon's Activities', 5 Aug. 1941; 'Reactions to the release of NEHRU, AZAD, and others of the Indian Political Prisoners', 9 Dec. 1941, P&J (S) 49/25, BL KM.
- [36] IPI note to Fulford, 18 May 1942, KV/2/2510-5.
- [37] Hollis to Ball, 2 Jan. 1942, KV/2/2510-8.
- [38] Ball to Fulford, 30 May 1942, KV/2/2510-5.
- [39] Linlithgow to Amery, 30 Nov. 1942, compiled in Mansergh, *Transfer of Power 1942-1947*, Vol. 3, 325
- [40] Amery to Robertson, 12 Nov. 1942, POL (S) 2409 1942, BL, KM.
- [41] The Labour Party was instinctively anti-imperialist, particularly in relation to India. Attlee, however, along with other leading members of his cabinet, such as Ernest Bevin, Herbert Morrison and Albert Alexander, remained attached to the allure of empire. Morrison shocked Labour followers in January 1946 with his reference to 'the jolly old Empire'. *The Times*, 12 Jan. 1946; Morgan, *Labour in Power*, 193-94; Moore, *Escape from Empire*, 338.
- [42] Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru, 1889-1947*, 311.
- [43] Brecher, *Nehru*, 122.
- [44] Arora, *V. K. Krishna Menon*, 71.
- [45] Menon's meeting with Molotov also attracted the attention of the US State Department. See 'US Embassy enquiry to J. C. Curry', 10 Dec. 1946, KV/2/2511-2.
- [46] Pethick Lawrence to Wavell, 1 Nov. 1946, in Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. 8, 858-59.
- [47] Pethick Lawrence to Attlee, 30 Nov. 1946, in Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. 9, 233.
- [48] Mountbatten to Listowel, 25 Jul. 1947, in Mansergh, *Transfer of Power* Vol. 12, 331.
- [49] Glynn, "'An Untouchable in the Presence of Brahmins": Lord Wavell's Disastrous Relationship with Whitehall', 659-63.
- [50] Ziegler, *Mountbatten*, 354.
- [51] 'Minute's of Viceroy's Thirty Ninth staff meeting', 6 June 1947, in Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. 11; Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, 88.
- [52] 'Report on the Last Viceroyalty, Part F, 25 July-15 August 1947', DO 142/364.
- [53] Mountbatten to Attlee, 10 July 1947, PREM 8/545.
- [54] Nehru to Attlee, 11 July 1947, PREM 8/545.
- [55] Attlee to Nehru, 17 July 1947, in Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. 12, 214-15.
- [56] Mountbatten to Listowel, 25 Jul. 1947, in Mansergh, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. 12, 331.
- [57] 'Statement to be made by D.G. at J.I.C. meeting', 1 Aug. 1947, KV/2/2512-20. No record of Sillitoe's memorandum appears in the JIC's papers. As has been noted elsewhere, however, discussion of Menon's activities, and the question of communist influence at the Indian High Commission, was deemed so sensitive by the JIC that it was often not recorded. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 443.
- [58] A note by Ashton Gwatkin, 12 Aug. 1947, FO 371/65574.
- [59] British officials in India destroyed significant amounts of intelligence material prior to the transfer of power in August 1947. Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, 114.
- [60] 'Consultation with India and Pakistan on Foreign Affairs', 7 Aug. 1947, FO 371/65574.
- [61] Note by Ashton Gwatkin, 12 Aug. 1947, FO 371/65574.
- [62] Note by Ashton Gwatkin, 15 Aug. 1947, FO 371/65574. Likewise, Major-General Gerald Templar, director of military intelligence at the War Office, informed the JIC in mid-August that the British chiefs of staff had ordered that India and Pakistan 'receive only such secret and top-secret information as was necessary for their immediate needs'. 'Interchange of Intelligence with India and Pakistan', JIC (47) 54th Meeting (O), 20 Aug. 1947, CAB 159/1.

- [63] The Labour government went to considerable lengths after 1945 to cultivate close relations with the older white dominions. Morgan, *Labour in Power*, 188.
- [64] Note by Ashton Gwatkin, 15 Aug. 1947, FO 371/65574.
- [65] Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru, 1947–1956*, 140–141.
- [66] ‘India’s Relations with the Commonwealth’, 10 Nov. 1948, CAB 129/30. Menon’s desire that India remain within the Commonwealth was not reflected in the wider Congress Party. Brecher, *India and World Politics*, 18.
