

The Information Research Department,  
British Covert Propaganda, and the Sino-  
Indian War of 1962: Combatting  
Communism and Courting Failure?

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## ABSTRACT

Britain's post-war interventions in former colonial territories remain a controversial area of contemporary history. In the case of India, recent releases of official records in the United Kingdom and South Asia have revealed details of British government anti-communist propaganda activity in the subcontinent during the Cold War period. This article focuses attention on covert or unattributable propaganda conducted in India by the Foreign Office's Information Research Department (IRD). It specifically examines the 1960s: a time between the outbreak of the Sino-Indian border war in 1962, and the Indian general election of 1967, when IRD operations peaked. The Indian government welcomed British support in an information war waged against Communist China, but cooperation between London and New Delhi quickly waned. Britain's propaganda initiative in India lacked strategic coherence, and cut across the grain of local resistance to anti-Soviet material. The British Government found itself running two separate propaganda campaigns in the subcontinent: one focused on Communist China, and declared to the Indian government; and a second, secret programme, targeting the Soviets. In this context, Whitehall found it difficult to implement an integrated and effective anti-communist propaganda offensive in India.

Key words: Information Research Department; India; China; Sino-Indian War; propaganda.

Whitehall's post-war interventions in Britain's former colonial territories remain a controversial area of contemporary history. In the case of India, the recent release of official source-material in the United Kingdom and South Asia opens up debates about the nature of British anti-communist activity in the subcontinent during the Cold War period.<sup>1</sup> This article focuses on one aspect of Britain's relationship with

India: covert or unattributable propaganda conducted by the Foreign Office's Information Research Department (IRD).<sup>2</sup> It specifically examines the 1960s: a period between the outbreak of the Sino-Indian border war in 1962, and the Indian general election of 1967, when IRD operations peaked.

In 1962, an ill-prepared and under resourced Indian government welcomed British support in an information war waged against Communist China. However, cooperation between London and New Delhi in the propaganda field quickly evaporated. British information officers attempted to work with Indian officials to address concerns that China's propagandists were outmanoeuvring New Delhi, but policy implementation on the ground was often muddled and ineffective. It lacked strategic coherence and cut across the grain of an Indian prohibition on propaganda operations directed against the Soviet Union. From the late 1950s, an increase in tension between Moscow and Beijing, which would culminate in the Sino-Soviet split, provided New Delhi with a powerful strategic rationale for courting the USSR's favour. The British Government's position that Soviet propaganda represented the greater long-term threat to India, led to a diminution in the UK information effort expended on China, and to New Delhi feeling unsupported. In this policy context, the British found it difficult to implement a coherent and integrated propaganda campaign in India.

Between 1954 and 1962, a long-simmering border dispute between India and China saw bilateral relations deteriorate from a position of peaceful co-existence and mutual amity to a state of open hostility and war. Propaganda became an important element in the Sino-Indian conflict, and New Delhi's passive and reactive information policy saw India flounder in a battle for hearts and minds. In Whitehall, British officials judged that their Indian colleagues failed to fully comprehend the

power of propaganda as an instrument of warfare. As we shall see, the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), which oversaw British policy in South Asia, and the Foreign Office (FO), which supervised covert information operations, responded to the Sino-Indian War by intensifying the United Kingdom's propaganda effort in the subcontinent.<sup>3</sup> Britain's propagandists provided expert advice and material support to the Indian government. However, London's plans to exploit the Sino-Indian border war to discredit Soviet as well as Chinese communism in South Asia met strong local resistance.

This article explores three themes. Primarily, it offers the first detailed archival account of work undertaken by the Information Research Department in India. The new evidence presented demonstrates that, as during other campaigns mounted to counter political ideology overseas, British authorities sanctioned illegal and high-risk operations to undermine local communist support. In doing so, this article situates the IRD both within its broader Whitehall context and in relation to political activity conducted in India. Regarding the former, it advances the argument that impetus for controversial British operations was not confined to London and upper echelons of the so-called secret state. Stimulus for covert propaganda also came from British outposts abroad and the diplomats tasked with upholding the United Kingdom's interests. With regard to the latter theme, it broadens existing understandings of British psychological operations in India by revealing the hidden hand of the IRD.

Secondly, this article seeks to examine British conceptualisations of propaganda within former colonial territories, and unattributable propaganda more specifically. It advances existing understandings of the IRD beyond its role in an East-West binary. Comparatively little attention has been given to the Department's impact inside an

expanding community of non-aligned nations during an era of decolonization. There has been some excellent scholarship published on the IRD's foreign and domestic activity.<sup>4</sup> Comparatively little attention, however, has been given to IRD operations overseas within former British colonial possessions. Carruthers, and Lashmar and Oliver, have undertaken path-breaking studies examining IRD interventions in Indonesia, Cyprus, and Northern Ireland. However, these have been framed predominantly in a counter-insurgency context.<sup>5</sup> North American scholars, including Eric Pullin and Jason Parker, have interrogated the work of the United States' Cold War propaganda agencies in South Asia.<sup>6</sup> This article breaks new ground by demonstrating the place of British information strategy in the subcontinent during the early years of the Cold War, thereby contributing a new dimension to broader studies of British diplomacy in India.

Thirdly, some consideration is given to the extent to which Whitehall's overseas information policy underestimated the power of local agency and exaggerated the impact of external influence. There is evidence that British propaganda strategy was predicated on a series of stereotypes about leadership and organisational attributes in Indian society, and overstated the effectiveness of local elites as agents of British influence. Diplomatic historians have utilised state archives to advance broad strategic explanations for the formulation and implementation of national interests. However, such archives also lend support to arguments presented most prominently in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, that the West fashioned a broadly negative image of the East as a counterpoint to positive conceptions of Occidental values.<sup>7</sup> This article suggests that Britain officials demonstrated orientalist traits in formulating their approach to unattributable propaganda in South Asia. More work is needed to fully substantiate the case that orientalism shaped British propaganda policy in the

subcontinent. Nonetheless, prominent British officials were predisposed to ‘save’ the ‘vast, immature and half-educated’ Indian intelligentsia from the kind of ‘woolly minded’ thinking that constituted ‘easy prey’ for communist propaganda.<sup>8</sup> Indians saw matters rather differently.

## I.

In a bureaucratic or political framework, propaganda assumes three principal forms: white, grey, and black. White propaganda is undertaken openly with State support apparent and declared. It seldom incorporates material obtained from covert intelligence sources. The negative and manipulative associations attached to the term ‘propaganda’ meant that it was invariably presented by official British agencies as publicity work. This propaganda represented the mainstay of the propaganda effort undertaken in India by the British Information Service (BIS) and the British Council. Keeping India out of the communist-bloc represented a ‘cardinal point’ of post-war British foreign policy. In pursuit of this objective, overt British information agencies in the subcontinent, as one prominent British high commissioner in India, Sir Archibald Nye, underlined, came to represent ‘the spearhead of our [Britain’s] attack on Communism.’<sup>9</sup>

Throughout Asia, the IRD maintained close co-operation with overt British information organisations. In large part, this intimate relationship was driven by an acceptance inside IRD that the impact of its anti-communist material would be maximised only if it were juxtaposed with pro-Western publicity work undertaken by BIS and the British Council. In November 1951, the Cabinet Overseas Information Committee noted, ‘...experience shows that negative propaganda fails largely of [sic]

its effect unless it is accompanied by at least as great a volume of positive material, that is to say, material showing what is going on in the Western democracies and what hopes their example offers to the world.’<sup>14</sup>

In India, successive directors of the BIS, beginning with W. F. King in the early 1950s, cultivated strong and effective liaison arrangements with IRD colleagues.<sup>16</sup> Equally, having worked hard to establish its reputation as an organisation ‘remarkably free of the propaganda stigma which attaches to certain other foreign information agencies’, and the United States Information Agency, in particular, the BIS determined not to compromise its effectiveness by becoming openly associated with ‘blatant, overt, or covert anti-Communist propaganda activity.’ The BIS was prepared to make ‘effective and discreet use’ of the IRD’s services. It was also painfully aware of the risks that working with the IRD entailed. ‘One false move,’ British officials acknowledged, ‘could undo the work of years.’<sup>17</sup>

Grey and black propaganda is more covert and opaque. In both instances, government involvement is elided. Use of grey propaganda, which constituted the mainstay of IRD activity in India, focuses on the dissemination of unattributable information. This was often derived from ‘open sources’, or publicly available information harvested from newspapers, journals, books, and the broadcast media on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Such propaganda was largely factual, although carefully crafted to promote a specific political agenda. It frequently manifested in government officials co-opting journalists and publishers to replay favourable material.

British propaganda work in South Asia was rooted in well-established imperial traditions that under the *Raj* had seen colonial officials cultivate the support of opinion formers. As scholars such as Chandrika Kaul have demonstrated, the

maintenance of British rule in India hinged on securing and retaining the support of local partners which, in turn, necessitated employing a pliant Anglo-Indian press to extoll the merits of empire and dampen nationalist sentiment.<sup>18</sup> The British discovered, however, that the power of the media does not correspond directly to the power of the message. From the 1930s, a nationalist press in the subcontinent that promoted a compelling narrative of *swaraj*, or independence, began to override the power of state propaganda.<sup>19</sup> Three decades later, British officials would encounter similar resistance when asking sceptical Indians to prioritise considerations of Cold War ideology over more immediate and pressing matters of national security.

Black propaganda, which involves influencing a target audience by means of deception or disinformation, is more complex and contentious, and carries a greater risk of ‘blowback’, or unintended and negative results. It is employed far less often than the white or grey varieties. At times, the IRD was involved in all three shades of propaganda in the Indian subcontinent. The focus of this article, however, is on the grey type that accounted for the majority of the time and effort invested by the Information Research Department in Cold War India.