- [67] Cripps to Nehru, 28 Apr. 1949, CAB 127/43.
- [68] Black, “‘The Bitterest Enemies’”, 44.
- [69] Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, 116.
- [70] Negative vetting, which began in 1948, eventually saw twenty-five civil servants dismissed, twenty-five resign while under investigation and a further eighty-eight transferred to non-sensitive posts. None was publicly named. In the United States, over 9000 Federal government employees lost their jobs during the McCarthy era in late 1940s and early 1950s, and a further 15,000 resigned while under investigation. All were publicly named. ‘Making Whitehall Mole-Proof’, *The Economist*, 5 June 1982; ‘Civil Service: Exclusion of Communists and Fascists from Certain Branches’, 25 Mar. 1948, CAB 128/12.
- [71] Sillitoe, *Cloak without Dagger*, xvi.
- [72] JIC (47) 63rd Mtg, 19 Sept. 1947, DEFE 32.
- [73] Noel-Baker to Attlee, 28 July 1948, PREM 8/1343. The Indian government was invited to the second Commonwealth Security Officers conference, in London, in May 1951. Although concerned that ‘disadvantages, both from a political and a security point of view’ might result from this change of policy, the British rationalised that ‘[t]he longer we postpone inviting them [India] to such a conference the more difficult it will be to bring them in without embarrassment’. Liesching to Nye, 20 Feb. 1951, PREM 8/1343.
- [74] In the wake of the Commonwealth Security conference, MI5 was asked to rank the dominions in order of security. Only Canada was deemed first rate, while Australia, New Zealand and South Africa trailed behind. Predictably, India, Pakistan and Ceylon were relegated to the bottom of the security pile. Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*, 115.
- [75] See Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence*.
- [76] French, *Liberty or Death*, 97–101.
- [77] In anticipation of a ‘political’ Indian assuming control over the Home Ministry, over the course of 1945 and 1946 the IB had systematically ‘weeded’ its registry of files on nationalist politicians. Joking with Nehru about this operation in September 1946, Lord Wavell recorded: ‘I asked how he [Nehru] was getting on with the D.I.B.: he said, “Quite all right, they have destroyed all the compromising papers.” I said, “Yes, I told them to make sure of that”, and he laughed.’ See Moon, *Wavell*, entry for 5 Sept. 1946, 347. See also, Aldrich, ‘Value of Residual Empire’, 254.
- [78] In terms of its operational remit, the transfer of power had little impact on IB. As Richard Popplewell has noted, ‘It is significant that when the British left India . . . [the] Intelligence Bureau continued under the same name and with the same anti-Communist aims’. Popplewell, “‘Lacking Intelligence’”, 349.
- [79] In January 1947, back in London the JIC bemoaned the fact that the flow of intelligence from India had become so poor that they were ‘no longer able to advise the Chiefs of Staff fully on the implications of future developments in that country’. JIC (47) 2 (0) (Final), ‘India—Organisation for Intelligence’, 4 Jan. 1947, CAB 159/1.
- [80] French, *Liberty or Death*, 257–59.
- [81] *Ibid.*, 280.
- [82] ‘Visit of Captain Liddell (Security Service) to the Middles East’, Confidential Annex to JIC (47) 33rd Meeting (0), 9 June 1947, CAB 159/1.
- [83] *Ibid.*

- [84] Murphy, 'Creating a Commonwealth Intelligence Culture', 107–08, 136–37.
- [85] A significant proportion of MI5 officers had served in India in some capacity. The service's former director general, Sir David Petrie, for example, was a veteran of the DIB. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 137.
- [86] 'Visit of Captain Liddell (Security Service) to the Middles East', Confidential Annex to JIC (47) 33rd Meeting (0), 9 June 1947, CAB 159/1.
- [87] The success of MI5's Indian SLO was instrumental in the JIC approving the recommendation made by Sir Percy Sillitoe in November 1947 to approach Pakistan with a view to placing an SLO in Karachi. 'Security Service Representative in Pakistan', JIC (47) 75th Meeting (O), 5 Nov. 1947, CAB 159/2.
- [88] Philip Murphy's work on colonial intelligence operations has traced the evolution of the SLO system across Africa and Asia in the wake of decolonisation. See Murphy, 'Intelligence and Decolonization'; 'Creating a Commonwealth Intelligence Culture'.
- [89] In contrast to MI5, SIS failed to endear itself to the IB following the transfer of power. Alex Kellar, head of the Security Service's 'E' or 'Overseas' branch, noted in July 1951, that the 'D.I.B were particularly irritated, following the grant of commonwealth status, by the activities of M.I.6 personnel in India: two were in fact asked to leave'. A. J. Kellar minute, 2 July 1951, KV/2/2512-4. Concerns raised by Sir Archibald Nye, Britain's high commissioner in India, over SIS's operations in India eventually prompted the 'Attlee Directive'. Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 442. For a broader discussion of the directives impact on SIS, see Bower, *Perfect English Spy*, 219–20.
- [90] Roger Hollis to Sir Burke Trend, 13 Nov. 1965, CO 1035/171.
- [91] Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 481.
- [92] Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru, 1947–1956*, 47–48.
- [93] Noel-Baker to Nye, 15 March 1949, DO 121/71.
- [94] Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 443.
- [95] 'Inner Circle', 19 Jan. 1949, DO 142/363.
- [96] Note of a conversation between MI5 and Barker and Jenkin, 15 June 1949, KV/2/2512-20.
- [97] Noel Baker to Attlee, 2 March 1949, DO 121/71.
- [98] Note by Liddell, 31 May 1949, KV/2/2512-1.
- [99] 'The India League', 30 May 1949, KV/2/2512-20.
- [100] Note by Liddell, 31 May 1949, KV/2/2512-1.
- [101] 'The India League', 30 May 1949, KV/2/2512-20.
- [102] Sillitoe to Chief Constable, County Durham, 24 Feb. 1950, KV/2/2512-18.
- [103] See 'Questionnaire for Colonel Stephens', 26 Nov. 1948; 'The Circle' manifesto, undated, KV2/1847.
- [104] 'Kwame Nkrumah', June 1948, KV2/1847.
- [105] 'Johnstone M. Kenyatta', undated, KV2/1787.
- [106] Sillitoe to B. M. de Quehen, 21 Aug. 1951, KV2/1788.
- [107] Note by H. Loftus Brown, 10 Nov. 1952, KV2/1788.
- [108] Goodman and Pincher, 'Clement Attlee, Percy Sillitoe and Security Aspects of the Fuchs Case', 68–71.
- [109] Andrew, *Her Majesty's Secret Service*, 687.
- [110] 'Security in India, Pakistan and Ceylon', JIC (49) 70th Meeting, 14 July 1949, CAB 159/6.
- [111] 'V. K. Krishna Menon', 10 March 1950, KV/2/2512-18.
- [112] Costley-White to Shaw, 14 March 1951, KV/2/2512-16.
- [113] Unhappy with Noel-Baker's indecision and administrative shortcomings, Attlee had replaced him with Gordon Walker, then parliamentary under secretary at the CRO, in February 1950. Garner, *Commonwealth Office*, 282.
- [114] For an insight into MI5's opinion of Dutt, see Thurlow, "'A Very Clever Capitalist Class': British Communism and State Surveillance", 1–21.

- [115] Note on a conversation between Sillitoe and Gordon Walker, 17 Apr. 1951, KV/2/2512-15/16.
- [116] Note by U'ren, 2 Apr. 1951, KV/2/2512-2/3.
- [117] Note on a conversation between Sillitoe and Gordon Walker, 17 Apr. 1951, KV/2/2512-15/16.
- [118] Ibid.
- [119] Garner, *Commonwealth Office*, 299.
- [120] Nye's successor as Britain's high commissioner to India, Sir Alexander Clutterbuck, noted that, Nehru aside, Menon 'has no friends here [India] and no-one trusts him'. Clutterbuck to Saville Garner, 21 Oct. 1954, KV/2/2514-3.
- [121] 'Statement made by D.G. of MI5 at JIC meeting, 1 Aug. 1947', KV/2/2512-20.
- [122] George, *Krishna Menon*, 155.
- [123] Attlee, the first British premier to visit MI5 headquarters, established a close rapport with Sillitoe, who enjoyed readier access to Downing Street than any of his successors in the twentieth century. Sillitoe subsequently reflected that he 'was most fortunate in having the privilege of working under Mr. Attlee, a man whose unfailing kindness and consideration I could always rely on'. Sillitoe, *Cloak without Dagger*, 176; Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 333.