## **II.**

Before examining IRD activity in the subcontinent, it is necessary to consider the wider political context in which a Foreign Office department concerned with combating Cold War communist propaganda came to be employed in non-aligned India. The Information Research Department was established at the end of February 1948, principally to counteract the siren call of communism amongst post-war western European states struggling to impose a degree of social and economic



cohesion. At an early stage, it was envisaged that IRD's work would grow to encompass a wider geographical remit, and 'require special application in the Middle East and Far Eastern countries.'<sup>21</sup> Drawing some of its funds from the Secret Vote, or intelligence and secret services budget, under the leadership of Ralph Murray, who had served in the Political Warfare Executive during the Second World War, the IRD rapidly built-up a broad network of contacts, or clients, amongst politicians, government officials, journalists, and trade unionists, both at home and abroad.

The IRD's terms of reference expanded considerably during the 1950s, and came to include operations directed at an extensive range of threats to Britain's strategic interests. At times, the Department was tasked with undermining pan-Arab nationalism, and put to work disrupting troublesome political regimes overseas, including that of President Sukarno in Indonesia.<sup>22</sup> Regional information offices were established in the Middle East and Asia, and set to work harmonizing British covert propaganda. At its zenith, in the mid-1960s, the IRD's London headquarters employed over 350 staff in geographical sections covering South East Asia, China, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Soviet Union.<sup>23</sup>

Within India, the IRD benefited from residual British information networks that had remained active until the very end of colonial rule in 1947. During the Second World War, the British mounted extensive covert propaganda operations in the subcontinent. Notably, the Viceroy of India, the Marquess of Linlithgow, utilised the Special Operations Executive (SOE), a clandestine warfare unit formed in 1940, in an effort to dampen nationalist sentiment, chiefly by placing unattributable articles supportive of Britain and the Allied war effort in vernacular newspapers.<sup>24</sup> Once the British had hauled down the Union Jack and departed from South Asia, India continued to matter in the corridors of Whitehall. Not least, in an era of European

decolonisation, the British government valued India's status as a prominent and moderating influence within the Afro-Asian Non-Aligned Movement.

Equally, the latent economic and military potential of India's hundreds-of-millions of citizens was seen as a valuable Cold War prize. As the world's largest democracy, India was viewed in London as an indispensable bulwark against the expansion of communism in Asia. After October 1949, India's currency as a beacon of Asian democracy increased substantially, when Mao Zedong's communists defeated their nationalist opponents and proclaimed the People's Republic of China (PRC). At the time, one British official in India emphasised that, 'there are two Capitals in the East which are assuming more and more importance, namely Peking and New Delhi, as here are to be found the governments who between them control the destinies of almost two-thirds of the total Asian population.'<sup>25</sup>

British anxiety at the external communist threat posed to India by the emergence of the PRC, was matched by concern at the nation's vulnerability to internal communist subversion. In 1948, the Communist Party of India (CPI) launched an armed insurgency centred on Telegana, in the south of the country. The Indian Army and the nation's security services managed to suppress the insurrection, which claimed over two thousand lives. By February 1950, India's communists had abandoned political violence and shifted to a strategy of seeking power through the ballot box.<sup>29</sup> Over the following decade, the left-leaning Congress Party of India's premier, Jawaharlal Nehru, dominated national politics. It was a rejuvenated CPI, however, that emerged as the Congress Party's principal electoral rival. A strong party organisation, ideological cachet amongst India's intelligentsia, and a generally left-of-centre political climate inside the subcontinent, all combined to make the Communists appear respectable and electable. In 1957, the communist share of the

vote in that year's Indian general election peaked at 9 per cent. More significantly, electors in the southern Indian state of Kerala became the first anywhere in the world to freely return a communist administration.<sup>30</sup>

Concurrently, the Indian government's decision to reinforce national security and boost economic development through closer and more constructive relations with its Chinese and Soviet neighbours, unsettled Whitehall. In October 1954, a state visit paid by Nehru to China paved the way for a Sino-Indian Treaty on Trade and Intercourse with Tibet, which incorporated the *Panch Sheel*, or Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. This committed India and China to uphold policies of mutual non-aggression; to respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity; to eschew interference in each other's domestic affairs; and, to pursue policies of peaceful coexistence. The treaty was also notable as the instrument under which India formally relinquished its ancient claim to special rights and privileges in Tibet.<sup>33</sup>

The flowering of Sino-Indian relations that followed, brought with it an increase in the amount and variety of Communist Chinese literature circulating in India. In March 1955, one BIS report grumbled that Indians appeared to be entirely unconcerned at the influx of communist propaganda entering the country across their northern border. 'There continues to be wide and enthusiastic reception for Chinese propaganda [in India] even at the highest levels,' one exasperated BIS officer observed, 'and a great deal more at the lower.'<sup>34</sup> Chinese propaganda was deemed 'particularly effective' by the British, as it focused on communist successes in combating problems all too familiar to most Indians, and chiefly those surrounding agrarian reform, endemic poverty, and petty corruption. Moreover, BIS analysis concluded that Chinese communist propaganda retained currency, and was 'widely acceptable' to Indians, because it originated from a nation that was 'held up as the

spearhead of Asian resurgence.’ Beijing’s propagandists were considered equally adept at ‘deliberately exploiting’ racial themes that touched on raw nerves in India, and which cast Britain and the United States in particular, as exploitative agents of “white imperialism.”<sup>35</sup>

It was the inroads being made by Soviet propaganda in India, however, that proved of paramount concern in London. In 1955, an exchange of state visits between Nehru and the Soviet premier, Nikita Khrushchev, invigorated New Delhi’s previously moribund relationship with Moscow. Soviet economic aid to India boomed. Politically, the Soviets garnered Indian goodwill by throwing their weight behind New Delhi’s position on the disputed state of Kashmir within the UN Security Council. In the cultural sphere, Soviet film festivals became a regular feature of Indian life; troupes of travelling Russian entertainers cross-crossed the country; the TASS news agency set up shop in Delhi; and heavily subsidised Soviet literature featured prominently on the shelves of Indian bookstores.<sup>36</sup>

Prominent Indians sympathetic to the West, such as the socialist turned conservative politician, Minocher Rustom ‘Minoo’ Masani, chastised Britain and the United States for doing ‘pathetically little’ to counter a proliferation of ‘fantastically cheap’ Soviet publications being ‘sold at every [Indian] street corner.’ In a single year, Masani noted, the Soviet People’s Publishing House, which had opened an office in Bombay, in western India, sold 300,000 discounted copies of the *Life of Joseph Stalin*. Prohibitively expensive British or American books on liberal political themes, such as Arthur Schlesinger’s *Vital Center*, struggled to run up Indian sales in excess of three figures. ‘The Soviet Government,’ Masani warned an American audience during a speech in Detroit, ‘is spending millions of rubles in India today to try and get the mind of the people on their side.’<sup>38</sup>

British officials in India attributed the success enjoyed by Soviet propaganda operations less to the inadequacies of local Western information activity, and more to New Delhi's supposed lassitude in confronting an insidious communist pincer movement that targeted the nation's social system from above and below. Faced with what the British considered to be a clear and present danger to state sovereignty, Indian officials were lambasted in Whitehall as evidencing a troublingly complacent and apathetic attitude to communism. Back in 1948, Alec Symon, Britain's deputy high commissioner, had lamented that India's intelligence chief, Tirupattur Gangadharam Sanjevi, 'seems to regard the [Communist] movement as purely internal nuisance to be classed with any other political body in India and he shows no signs of regarding Communism as an international conspiracy aimed at Sovietization of Asia and the World.'<sup>40</sup> A decade later, Whitehall remained perplexed at the Indian government's benign view of Soviet foreign policy.

The British conceded that, in fairness, Nehru's administrations had taken a firm line with the CPI, arresting Indian communists suspected of inciting civil disorder or engaging in political agitation. Externally directed communist subversion, however, seemed of little concern to India's national leadership. Indeed, it was the Pandora's box of communalism, and the risk that religious tensions might fracture Indian unity, that preoccupied Nehru. 'The danger to India ... is not communism,' the Indian premier was fond of reminding his civil servants. 'It is Hindu right-wing communalism.'<sup>41</sup> In such circumstances, British policymakers deemed it to be self-evident that London not only had a clear interest, but also an obligation, to save India from communism.