- [124] Note on a conversation between Sillitoe and Attlee, 7 May 1951, KV/2/2512-13.
- [125] 'The India League', 30 May 1949, KV/2/2512-20.
- [126] Nye to Liesching, 28 Dec. 1950, FO 371/92925.
- [127] Note by Kellar, 2 July 1951 KV/2/2512-4.
- [128] Mullik, *My Years with Nehru*, 57.
- [129] Given their shared concern over Menon's links with British communism, MI5's Alex Kellar expressed the 'hope that Mullik will help to alter Nehru's views' in relation to the High Commissioner. A. J. Kellar minute on Nye's approach to Indians, 2 July 1951, 'KV/2/2512-4.
- [130] Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 444-45.
- [131] Maxwell, *India's China War*, 335.
- [132] Mullik, *My Years with Nehru*, 57.
- [133] Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 445-6.
- [134] MI5 SLOs in New Delhi channelled information on Menon back to London from 'completely reliable' Indian sources. In June 1950, for example, one report, which undoubtedly originated in the IB, claimed that Menon was acting in league with Moscow to strengthen Indo-Soviet ties. See, for example, E. R. Kitchen to Director General, 4 Aug. 1950, KV/2/2512-17.
- [135] Nye's opinion was regarded as particularly valuable given the close ties that he had forged with Nehru while serving as governor of Madras before serving as high commissioner in New Delhi. In the opinion of one informed observer, Nye's 'friendship with Nehru . . . was equalled by no other diplomatic representative at any time'. Garner, *Commonwealth Office*, 310.
- [136] Shaw to S.L.O New Delhi, 2 May 1951, KV/2/2512-13; Shaw to Sillitoe, 25 Apr. 1951, KV/2/2512-3.
- [137] U'ren to S.L.O New Delhi, 28 May 1951, KV/2/2512-10.
- [138] Note by U'ren, 28 Jun. 1951, KV/2/2512-4.
- [139] Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru, 1947-1956*, 142.
- [140] Note by U'ren, 2 Apr. 1951, KV/2/2512-2/3; 'Inside Information', *Daily Graphic*, 3 Apr. 1951, KV/2/2512-1. MI5 had monitored Menon's involvement in a series of 'doubtful deals', including the export of motor cars and refrigerators to India through the Bachraj Trading Company Ltd. A note on a conversation between Sillitoe and Gordon Walker, 17 Apr. 1951, KV/2/2512-15/16.
- [141] In January 1950, Sir Percy Sillitoe had established a new division within MI5, the Overseas Service (OS), under Sir John Shaw, a former colonial administrator. Sillitoe envisioned that the OS would both improve the co-ordination of imperial security, and increase his own control over it. However, many MI5 directors saw the OS as an unnecessary interposition between the SLOs and intelligence officers, and Sillitoe's successor, Dick White, had it closed down. See Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, 447.
- [142] Note by Kellar, 2 Jul. 1951, KV/2/2512-4.

- [143] Nye to Liesching, 8 Nov. 1951, KV/2/2513-10.
- [144] Liesching to Nye, 1 Jan. 1952, KV/2/2513-10.
- [145] Menon's abuse of luminal was well known to the British. See Gordon Walker, *Political Diaries*, 241.
- [146] Note by Spooner, 24 Jan. 1951, KV/2/2512-16; Brown, *Nehru*, 248.
- [147] Nye to Liesching, 8 Nov. 1951, KV/2/2513-10.
- [148] Mathai, *Reminiscences of the Nehru Age*, 165.
- [149] Note by U'ren, 11 Dec. 1951, KV/2/2513-10.
- [150] Nye to Liesching, 8 Nov. 1951, KV/2/2513-10.
- [151] Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru, 1947–1956*, 141–43.
- [152] Nye to Liesching, 8 Nov. 1951, KV/2/2513-10.
- [153] Liesching to Nye, 1 Jan. 1952, KV/2/2513-10.
- [154] Note by U'ren, 2 Apr. 1951, KV/2/2512-2/3.
- [155] Saville Garner monthly letter No. 16, 8 Jul. 1952, DO 133/56; Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru, 1947–1956*, 144; Arora, *Menon*, 111.
- [156] 'Mr. Kher in London', 14 July 1952, *The Times*.
- [157] Note by Spooner, 8 Jul. 1952, KV/2/2513-8; 'The Present Position and Views of Krishna Menon', 19 Jul. 1952, KV/2/2513-5.
- [158] U'ren to Costley-White, 29 May 1953, KV/2/2514-8; Saville Garner to Combie, 9 Feb. 1954, DO 35/9014.
- [159] Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru, 1947–1956*, 144.
- [160] Saville Garner to Clutterbuck, 11 Oct. 1954, KV/2/2514-5; Roberts to Saville Garner, 11 Oct. 1954, FO 371/112194.
- [161] No evidence has yet emerged that links Menon with Soviet intelligence services prior to the 1962. Much has recently been made of active measures undertaken by the KGB in India during the 1960s, which looked to promote Menon's political fortunes, and which on one occasion, in 1967, involved the covert funding of his election expenses. However, it is as well to note that at this time the KGB were simultaneously attempting to advance the interests of seemingly every significant figure on the left-centre of the ruling Congress Party, including, among others, Gulzarilal Nanda, Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi. If anything, the paucity of evidence linking Menon to KGB tends to confirm both his ideological ambivalence, and the fact that from late 1962 he was no longer a significant player in the Indian politics. See Andrew and Mitrokhin, *Mitrokhin Archive II*, 314–22; Stein, *India and the Soviet Union*, 237.
- [162] Hennessy, *Secret State*, 79.
- [163] Costley-White to Kitchin, 19 Oct. 1954, KV/2/2514-5; note by Kitchin, 25 Oct. 1954, KV/2/2514-1.
- [164] Snelling to Saville Garner, 25 June 1962, DO 189/371.

References

- Ahmed, Mesbahuddin. *The British Labour Party and the Indian Independence Movement, 1917–1939*. New York: Envoy, 1987.
- Aldrich, Richard J. 'Imperial Rivalry: British and American Intelligence in Asia, 1942–1946', *Intelligence and National Security* 3, no. 1 (1988): 5–55.
- . "'The Value of Residual Empire': Anglo-American Intelligence Co-Operation in Asia after 1945". In *Intelligence, Defence and Diplomacy: British Policy in the Post-War World*, edited by Richard J. Aldrich and Michael F. Hopkins. London: Frank Cass, 1994.
- . 'American Intelligence and the British Raj: The OSS, the SSU and India, 1942–1947'. *Intelligence and National Security* 13, no.1 (1998): 132–64.
- . *Intelligence and the War against Japan: Britain, America and the Politics of Secret Service*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

- . *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence*. London: John Murray, 2001.
- Andrew, Christopher J. *Her Majesty's Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community*. London: Sceptre, 1986.
- . *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5*. London: Allen Lane, 2009.
- Andrew, Christopher J. and Vasili Mitrokhin. *The Mitrokhin Archive II: The KGB and the Wider World*. London: Penguin, 2005.
- Arora, K. C. *Indian Nationalist Movement in Britain, 1930–1949*. New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1992.
- . *V. K. Krishna Menon: A Biography*. New Delhi: Sanchar Publishing House, 1998.
- Black, Lawrence. “‘The Bitterest Enemies of Communism’: Labour Revisionists, Atlanticism and the Cold War’. *Contemporary British History* 15, no. 3 (2001): 26–62.
- Bower, Tom. *The Perfect English Spy: Sir Dick White and the Secret War 1935–90*. London: Heinemann, 1995.
- Brecher, Michael. *Nehru: A Political Biography*. London: Oxford University Press, 1961.
- . *India and World Politics: Krishna Menon's View of the World*. London: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- Brown, Judith M. *Nehru: A Political Life*. London: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Campbell-Johnson, Alan. *Mission with Mountbatten*. New York: Atheneum, 1986.
- Darwin, John. *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World*. London: Macmillan, 1988.
- Chakravarty, Suhash. *V. K. Krishna Menon and the India League, 1925–47*. 2 vols. New Delhi: Har-Anand, 1997.
- . *Crusader Extraordinary: Krishna Menon and the India League, 1932–36*. New Delhi: India Research Press, 2006.
- Curry, John. *The Security Service, 1908–1945: The Official History*. London: Public Record Office, 1999.
- French, Patrick. *Liberty or Death: India's Journey to Independence and Division*. London: HarperCollins, 1997.
- Garner, Joe. *The Commonwealth Office, 1925–68*. London: Heinemann, 1978.
- George, T. J. S. *Krishna Menon: A Biography*. London: Cape, 1964.