### III.

The IRD operation in India reached its zenith in the 1960s. As early as 1948, however, Christopher Mayhew, Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, and a leading figure in the IRD's creation, had begun working with colleagues in the Commonwealth Relations Office to strengthen the dissemination of unattributable anti-communist propaganda across South Asia.<sup>45</sup> By the following year, the CRO had established effective mechanisms for forwarding IRD material on to the British High Commission in New Delhi and, in return, furnishing the IRD with intelligence on local communist publications. Senior British officials, including the high commissioner, Archibald Nye, found a ready market for the IRD's anti-communist product among Indian colleagues. Haravu Venkatanarasimha Varadaraja Iengar, the Indian government's Home Secretary, and the senior civil servant responsible for internal security, proved to be an avid consumer of IRD literature.<sup>46</sup> A former stalwart of the pre-independence British colonial administration, Iengar was categorised by Nye as 'one of the ablest and most effective' operatives in Nehru's government and, more importantly, staunchly anti-communist.<sup>47</sup>

It was British diplomats on the ground in India, Nye included, and not Whitehall Mandarins back at home, that cracked the propaganda whip hardest. In May 1951, the disgruntled high commissioner found cause to gripe to the CRO at the inadequate support his mission had received in the communist counter propaganda field. It had been over a year, Nye protested, since his staff had asked for IRD material targeted at India's students and 'semi-educated classes.' Since then, Nye complained to Percival Liesching, Permanent Under-Secretary at the CRO, he had been fobbed off with assurances that 'the matter [was] under consideration' and that London was 'hoping

to get something out soon.’ Underlining his concern in a separate missive dispatched to Patrick Gordon-Walker, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Nye stated bluntly that, ‘half-hearted measures [in India] are...a waste of time and it is essential that the whole anti-Communist publicity campaign should be systematized and carried out with drive and energy if worth-while results are to be obtained.’<sup>48</sup>

In London, the High Commissioner’s warning hit home. The CRO made sure that Nye’s successors, Alexander Clutterbuck and Malcolm MacDonald, benefited from the establishment of more direct lines of communication with the IRD. In consequence, the volume of IRD literature reaching India increased substantially during the 1950s, and began to reach ever-wider circles of ‘friendly’ British contacts within Nehru’s government; the ruling Congress party; the armed forces; the press; and academia.<sup>49</sup> Not all IRD material dispatched to New Delhi hit the right note with its Indian audience. Much of IRD output that arrived in the subcontinent was of a generic anti-communist type, or based on examples of communist repression and tyranny drawn from Eastern Europe. Unsurprisingly, this proved of limited interest to Indian ‘customers’. IRD articles decrying the persecution of the Roman Catholic Church in Bulgaria, for example, vexed local British information staff. ‘Even the ablest Information Officer,’ the CRO was reminded, ‘cannot succeed in making a vital issue [of Bulgarian Catholicism] amongst his Indian contacts.’<sup>50</sup> The propaganda offensive in India, Whitehall was chided, would benefit were IRD to cast ‘a rather more critical and selective eye’ over the suitability of the publications it sent east of Suez.<sup>51</sup>

The IRD responded to criticism from British information officers in the field, and quickly replaced the short, well-documented, and utilitarian briefing notes, or *Basic Papers*, that it sent to India, with a more appropriate range of materials designed to

pique the interest of local opinion formers. The *Interpreter*, a monthly publication, aimed at national elites, proved especially popular with Indian contacts. It was offered to senior Indian government officials on the pretext that it was a British foreign service document, and that recipients would be privy to inside information not usually shared outside Whitehall. Notable for its tight prose and methodical anti-Communist analysis, the *Interpreter* featured an introduction not dissimilar to that of a broadsheet leader. Derived from the *Interpreter*, *Asian Analyst* proved another favourite with the IRD's Indian clients. It focused specifically on developments inside China, on Soviet and Chinese foreign policy, and the insidious actions of communist parties across Asia. The stable of IRD publications in India also came to include the *Digest* series. This pulled together short, punchy anti-communist stories that were readily quotable, and appeared sufficiently topical to pass as news.<sup>52</sup> In keeping with its status as a covert organisation, none of the IRD's output carried a publisher's imprint or was attributed to the British government.

Refinements made to IRD output reaped immediate dividends in India. Notably, British diplomats pulled off a significant coup by adding Bhola Nath Mullik to the distribution list for IRD material. In July 1950, Mullik had replaced Sanjevi as the head of India's intelligence agency, the Intelligence Bureau (IB). India's spy chief proved to be an avid consumer of IRD product, and received personal copies of the *Interpreter*, *Asian Analyst*, *Digest*, and *Trends in Communist Propaganda*.<sup>53</sup> Mullik was regarded as a particularly important asset by the IRD on account of his close personal relationship with Nehru, and his willingness to provide feedback on the type of propaganda material likely to resonate inside the Indian government. One British official noted that in developing counter-propaganda for Indian audiences, he had come to 'think of the D.I.B. [Mullick] being the perfect point d'appui.'<sup>54</sup>



Unattributable research papers produced by the IRD and the Foreign Office Research Department (FORD) were even channelled through India's Intelligence Bureau to other Indian government departments, in a process that enhanced the materials credibility immeasurably and further masked its British origin. 'There is evidence,' British officials crowed, 'that much of this [IRD literature] is read by Mr Nehru himself. By Sir N.R. Pillai [Secretary General of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Cabinet Secretary] and by the Home Secretary (Mr Pai).'<sup>55</sup>

Moreover, the connection formed between the IRD and India's intelligence service delivered benefits beyond government. The Intelligence Bureau assisted the British in placing a steady flow of unattributable anti-communist material produced by the IRD in mainstream Indian newspapers.<sup>57</sup> More broadly, as the 1950s came to a close, the British information officials in India expressed satisfaction that, 'we have in fact been making good use vis-a-vis Indian officials, including Mullik, of the [IRD] material on this subject which has reached us...' Whether such material was being digested by Nehru and his cabinet, and what effect, if any, it might have had on the Indian leaderships attitudes to the Soviet Union, and the danger posed by communist subversion, was, British officials conceded, 'much harder to say.'<sup>58</sup>

#### **IV.**

In the late summer of 1960, a change of British leadership in India, that saw Sir Paul Gore-Booth arrive in New Delhi as UK high commissioner, had a transformative effect on IRD operations in the subcontinent. On arriving in the Indian capital, Gore-Booth was immediately struck by the ubiquity of Soviet propaganda, and quickly concluded that the IRD should be employed more aggressively to counter communist information activity.<sup>67</sup> Wasting no time, in September, the new high commissioner asked the IRD to send one of its officers out to India to review Britain's counter-propaganda operation. Between March and April 1961, Josephine O'Connor Howe, who had earned a formidable reputation within the IRD for efficiency and directness, set to work on a root and branch assessment of the Department's activity.<sup>68</sup>

When O'Connor Howe's report landed on Gore-Booth's desk, it identified the British propaganda problem in India as one of weak and ineffective co-ordination between information agencies. Specifically, the covert anti-communist activity undertaken by the IRD, and the overt and 'positive' output celebrating liberal democracy and free enterprise that underpinned BIS' work, were deemed to be insufficiently integrated and complementary. To rectify matters, O'Connor-Howe argued for the deployment of a permanent IRD officer to work alongside BIS colleagues in New Delhi.<sup>71</sup> The IRD had been exploring ways of stationing 'field officers' overseas for some time. An escalation in Cold War tension at the beginning of the decade, following clashes between the Soviet Union and the United States over a range of issues from Cuba to Berlin, saw the IRD's role in combatting communist subversion acquire renewed currency in Whitehall. The Department's funding increased. It recruited additional staff. And, for the first time, the IRD found itself in a position to place its officers in British diplomatic missions overseas.<sup>72</sup>

By the end of 1962, twenty-five IRD field officers had been posted abroad. Their remit was to report on local communist activity; procure examples of communist propaganda; distribute IRD literature; and cultivate contacts willing to receive and disseminate IRD product. Two years later, the Department had over fifty staff serving across the globe.<sup>73</sup> India's status as a British foreign policy priority, allied to Gore-Booth's push for a more active IRD role in the subcontinent, ensured that New Delhi was placed at the forefront of the field officer initiative. In January 1962, Peter Joy, the first IRD officer posted to India, arrived in South Asia.

Operating covertly, and without the knowledge of the Indian government, ostensibly Joy's role was that of a publications officer in the BIS.<sup>74</sup> Initially, he struggled to expand the IRD's network of local contacts. Reluctant to compromise India's policy of Cold War non-alignment, and anxious to retain Soviet economic and political support, many officials in Nehru's government shied away from involvement in overtly anti-communist activity that was likely to antagonise Moscow. With the assistance of British information staff based in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, Joy embarked upon the 'slow and laborious' task of recruiting Indians to disseminate unattributable IRD material on a confidential basis. By the late summer of 1962, following months of hard work, he had acquired 60 Indian contacts, each of which was graded in terms of their individual influence and reliability.<sup>75</sup>

In October, the IRD's luck in India changed decisively for the better. That month, a border dispute between India and China that had smouldered since the end of the previous decade, erupted into open hostilities. The brief and bloody Sino-Indian border war saw India suffer a humiliating military defeat at the hands of its communist neighbour.<sup>76</sup> In Whitehall, British officials were as disconcerted at the ease with which China managed to outflank India in propaganda terms, as they were

with events on the battlefield. The ‘absolute consistency’ with which Beijing presented itself to international audiences as a victim of Indian aggression, one Foreign Office official observed, contrasted unfavourably with New Delhi’s ‘wavering and often self-contradictory’ performance in the publicity sphere.<sup>77</sup>

The British Information Service expressed grudging admiration for the manner in which Radio Peking’s English Service had shown itself to be ‘highly skilled’ in selectively quoting from the public statements of Indian leaders to portray its adversary as a belligerent warmonger. In a media operation that the BIS noted had “‘out-Goebbels Goebbels’”, Chinese state radio utilised the services of an Irishman ‘slightly reminiscent of Lord Haw Haw’, who returned to the theme of Indian aggression, ‘so repetitively that something must certainly stick in the minds of Asian/African listeners, if not of other peoples also.’<sup>78</sup> The British were especially concerned at the lack of sympathy and understanding that India had garnered in the developing world following the onset of the Sino-Indian border war. An apparent indifference to India’s plight amongst the nations of Africa and Asia was attributed, in part, to the imperious manner in which Nehru’s governments had conducted much of their diplomacy since 1947. Gore-Booth suggested that the border war had demonstrated to Indians that, ‘if you want goodwill from people in critical moments, you must not spend the rest of your time either ignoring them or loftily criticising the management of their affairs.’<sup>79</sup>

The scale of India’s military reversal at the hands of the Chinese served to amplify a disposition amongst Britain’s foreign service officers and propagandists, at home and abroad, to deny agency to their Indian colleagues, and to disparage the Indian government’s association with non-alignment and non-violence. British officials invariably portrayed their Indian counterparts as weak, naïve, and passive victims,

who required external direction to function effectively. Indeed, the paternalistic language and imperious tone employed by British diplomats at the time of the Sino-Indian War offers evidence in support of Said's critique of Orientalism. Whitehall's missions across the globe took a perverse sense of pleasure in India's predicament. Behind closed doors, British expressions of *schadenfreude* were couched in language that betrayed a thinly veiled sense of condescension towards, 'the inadequate public presentation... of the Indian case in regard to the frontier dispute with China.'<sup>80</sup>

At the very top of the British government, the Conservative prime minister, Harold Macmillan, reflected acidly that having suffered 'a bit of a Dunkirk' at the hands of China and been exposed to the harsh realities of power-politics, Nehru had assumed a, 'different tone from that [previously] adopted by the protagonist of non-resistance and "non-alignment."' India's leader, the British premier observed caustically, appeared to have undergone a transformation from 'an imitation of George Lansbury into a parody of Churchill.'<sup>81</sup> With obvious distaste, Macmillan confided to American officials that the Sino-Indian war would compel his government to assist, 'people [Indians] who for 12 years or more have attacked us ... like a camel looking down his nose at you'.<sup>82</sup> Macmillan's attitude was replicated across Whitehall. Having been recalled to London for talks in the wake of the border clash, Ronald Belcher, Britain's deputy high commissioner in India, returned to the subcontinent with, 'the impression ... of everyone's disliking and distrusting India – to such a degree that it seemed there was a danger of emotion being allowed more hand than reason in swaying our policies'. Belcher's discomfort at the level of anti-Indian sentiment in London was such, that he felt compelled to remind the CRO that 'the present Government of India's undoubtedly irritating characteristics of stubbornness and ungratefulness' ought not obscure the fact that Britain should offer India support

‘because it is in our own interest to do it.’<sup>83</sup>

Further afield, British representatives in Africa and Asia proved to be equally critical of India. In Mali, in West Africa, the British ambassador, Martin Le Quesne, expressed exasperation at the degree to which local Indian officials had meekly surrendered the propaganda initiative to China. Le Quesne advised Whitehall that the response of Indian envoys in Africa to the border conflict was ‘wet’ and defeatist. The Indian ambassador to Ghana, London was informed, ‘agree[d] wholeheartedly that the Indians had failed to play the good cards in their hand and had let the Chinese take all the tricks, but seemed to regard this as being the natural order of things. One of those unfortunate facts of life about which nothing could be done.’<sup>84</sup> British representatives in Asia were equally critical in their assessments of India’s performance in the information arena. In Indonesia, the British embassy in Djakarta reported that India’s ambassador, Apa Pant, was ‘almost at his wits’ end’ in trying to counter Indonesians’ willingness to accept China’s version of the border war. ‘Seen from here,’ the Djakarta embassy judged, ‘the Chinese have carried out an entirely successful propaganda exercise designed to fog and bemuse uninformed and semi-informed opinion. Their official statement at the outset of the fighting were almost automatically taken at face value here and the first impression thus created has not been weakened seriously by anything said or done by the Indians since.’<sup>85</sup>

Exasperated by India’s ineffectual attempts at influencing global opinion, the Foreign Office concluded starkly that, ‘the Chinese are much better at propaganda than the Indian...’ The Nehru government’s mishandling of the information dimension of the Sino-Indian war, as much as the military calamity that it came to represent, was taken as validation by British officials that Indians more generally were unsuited and ill-equipped to manage a modern conflict in which propaganda and

psychological warfare capabilities were of critical importance. In simple terms, the British reasoned that New Delhi did, 'not know how to put their case across ... and it looks as if it is going to take them a long time to learn how to do it.'<sup>86</sup> The organisation and operational effectiveness of India's publicity and information machinery certainly left much to be desired. Yet, Britain's approach to the Sino-Indian war in general, and India's information performance more specifically, was also undoubtedly informed by paternalist sentiment. Put simply, the British viewed their former Indian colony as a more passive and less dynamic nation than Communist China. Earlier in 1962, when referencing disparities in the relative economic performance of the two states, one Foreign Office official articulated a criticism of India that was aired all too frequently in the corridors of Whitehall. The road to modernity depended above all, the British argument went, on mobilizing the will and energy of the people, and whilst 'that upsurge of will and energy is certainly manifest in China: it does not yet seem to be very evident in India.'<sup>87</sup>

Harold Macmillan's government accepted that extending some form of British support to India in its conflict with China, whatever Whitehall's distaste for Nehru's foreign policymaking, was politically unavoidable. The British cabinet nevertheless bridled at committing its limited national economic and military resources to defend India. Strategically overextended prior to the onset of Sino-Indian hostilities, Britain recoiled from the prospect of becoming enmeshed in a shooting war with China that threatened disaster for its international interests and, above all, those in Hong Kong. Furnishing India with expertise and advice in the information realm offered London a means to assist New Delhi at little cost and minimal risk.<sup>88</sup> Accordingly, when meeting with Nehru in November 1962, Duncan Sandys, Macmillan's Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, emphasised Britain's willingness 'to help the

Indians in every way in the presentation of their case [on the border war].’ Noting that the UK had ‘a considerably developed network of Information Services’, Sandys confirmed to the Indian premier that London would ‘be very glad’ to work with his government in countering Chinese propaganda.<sup>89</sup>

In offering India the benefit of British expertise in counter-propaganda operations, Sandys was pushing against an open door. The Sino-Indian conflict found Indian government ministries, journalists, and research centres, clamouring for material on the inequities of Communist China, which Peter Joy and the IRD were only too willing to supply. As a first step, a newly formulated Indian government committee for ‘War Information and Counter-Propaganda’, that included representation from the IB, MEA, All-India Radio, and the Press Information Bureau, requested assistance from the BIS, which continued to act as cover for the IRD’s undeclared operations in India. Extra copies of the IRD’s stock publications on Chinese communism, including *China Topics* and *China Records*, were rushed out to the subcontinent to meet a welcome surge in Indian demand. A special supplement of the *Asian Analyst* was produced that addressed purported Chinese treachery in respect of the border conflict. A direct airmail service was established between the IRD’s London office and the High Commission in New Delhi. This allowed the IRD to supply its Indian contacts with timely extracts from anti-Indian and pro-Chinese public statements made by communist leaders and their governments. The airmail service was also utilised to feed Nehru’s administration with copies of disparaging quotations attributed to Chinese officials in which the Indian premier and members of his cabinet were the subject of personal abuse. In fact, such slanderous material originated with MI6, Britain’s foreign intelligence service, who passed it on to news



agencies in the Far East that were covertly funded by London, in a classic black propaganda operation.<sup>90</sup>

As 1962 drew to a close, the Indian government provided Britain's propagandists with a green light to pass on as much anti-Chinese material as they could to 'the appropriate official [Indian government] bodies – and indeed to non-official organisations if we [Britain] wished.' The sole limitation placed by Indian officials upon an unprecedented invitation extended to British colleagues to disseminate counter-propaganda material inside and outside government channels, was that such work remain confined, 'to China and Chinese activities in view of the continued official ban on propaganda against the Soviet Union or Communism as such.'<sup>91</sup> Nehru's government had no interest in exploiting the Sino-Indian war to turn Indians against communism more broadly. Having become embroiled in an enervating conflict with one of its communist neighbours, New Delhi was resolute in its determination to avoid antagonising another.<sup>92</sup>

Indeed, from the end of the 1950s, Soviet reluctance to censure New Delhi, as India's relations with Beijing turned increasingly sour, acted as a catalyst for the Sino-Soviet schism, and provided Nehru's government with ample reason to cultivate Moscow's goodwill. A bitter rancour developed between the Soviet Union and the PRC over the latter's management of its relationship with India, in the wake of unrest in Tibet, armed clashes between Indian and Chinese border guards, and the flight of the Dalai Lama to the subcontinent. In turn, the Sino-Indian dispute was transformed into a vehicle for the expression of broader differences between Moscow and Beijing over how the Cold War should be waged. Barbed exchanges between Soviet and Chinese officials over the merits of peaceful co-existence and how best to advance socialism in non-aligned India, resulted in accusations of disloyalty, opportunism and bad faith.

With hostile states in the form of China and Pakistan astride India's northern, eastern, and western borders, the division between New Delhi's communist neighbours suited its strategic interests, and provided a compelling reason for avoiding encirclement by courting Moscow's favour.<sup>93</sup>

The Indian government's aversion to anti-Soviet propaganda aside, Peter Joy found reason to express cautious optimism that the border war would rebound to the IRD's advantage. Principally, it seemed likely that a growth in Indian demand for IRD publications would continue unabated into the future. Nevertheless, Joy was careful to inject a note of circumspection in his reports back to London. The IRD officer cautioned colleagues that, in the immediate term at least, the political climate in the subcontinent was only receptive to counter-propaganda, 'related to India's problems [with China] and not straight anti-Communist propaganda which would not be acceptable in India.' Whitehall found Joy's assessment of the new counter-propaganda environment in India that had been opened-up by the border war to be excessively pessimistic. Convinced that Indians, with appropriate guidance, could be cajoled to recognise the danger represented by Soviet as well as Chinese subversion, senior IRD officers evidenced a bullishness more redolent of colonial administrators than post-colonial partners. China's actions had, it was held, presented 'a chance of securing a major "break-through" for I.R.D. work in India.'<sup>94</sup> At a minimum, it was anticipated that the assistance the IRD provided to New Delhi in the propaganda field would 'cement our good relations with the Government of India for a long time to come.'<sup>95</sup>