- Glynn, Irial. “‘An Untouchable in the Presence of Brahmins’: Lord Wavell's Disastrous Relationship with Whitehall during His Time as Viceroy to India, 1943–1947’. *Modern Asian Studies* 41, no. 3 (2007): 639–63.
- Goodman, Michael S. and Chapman Pincher. ‘Clement Attlee, Percy Sillitoe and the Security Aspects of the Fuchs Case’. *Contemporary British History* 19, no. 1 (2005): 68–71.
- Gopal, Sarvepalli. (ed.) *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, First Series*, Vol. 7. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1975.
- . *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, Vol. 1, 1889–1947. London: Cape, 1975.
- . *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, Vol. 2, 1947–1956. London: Cape, 1979.
- Gordon Walker, Patrick. *Political Diaries, 1932–1971*. London: The Historians Press, 1991.
- Hennessy, Peter. *The Secret State: Whitehall and the Cold War*. London: Allen Lane, 2002.
- Inder Singh, Anita. *The Limits of British Influence: South Asia and the Anglo-American Relationship, 1947–56*. London: St Martin's Press, 1993.
- Mansergh, Nicholas. *Transfer of Power 1942–1947*, Vol. 3, *Reassertion of Authority, Gandhi's Fast and the Succession to the Viceroyalty, 21 September 1942–12 June 1943*. London: HMSO, 1971.
- . *Transfer of Power 1942–1947*, Vol. 8, *The Interim Government, 3 July–1 November 1946*. London: HMSO, 1979.
- . *Transfer of Power 1942–1947*, Vol. 9, *The Fixing of a Time Limit, 4 November 1946–22 March 1947*. London: HMSO, 1980.

- . *Transfer of Power 1942–1947*, Vol. 11, *The Mountbatten Viceroyalty Announcement and Reception of the 3 June Plan, 31 May–7 July 1947*. London: HMSO, 1982.
- . *Transfer of Power 1942–1947*, Vol. 12, *The Mountbatten Viceroyalty: Princes, Partition and Independence, 8 July–15 August 1947*. London: HMSO, 1983.
- Mathai, M. O. *Reminiscences of the Nehru Age*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing, 1978.
- Maxwell, Neville. *India's China War*. London: Pelican, 1972.
- Moon, Penderel, ed. *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Moore, R. J. *Escape from Empire: The Attlee Government and the Indian Problem*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.
- Morgan, Kenneth O. *Labour in Power, 1945–1951*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.
- Mullik, B. N. *My Years with Nehru, 1948–1964*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1972.
- Murphy, Philip. 'Intelligence and Decolonization: The Life and Death of the Federal Intelligence and Security Bureau, 1954–63'. *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 29, no. 2 (2001): 101–30.
- . 'Creating a Commonwealth Intelligence Culture: The View from Central Africa 1945–1965'. *Intelligence and National Security* 17, no. 3 (2002): 131–62.
- Owen, Nicholas. *The British Left and India: Metropolitan Anti-Imperialism, 1885–1947*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Popplewell, Richard J. 'The Surveillance of Indian Revolutionaries in Great Britain and on the Continent, 1905–1914'. *Intelligence and National Security* 3, no. 1 (1988): 56–76.
- . *Intelligence and Imperial Defence: British Intelligence and the Defence of the Indian Empire, 1904–1924*. London: Frank Cass, 1995.
- . "'Lacking Intelligence": Some Reflections on Recent Approaches to British Counter-Insurgency, 1900–1960'. *Intelligence and National Security* 10, no. 2 (1995).
- Ram, Janaki. *V. K. Krishna Menon: A Personal Memoir*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Rathbone, Richard. 'Police Intelligence in Ghana in the Late 1940s and 1950s'. *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 21, no. 3 (1993): 107–28.
- Rimington, Stella. *Open Secret: The Autobiography of the Former Director-General of MI5*. London: Arrow, 2002.
- Sillitoe, Sir Percy. *Cloak without Dagger*. London: Cassell, 1955.
- Stein, Arthur. *India and the Soviet Union: The Nehru Era*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1969.
- . "'A Very Clever Capitalist Class": British Communism and State Surveillance 1939–45'. *Intelligence and National Security* 12, no. 2 (1997): 1–21.
- Ziegler, Philip. *Mountbatten: The Official Biography*. London: Guild Publishing, 1985.