Under instruction from London, Joy began running a twin-track IRD operation in India. One strand, which was 'virtually requested by the Indian authorities,' saw the IRD support and develop the Indian government's counter-propaganda capability in

respect of China. In practical terms, this encompassed work that ranged from providing guidance and advice to Indian colleagues on the format and content of programming on All India Radio, to arranging for Indian information officers to attend propaganda and psychological warfare courses back in the UK.<sup>96</sup> One IRD radio script entitled, *China's Withdrawal Appraised*, was broadcast almost verbatim on the AIR programme, *India and the Dragon*.<sup>97</sup> The MEA's China division went as far as to solicit British input on semi-classified Indian government documents covering the border conflict and the Sino-Soviet dispute. This development, Peter Joy enthused optimistically, had enabled political officers within the British high commission, 'to encourage a dialogue [with Indian colleagues] on future Chinese and Communist bloc policy which may in time provide us with opportunities for influencing official thinking in this field.'<sup>98</sup>

Some disquiet did surface within the IRD that by collaborating with the Indian government on counter-propaganda work directed exclusively at China, the shortcomings of Soviet communism would be elided. 'To some extent,' the IRD conceded, an over emphasis on China '...helps the Russians to do their jobs for them.' Specifically, the Department worried that by directing too much British expertise and resources in the propaganda field on presenting China as a militant, aggressive, and expansionist state, 'many Indians may be reinforced in their assumption that Soviet Communism is "liberal" in comparison with the Chinese brand.' Persuading Indians of Beijing ill-intent was, after all, the British reasoned, essentially a case of 'preaching to the converted.' More positively, the IRD drew some comfort from the goodwill that Peter Joy's efforts had generated toward Britain inside the Indian government. Moreover, an increase in anti-Chinese publicity in the

subcontinent was likely, the IRD anticipated, to have ‘replay value’ beyond India’s borders, and produce ‘generally anti-communist “fall-out” across Asia.’<sup>99</sup>

A second, unofficial strand of the IRD’s India operation, continued to disseminate counter-propaganda material aimed at the Soviet Union, and operated without the knowledge and approval of the Indian government. Although frustrated by the embargo imposed by Nehru’s administration on propaganda activity with an anti-Soviet tinge, the IRD had little option other than to acknowledge the political boundaries imposed by realities on the ground. ‘Russia’s position in India excludes our close liaison with the Government in countering Communist subversion,’ a senior IRD officer acknowledged, ‘and our effort must be concerned primarily with alerting unofficial... opinion to the threat rather than with liaison in countering it.’<sup>100</sup> The ‘unofficial’ Soviet element of IRD activity in India continued to be seen by the Department as ‘much more important’ in the long-term than its ‘official’ Chinese programme. Consequently, the ‘main effort’ undertaken by Peter Joy remained concentrated upon the, ‘infinitely more difficult tasks of weaning Indians away from the idea that the Soviet Union’s dispute with China has transformed it into India’s “guardian angel” in the Sino-Indian dispute, and that the aims and methods of Soviet Communism are, in some way, different in kind from those of the Chinese.’<sup>101</sup>

In electing to prioritize counter-propaganda operations in India that targeted the Soviet Union, the IRD faced an uphill task. In February 1957, having concluded that the previous year’s Hungarian crisis had shown its propaganda capabilities to be lagging behind those of the West, the Central Committee of the Soviet Presidium approved an expansion in the volume and reach of propaganda aimed at the developing world. The budget of the Soviet Ministry of Communications was boosted, and Radio Moscow was provided with new and more powerful transmitters

directed at Asia, Latin America and Africa. The quantity of Soviet literature available in the Indian subcontinent increased exponentially. One Soviet publication alone, the fortnightly magazine, *Soviet Land*, came to be distributed in India in fourteen languages, and had a circulation of 300,000 by the early 1960s.<sup>102</sup>

The ‘formidable Communist bloc effort in the Information field’ in India came to encompass an ever-expanding cultural programme of Soviet films, exhibitions, and lectures. The India-Soviet Cultural Society (ISCUS) operated a national network of branches and affiliates that sponsored communist libraries and reading rooms. *Novosti*, the Soviets ‘unofficial’ press agency, opened a bureau in New Delhi. A second Soviet front organisation, *Inter-Ads*, subsidised communist newspapers and journals by channelling spurious advertising revenue in their direction. At the same time, the aftermath of the border war witnessed an increase in indigenous communist propaganda carried by left-wing Indian newspapers, such as *Blitz*, *Patriot*, *Link* and *Mainstream*, and amongst workers organisations linked to the CPI, including the All India Trade Union Congress.<sup>103</sup> One Soviet intelligence officer, who served in the KGB residency, or station, in New Delhi, during this period, subsequently confirmed that in waging a propaganda war against the West, full use was made of, ‘extensive contacts within [Indian] political parties, among journalists and public organizations. All were enthusiastically brought into play.’<sup>104</sup>

The absence of Indian government support for the IRD’s ‘unofficial’ counter-propaganda effort directed against the Soviet Union, failed to prevent Peter Joy from expanding the operations scope and scale. Joy pressed ahead and established a network numbering some 400 Indian contacts, or ‘well placed and influential individuals’, who received IRD material and assisted in its dissemination.<sup>105</sup> In 1964, the enterprising IRD officer forged relationships with two Indian publishers, Gopal

Mittal, owner of the National Academy Publishing House in New Delhi, and Ram Singh, a journalist on the *Hindustan Times*, editor of the right-wing magazine *Thought*, and manager of the Siddharta publishing group.<sup>106</sup> Mittal and Singh went on to become mainstays of Britain's counter propaganda offensive against Soviet communism in India. Each covertly distributed IRD literature under payment of a financial subsidy. Mittal's company, in particular, printed and distributed books with anti-communist themes throughout the subcontinent in English, Hindi, Urdu, and Tamil editions, the texts of which were supplied by the IRD. Under the terms of a 'see-safe' agreement, the IRD paid Mittal a subsidy that covered publication and distribution expenses, and ensured that his business returned a healthy profit from its association with Britain's covert propagandists. The scheme, which by the spring of 1967 had seen 70,000 books gifted to key IRD contacts, or sold at below market prices, cost the British taxpayer upwards of £10,000 per annum.<sup>107</sup>

Joy subsequently expanded IRD operations in India to encompass an article redistribution scheme. In collaboration with Gopal Mittal, whose publishing interests included ownership of a prominent Urdu magazine, *Tehreek*, Joy arranged for IRD copy to be translated into a range of vernacular languages and passed on to journalists working at Indian newspapers and magazines. In theory, the scheme enabled the IRD to react quickly to breaking news, and to reach Indian audiences with topical anti-communist material. On average, however, the scheme placed just two articles a month in Indian newspapers, at an annual cost of £1,500. At the time, India's thousands of newspapers and periodicals had a combined circulation of 30 million readers.<sup>108</sup> The meagre output of the article redistribution scheme was justified by Joy on the basis that the news stories it produced invariably resulted in similar copy being

carried by other news organisations and, as such, ‘it seems to us good value for money.’<sup>109</sup>

The IRD’s inability to quantify precisely how much replay its articles received in the Indian media suggested, however, that the value for money argument was based less on cold hard facts, and more on professional wishful thinking. Less regulated arrangements were subsequently put in place to distribute IRD news items through other Indian publishers with links to local and national media, including Sagar Ahluwalia, editor of *Young Asia Publications*, and Professor A. B. Shah, of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom. The diverse web of publishing contacts established in India, IRD officers crowded, enabled the Department, ‘...to get the right article into the right paper at the right time.’<sup>110</sup>

The perception inside Whitehall that the IRD was making headway against the Soviet information offensive in India, enabled Joy to lobby successfully for the allocation of additional counter-propaganda resources. For some time, Joy had complained that the IRD operation in India was over-stretched, under-resourced, and, in consequence, ‘dependent on a pathetically small network of reliable contacts in New Delhi and the [regional British] posts.’ In May 1964, gripes over the difficulties in making and ‘nursing’ Indian contacts in a vast country subject to an increasing weight of Soviet propaganda were addressed, in part, when a second IRD officer was posted to Delhi. Catherine Allen arrived in India as a ‘super PA’ to offer Joy much needed administrative support. It was as a successor to Allen, that a future head of MI5, Stella Rimington, was inducted into the ‘secret world’.<sup>111</sup> Allen proved to be an exceptionally capable and enterprising officer. Even with additional assistance, however, Joy struggled with the logistical challenges of running a counter-

propaganda programme within a nation renowned for its social, political, ethnic, religious, and linguistic plurality.

Fieldtrips undertaken outside the Indian capital revealed that the IRD's work missed its mark as often as it hit home. In Ranchi, in eastern India, one IRD contact, Sen Gupta, the editor of the local English language daily, *New Republic*, was discovered by Joy to be, 'busily engaged in playing both the Soviet bloc off against the West in his own parish.' A typical IRD contact, Gupta ran a small newspaper with insufficient staff or time to devote to sub-editing. As such, Gupta made more use of small features on topical issues supplied to him by the information department of the Soviet Embassy in New Delhi, and rather less of relatively long-winded and abstruse IRD copy. Short one-page Soviet bulletins, written in plain language, and focusing on basic themes calculated to attract the attention of rural readers, such as Soviet medical, scientific, and agricultural advances, compared favourably with the 'far too sophisticated' fare offered up by the IRD.<sup>112</sup> Reliable and effective IRD contacts in Indian journalism and publishing were highly prized and, as Joy rued, 'as scarce as gold dust!'<sup>113</sup> Such, contacts, however, as Gupta candidly acknowledged, invariably proved indifferent to the political message contained within British and Soviet propaganda. They were more concerned with parochial issues of style, human interest and, ultimately, commercial appeal. Recruiting a contact was one thing, Joy found to his chagrin, having them do your bidding was another and, much more difficult, proposition.

In December 1964, concerns that the Soviets were stealing a march on the IRD in the *mofussil*, or areas outside the subcontinent's major metropolitan centres, saw a regional dimension added to the Department's Indian armoury. Jonathan Davidson, a young graduate recruited by the IRD directly from Cambridge University, was



despatched to Calcutta to oversee and expand counter-propaganda operations in eastern and southern India, hotbeds of indigenous communist activity. As with Joy, Davidson was not declared to the Indian government as an IRD officer, and worked undercover as third secretary in the political section of the British mission in Calcutta. Davidson's role was that of a mobile contact maker, identifying new outlets for unattributable IRD material amongst politicians, journalists, publishers, and academics.<sup>114</sup> His area of geographic responsibility was enormous. The young IRD officers remit ran from Calcutta, in the north, to Madras, a thousand miles to the south, and took in Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Kerala, hundreds of miles further to the west. Davidson would go on to have a highly distinguished career in the Foreign Office's information service and, as an accomplished musician, play first flute in the Calcutta Symphony Orchestra.<sup>115</sup>

On Davidson's watch, and that of his successor, Ian Knight Smith, who arrived in India in March 1967, the IRD added a new tranche of Indians to its burgeoning list of contacts. These grew to encompass members of the opposition Praja Socialist Party, faculty at Calcutta University, leaders of the tea workers union in Assam, and influential figures in the state politics of eastern and southern India, such as P. Thimma Reddy, president of Andhra Pradesh Congress Party committee. As in New Delhi, IRD's regional work ran to subsidizing local publishers, such as A. N. Nambiar and P.V. Thampy, who operated the news services, FABIANS and Indian Press Features. Nambiar and Thampy worked especially closely with the IRD to translate its copy into southern Indian languages, obscure its origin, and offer it to local journalists for replay in India's myriad regional newspapers.<sup>116</sup>

Although the diversification of its operations to cover eastern and southern India was viewed with satisfaction, back in London IRD management were concerned to

guard against any tendency to spread the Department's limited resources too thinly across the subcontinent and, in doing so, sacrifice impact in search of reach. 'IRD should,' its management had concluded by 1967, 'concentrate more than hitherto on the cultivation of influential Congress Ministers, M.P.'s and senior civil servants.' 'We have tended,' one IRD review of operations in India reflected critically, 'to commit our armour in penny packets against peripheral targets of opportunity and at greater cost.'<sup>117</sup> Or, put another way, the Department was anxious that its Indian operation had fallen into the trap of recruiting contacts on the basis of their availability, and had neglected more important but less pliant targets. Moreover, IRD officers in the field began to express reservations that the Indian programme risked becoming too insular and excessively focused on indigenous communist influence in the regions. 'The local [communist] threat is very much less of a threat to British interests and, for that matter, to the Congress Party itself,' one IRD officer cautioned, 'than that posed by the Soviet Union in particular and the Soviet bloc in general.'<sup>118</sup> It appeared prudent, in Whitehall's view, to rebalance the IRD's work in India, and turn back to weakening Soviet influence at centre of Indian politics.

## V.

As the IRD prepared to realign its operation in India, broader political developments in the subcontinent conspired to throw a spanner in the Department's works. To a considerable degree, the IRD had benefited from a reservoir of goodwill towards Britain that had accumulated in India in the wake of the Sino-Indian War. As early as 1963, however, London's relations with New Delhi had hit a bump in the road following an ill-fated and unwelcome British intervention in the Kashmir dispute

between India and Pakistan. Worse still, the Labour government of Harold Wilson, which had come to power in October 1964, managed to infuriate Indians by charging New Delhi with unwarranted aggression during the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965. Towards the end of that year, the Anglophile former Indian high commissioner in London, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, lamented to British friends that, 'It would be difficult to exaggerate Britain's unpopularity in India.'<sup>119</sup> In a development that would have seemed unthinkable only a few years before, the peace talks that concluded the 1965 conflict were brokered by Moscow, on Soviet soil, in the central Asian city of Tashkent. The Tashkent accord was widely interpreted as emblematic of waning British power and influence in South Asia. 'How strange and intolerable it would have seemed to [Lord] Curzon', *The Times* opined in January 1966, 'that the affairs of the sub-continent he ruled should be taken to Tashkent to be discussed under the patronage of a Russian.'<sup>120</sup>

Equally troubling for the IRD was the sudden and unexpected death during the Tashkent talks of India's prime minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, who had come to power on Nehru's death, in May 1964. Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, who, unlike her father, had little time for, or interest in, the United Kingdom, was co-opted to replace Shastri. In New Delhi, officials in the High Commission soon began to refer to the 'Gandhi factor' in Indo-British relations. Troublingly, the new Indian premier was considered to have a considerable 'chip on the shoulder' when it came to Britain. Indeed, under the stewardship of the left-leaning Gandhi, India's purportedly 'special' relationship with Britain proved to be anything but 'special'. With Gandhi at the helm, India's diplomatic, economic, and military links with the Soviet Union went from strength to strength. Against a backdrop of diminishing British authority in South Asia, a dispirited John Freeman, who Wilson had appointed to replace Gore-

Booth as high commissioner in India, concluded that his mission had little option other than to, ‘lie low for the time being and leave it to the Russians to make the running [in India], in the hope of gradually recovering our influence and eventually making a comeback later.’<sup>121</sup> Or, as John Gordon McMinnies, who, in January 1965, had taken over responsibility for the IRD operation in India from Peter Joy, put matters, ‘It would be...quite unrealistic in the present post-Tashkent era to expect the Congress Government as such to peddle any material critical of the Soviet Union.’<sup>122</sup>

In 1967, the political obstacles confronting the IRD in India multiplied. In the states of Bengal in eastern India, and Kerala, in the west of the country, electorates returned communist governments to office. Overnight, IRD contacts in the Congress party, that had been nurtured over many years, were cast to the margins of Indian politics. Worse still, allegations surfaced in the Indian communist press that external interference had taken place in that year’s national elections. The Indian media fed off reports first published in the American west-coast magazine, *Ramparts*, that exposed the CIA’s long-standing financial relationships with a number of international educational institutions and cultural bodies, including the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom.<sup>123</sup> In March, CIA activity in the subcontinent attracted further unwelcome scrutiny when Svetlana Alliluyeva, daughter of the Soviet dictator, Josef Stalin, defected to the West via the US Embassy in New Delhi, and was spirited out of India by American intelligence officers.<sup>124</sup>

With Indian suspicion of Western intelligence agencies running high, the principal IRD officer in Delhi came under suspicion as an ‘undeclared friend’, or MI6 operative.<sup>125</sup> In response, Freeman ordered the IRD operation to proceed with ‘particular caution,’ and to temporarily curtail its riskier activities. Specifically, Freeman instructed IRD officers to avoid seeking new Indian contacts; suspend

meetings with existing ‘assets’; and implement tighter security measures around the distribution of financial ‘incentives.’<sup>126</sup> In rationalizing the decision taken to ‘pause’ IRD activity, Freeman argued that the attention that had been focused upon the CIA in India threatened to, ‘unearth the activities of other Western Missions and perhaps link these with the C.I.A. Here we [the British] should be an obvious target.’ Furthermore, with the advent of communist state governments eastern and western India, Freeman was conscious that, ‘the spread of communist influence is now likely to enter the field of Indian domestic politics, and... in the process, the ability of the State Governments to uncover—or fabricate—“foreign influences” is of course increased.’<sup>127</sup> The British high commissioner’s suspicion that Western intelligence services faced a rough ride in the subcontinent proved well founded. In an ironic twist, Freeman was himself later subjected to a communist disinformation ploy involving a forged telegram that detailed fictitious incidents of American interference in India’s internal affairs.<sup>128</sup>

## VI.

The ‘pause’ Freeman imposed on IRD work in India lasted only a matter of months. A progressive growth in Soviet influence in the subcontinent under the Gandhi government, however, underlined by the signing of an Indo-Soviet treaty of friendship and cooperation, in 1971, ensured that British counter-propaganda work remained on the back foot. In the face of calls from Whitehall for economies to be made in overseas spending, Freeman’s successor as high commissioner, Terence Garvey, questioned the need for a continued IRD presence on his staff. Towards the end of 1971, Garvey informed Whitehall that if financial savings had to be made in

India, he was prepared to dispense with the IRD, and to transfer counter-propaganda responsibilities to a member of the high commission's chancery.<sup>129</sup> In London, senior IRD managers fought a successful rear-guard action to retain the Department's presence in India. It would be foolhardy, the IRD argued, to denude India of a specialist counter-subversion presence at a time when, following the outbreak of another Indo-Pakistan war and the emergence of the new state of Bangladesh, 'the Soviet Union and China are more closely involved than ever before in the sub-continent.' Under new terms of reference, however, P. H. Roberts, the incumbent IRD representative, was compelled to undertake 'straight' information work alongside the department's covert activities. The IRD's regional representation in India was phased out.<sup>130</sup>

By 1972, a new and slimmed down version of IRD, or IRD Mark II, came into being. This development reflected the consensus in London that, since its heyday in the 1960s, 'the [IRD] operation had tended to get out of hand; IRD became too big, too diffuse and had to be drastically reorganised.' The Department's complement of staff was halved, and its headquarters relocated from a tower block at Riverwalk House, Millbank, to smaller offices in Great George Street.<sup>131</sup> In India, reductions in the IRD's footprint coincided with the country slipping outside Whitehall's list of the 'Top 20' information priorities. Roberts was subsequently forced to assume additional responsibility for IRD operations in Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, as well as in India. The enthusiasm for expanding the IRD's global role that had been so evident in Whitehall in the early 1960s, came to represent a dim memory. With neither the time nor the funds to sustain the IRD's network of South Asian contacts, Roberts found himself largely confined to New Delhi, where his administrative support was supplied by the civilian wife of a British diplomat, who

read seven English-language Indian newspapers a day, ‘using her own judgment on matters of IRD interest.’<sup>132</sup>

In 1975, IRD was compelled to impose a second suspension, or ‘partial embargo’, on its operations in India. In June, the Allahabad High Court controversially found Indira Gandhi to be guilty of electoral malpractice. The legal ruling threatened to invalidate the Indian premier’s status as a member of parliament, and bring down her government. Scenting political blood, Gandhi’s opponents took to India’s streets and the prime minister responded by declaring a state of emergency, suspended civil liberties, and jailed her political opponents. The IRD’s Indian contacts ran for cover, fearful of being exposed or imprisoned by an increasingly authoritarian regime that appeared obsessed by threats to the nation’s sovereignty, real and imagined. In turn, following discussions between the IRD and Foreign Office’s South Asia desk, it was agreed that the circulation of counter-propaganda material in India would be ‘drastically reduced’. The supply of IRD anti-Soviet literature to ‘unofficial recipients’, or Indians outside government, stopped. With Gandhi’s administration intercepting and censoring communications, local mail ceased being used to deliver IRD copy, further restricting its circulation, and all reference to Indian internal politics was stripped from the Department’s publications. Roberts effectively found himself reduced to servicing a shrinking group of trusted officials in a small number of Indian government departments.<sup>133</sup>

Prior the IRD’s eventual demise in 1977, on the orders of Labour’s foreign secretary, David Owen, the Department continued to justify its by now ‘penny packet’ activities in India on the increasingly dubious basis that they retained impact. One IRD official had suggested that when it came to counter-propaganda activity in the subcontinent, the British ‘eye-dropper can continue to be effective where Russian

and American fire hoses may be too indiscriminating always to hit the target, and the solution this applies may sting more.’<sup>134</sup> However, as the department was forced to concede, it remained all but, ‘impossible to quantify the effectiveness of information activities, whether covert or overt.’<sup>135</sup> Instead, the IRD asked for the value of its work in India to be taken largely as an article of faith. Drawing on an agricultural analogy, the IRD compared its efforts to the effect of fertilizer. ‘You cannot really tell how much it has affected a particular crop as opposed, say, to the weather. But like fertilizer you have to put it on.’<sup>136</sup>

In Whitehall, where misunderstanding of the IRD and its responsibilities was commonplace, some colleagues drew a different, and less flattering interpretation from a metaphor that associated the Department with the spreading of manure. Within the prevailing climate of détente between East and West, the IRD came under intense pressure to justify its continued relevance. One external assessment of the Department noted that officials, including many within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, had long regarded IRD, ‘with deep suspicion as a law unto itself, allegedly pursuing its own foreign policy without too much reference to higher authority.’<sup>137</sup> Such categorizations of the IRD were unfair. But, its operations in India did clearly run substantial political risks. They were undeclared to the Indian authorities, in breach of Indian law, and, by channelling payments to Indian nationals, threatened to position the British government in the crosshairs of the Gandhi administration’s fixation with ‘foreign hands’ subverting Indian democracy. A further Whitehall review of the IRD, undertaken in 1976, by the retired civil servant and former high commissioner to Canada, Sir Colin Crowe, underscored the wider dangers for British diplomacy associated with the Department’s covert activity. IRD



operations along the lines of those conducted in India, Crowe noted in his report to Foreign Office ministers, 'if they went awry, could cause great embarrassment.'<sup>138</sup>

Moreover, in New Delhi, the strong support that the IRD had previously enjoyed inside the high commission evaporated in the first half of the 1970s. Leonard Appleyard, first secretary in New Delhi, called into question the wisdom of, 'gearing ourselves [Britain] up for a costly counter-propaganda effort against the Russians in India.' Broader political currents and national policies were the decisive factors influencing India opinion, Appleyard suggested, and not counter-propaganda work conducted around its margins. 'If our general policy is acceptable here [India]', the British diplomat stressed, 'we get a good press; if not, we get a bad press, whatever we say or do.'<sup>139</sup> The same rule applied to the Soviets. In sum, senior British officials in India informed Whitehall that a modern counter-subversion rendering of the Victorian 'great game' in South Asia was simply not worth the candle. The strength of the Soviet position in India, coupled with the 'infertile local soil', suggested that Britain's counter-propaganda resources would be better employed in, 'much more propitious conditions in other parts of the world...'<sup>140</sup> Or, as Sir Terence Garvey stated, it seemed imprudent to pour money and manpower into contesting an, 'immense Russian information effort [that] consisted mainly of providing second-class material for mass publication in India.' Overt and semi-autonomous bodies, such as the BIS and the British Council, Garvey counseled the Foreign Office, could protect British interests in the subcontinent just as well as the IRD.<sup>141</sup>

Criticisms from the periphery reinforced London's unease that the IRD had become outmoded and ineffective in India. Searching questions began to be asked as to whether the Department really did influence opinion? Whether it was bloated, cumbersome, and over staffed? Whether IRD should be disbanded and integrated

within the rest of Britain's information apparatus? These were questions to which the Department's supporters had no easy answers. The primary objective of IRD in India was to counter Soviet influence. Despite sporadic assertions to the contrary, the IRD had steered away from claims that it could reach and influence India's masses. The limited resources at IRD's disposal and the sheer scale of the task in South Asia ruled out a broad-based counter-propaganda approach on purely practical grounds, aside from anything else. Having instead concentrated on targeting India's political and economic ruling class, the IRD manifestly failed to persuade the Indian government, or the nation's intelligentsia, to turn against Moscow, quite the converse. Indeed, the IRD's major impact in India was felt not in the Soviet sphere, but in the field of Chinese counter subversion, a contribution that the IRD itself conceded had probably rebounded to Moscow's advantage.

## **VII.**

The covert counter-propaganda campaign waged by the IRD in India was lengthy, involved, and fraught with political risk. It began as a small-scale and largely ad-hoc venture. Managed remotely from the Department's London headquarters throughout the 1950s, Britain's covert propagandists were dependent on the goodwill and cooperation of local high commission staff in South Asia. By the mid-1960s, however, the IRD had transformed its Indian operation. The Department developed a diverse and wide-ranging network for disseminating covert propaganda in India that achieved a notable degree of operational complexity. Elements within the upper echelons of the Indian government, and the nation's major political parties, armed forces, intelligence services, educational institutions, and press, were marshalled in

support of Britain's anti-communist propaganda offensive. External developments impacting upon South Asia during this period, most notably the Sino-Soviet split and the Sino-Indian War of 1962, presented an unexpected window of opportunity to the IRD, which it was quick to exploit. Above all, the posting of covert IRD field officers to India facilitated a significant expansion in the scale of British counter-propaganda material disseminated in the subcontinent, and substantially increased the number and range of Indian contacts that it reached.

Nevertheless, the IRD struggled to balance local, national, and global counter-propaganda priorities in India. Adding regional counter-propaganda capacity failed to adequately address lingering problems of over-centralization and deficiencies in linguistic, cultural, and political competencies. The IRD officers and administrative staff employed in India were invariably over-committed, under-resourced, and expected to learn on-the-job. Counter-propaganda messages delivered to Indian audiences that focused on communist subversion appeared to fall flat as often as they struck home. An over emphasis on threats to Indian sovereignty posed by an insidious communist hand and alien ideological dogma, saw Britain's propagandists neglect local concerns and grievances, and squander opportunities to win Indian hearts and minds. This was far from atypical behavior, as other studies of Britain's global propaganda operations have shown.<sup>142</sup>

Accurately assessing the impact of the IRD campaign in India is problematic. Measuring the effectiveness of covert propaganda is notoriously difficult. In 1970, one Foreign Office official acknowledged that, 'there is no accurate measure of the effectiveness of information work generally and measuring the effectiveness of IRD work in its present form would present even greater difficulty.'<sup>143</sup> Nevertheless, when judged against the IRD's political objectives, the Department's intervention in the

Indian subcontinent delivered meagre results, at best. The British set out to discredit the CPI in India and weaken support for the Soviet Union. Neither outcome was achieved. After 1962, Moscow's relations with New Delhi went from strength to strength, and would remain steadfast until the very end of the Cold War. More generally, Indians, at all levels, remained unpersuaded that internal or external manifestations of Communism posed a clear and present danger to national sovereignty. Put simply, Britain's global Cold War priorities found little traction in an Indian context where security concerns, predominantly in the form of China and Pakistan, had little, if anything, to do with doctrinaire politics. At worst, IRD activity in the subcontinent can be seen to have harmed Britain's long-term interests by stoking Sino-Indian enmity and, unwittingly, facilitating Indo-Soviet accord.

On balance, it is difficult to find fault with the argument advanced by prominent British diplomats that, from the beginning of the 1970s, in India, at least, the IRD had played itself out. Having originally adopted a cautious and circumspect approach to intervention in India's internal affairs. The advent of the Sino-Soviet split, and the outbreak of the Sino-Indian War, saw the Department change tack and implement a more extensive and aggressive anti-communist propaganda strategy in South Asia. Ultimately, the results were disappointing for the British. Nevertheless, given the paucity of other options for containing Soviet influence in India available to a cash-strapped and over-extended Whitehall, gambling on the success of an amplified IRD operation made sense. Certainly, employing British soft power in South Asia, whatever the strategies limitations in information and propaganda terms, was preferable to more expensive and impractical hard power alternatives.

If the IRD's counter-propaganda campaign in India lacked tangible results, it nevertheless represented a significant episode in the history of Britain's post-colonial

relationship with India. The IRD's intervention in the Indian subcontinent provides telling evidence of Whitehall's willingness to interfere in the democratic process of a sovereign Commonwealth nation, not least by subverting its press. It adds weight to the notion that India remained a core sphere of British interest long after 1947, and that successive post-war British governments accepted that it was both correct and necessary to covertly influence the internal affairs of a former colony. Much of the political and security activity undertaken by Britain in India during the Cold War period is yet to be declassified. The work of IRD represents a notable exception, and offers rare insight on a major covert operation that Whitehall sanctioned inside India. New evidence from official British documents offers up important evidence on the nature and extent of the IRD's interaction with Indian politicians, military personnel, journalists, publishers, academics, intellectuals, businessmen, and trade union leaders. The IRD operation in India, which was authorized at the highest levels of the British government, provides a new and important perspective on the interplay between the former colonizer and the formerly colonized in South Asia.

Ultimately, the IRD's eyedropper proved unable to cure the Indian patients supposed optical malaise, and eradicate what Whitehall perceived as a South Asian blind spot in recognising the dangers posed by communist subversion. If anything, the medicine administered by the Information Research Department in India served only to further irritate the tired eyes through which New Delhi came to view a former British ruler with divergent perspectives and conflicting priorities in respect of the Cold War in South Asia.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> A new wave of scholarship exploring Indo-British relations includes: Paul M. McGarr, *The Cold War in South Asia: Britain, the United States and the Indian Subcontinent, 1945-1965* (Cambridge:

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Cambridge University Press, 2013); Rakesh Ankit, *The Kashmir Conflict: From Empire to the Cold War, 1945-1966* (London: Routledge, 2016); and, Chris Masden, 'The Long Goodbye: British Agency in the Creation of Navies for India and Pakistan', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 43 (3) (2015), 463-488. For an earlier path-breaking account of London's post-colonial relations with India, see, Anita Inder Singh, *The Limits of British Influence: South Asia and the Anglo-American Relationship, 1947-56* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> For insights into the British approach to Cold War propaganda, see, A. Defty, *Britain, America and Anti-Communist Propaganda, 1945-53: The Information Research Department* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003); John Jenks, *British Propaganda And News Media in the Cold War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); and, Gary Rawnsley (ed.), *Cold-War Propaganda in the 1950s* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999). For more general analysis of propaganda theory and practice see: G. Jowett and V. O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (London: Sage, 2015); Robert Jackall (ed.), *Propaganda* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995); and, Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Between 1947 and 1968, the Commonwealth Relations Office and, for a short period between 1966 and 1968, the Commonwealth Office, supervised Britain's relations with members of the Commonwealth, including India. The CRO merged with the Foreign Office in 1968, to form the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which assumed responsibility for Britain's foreign relations in their entirety.

<sup>4</sup> For insights into the IRD's genesis and operations, see: Paul Lashmar and James Oliver, *Britain's Secret Propaganda War: The Foreign Office and the Cold War, 1948-1977* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998); Hugh Wilford, 'The Information Research Department: Britain's Secret Cold War Weapon Revealed,' *Review of International Studies*, 24 (1998), 353-369; K. Utting and W.S. Lucas, 'A Very British Crusade: The Information Research Department and the Origins of the Cold War', in R. Aldrich, ed., *British Intelligence, Strategy, and the Cold War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992); Defty, *Britain, America and Anti-Communist Propaganda*; Tony Shaw, 'The Information Research Department of the British Foreign Office and the Korean War, 1950-53', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34 (2), (1999), 263-281; and, R. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America, and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London: John Murray, 2001). See also Christopher Mayhew's inside account of IRD's formation and early years in, *Time to Explain* (London: Hutchinson, 1987) and *A War of Words: A Cold War Witness*

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(London: I.B Taurus, 1998)

<sup>5</sup> The colonial dimension of British propaganda has been addressed in G. Kennedy and C. Tuck (eds.), *British Propaganda and Wars of Empire: Influencing Friend and Foe, 1900–2010* (Farnham: Routledge 2014); S. Carruthers, *Winning Hearts and Minds: British Governments, the Media, and Colonial Counterinsurgency, 1944–1960* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1995); Lashmar and Oliver, *Britain's Secret Propaganda War The Middle East* provides a notable exception to the comparative lack of focus placed on post-colonial British propaganda. See, for example, J. Vaughan, *Unconquerable Minds: The Failure of American and British Propaganda in the Arab Middle East, 1945–1957* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Tony Shaw, *Eden, Suez, and the Mass Media: Propaganda and Persuasion During the Suez Crisis* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1996); and, Scott W. Lucas, *Divided We stand: Britain, the US, and the Suez Crisis* (London: Sceptre, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> Notably, Eric D. Pullin, “‘Money Does Not Make Any Difference to the Opinions That We Hold’”: India, the CIA, and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1951–58’, *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 26 (2–3) (April-June 2011) 377–398; and, Jason C. Parker, *Hearts, Minds. Voices: US Cold War Public Diplomacy and the Formation of the Third World* (New York: OUP USA, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). For recent insights into the impact of Orientalism on British foreign policy, see, L. F. Braun, ‘Suez Reconsidered: Anthony Eden’s Orientalism and the Suez Crisis’, *The Historian*, lxxv (2003), 535–61; and, Spencer Mawby, ‘Orientalism and the Failure of British Policy in the Middle East: The Case of Aden’, *History* 95(319) (2010), 332-353.

<sup>8</sup> Archibald Nye to Sir Percivale Liesching, 4 May 1951, [Kew, United Kingdom National Archives, Public Record Office], DO [Commonwealth Relations Office Records] 133/134.

<sup>9</sup> Nye to CRO, 15 Jan. 1952, DO 35/2657.

<sup>14</sup> FO memorandum, 17 Nov. 1951, FO 953/1051, P 1011/94.

<sup>16</sup> W. F. King to Mr. Joyce, 2 Feb. 1950, FO 1110/293, PR19/8/G.

<sup>17</sup> J. S. Bennett to L. C. Glass, 25 Jan. 1962, FO 1110/1560, PR 10545/1.

<sup>18</sup> See, Chandrika Kaul, *Communication. Media and the Imperial Experience: Britain and India in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); D. Finkelstein and D. M. Peers (eds.), *Negotiating India in the Nineteenth- Century Media* (London, Macmillan, 2000); and, Julie. F. Codell

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(ed.), *Imperial Co-Histories National Identities and the British and Colonial Press* (London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Chandrika Kaul, 'India, the Imperial Press Conferences and the Empire Press Union: The Diplomacy of News in the Politics of Empire, 1909–1946', in Chandrika Kaul (ed.), *Media and the British Empire* (London: Palgrave, 2006), 132.

<sup>21</sup> Minute by F. R. H. Murray, 28 Mar. 1950 [Kew, United Kingdom National Archives, Public Record Office], CAB[inet Office Records] 143/3, Official Committee on Communism (Overseas), A.C. (O) (50) .

<sup>22</sup> 'Information Research Department', c. 1970, FCO 79/182, Appendix A, 'Evolution of IRD.'

<sup>23</sup> Murray Lawson to Mr. Stephens, 23 Aug. 1965, D[eclassified] D]ocuments] R[reference] S[ystem]-295501-i1-14.

<sup>24</sup> Earl of Selborne to Churchill, 23 Oct. 1944, CAB 301/11.

<sup>25</sup> J. A. Borron, 12 Nov. 1951, DO 133/134.

<sup>29</sup> *The Times*, 10 Sep. 1954.

<sup>30</sup> John Freeman to George Thomson, 8 May 1968, FCO 37/43.

<sup>33</sup> The text of the Sino-Indian Treaty on Trade and Intercourse with Tibet is reproduced in A. Appadorai (ed.), *Select Documents on India's Foreign Policy and Relations, 1947–1972*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), 459–66.

<sup>34</sup> J. T. Hughes to B. Cockram, 25 Mar. 1955, FO 1110/818, PR 1085/6/G.

<sup>35</sup> J. T. Hughes, 11 Aug. 1951, DO 133/116, 'Propaganda on Communist China', BIS Quarterly Report Jan-Mar 1951.'

<sup>36</sup> Archibald Nye to CRO, 5 May 1951, FO 371/92864, FL1016/15; J. T. Hughes to B. Cockram, 25 Mar. 1955, FO 1110/818, PR 1085/6/G.

<sup>38</sup> 'Minoo Masani speech to Detroit Economic Club,' 13 Nov. 1951, DO 133/134,.

<sup>40</sup> A. C. B. Symon to Sir Paul Patrick, 14 Feb. 1948, DO 133/128.

<sup>41</sup> Y. D. Gundevia, *Outside the Archives* (New Delhi: Sangam Books, 1984), 208–9.

<sup>45</sup> C. P. Mayhew to Patrick Gordon-Walker, 22 Nov. 1948, FO 1110/22, PR1159/G.

<sup>46</sup> Ralph Murray minute, 22 Jul. 1948, FO 1110/22, PR1339/G.

<sup>47</sup> Archibald Nye to CRO, 5 May 1951, FO 371/92864, FL1016/15.

<sup>48</sup> Archibald Nye to Sir Percivale Liesching, 4 May 1951, DO 133/134; Archibald Nye to P.C. Gordon



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Walker, 5 May 1951, DO 133/134.

<sup>49</sup> G.S. Bozman handwritten minute, 28 Mar. 1956, FO 1110/929, PR1085/6/G.

<sup>50</sup> J. T. Hughes to B. Cockram, 25 Mar. 1955, FO 1110/818, PR 1085/6/G.

<sup>51</sup> David Cole to G.S. Bozman, 22 Jun. 1956, FO 1110/929, PR1085/12.

<sup>52</sup> Jenks, *British Propaganda*, 67-69.

<sup>53</sup> V. C. Martin to G. S. Bozman, 7 Oct. 1953, FO 1110/603; Minute by G.S. Bozman, 15 Apr. 1955, FO 1110/818, PR 1085/6/G.

<sup>54</sup> G.S. Bozman to David Cole, 28 Jun. 1956, FO 1110/929, PR1085/12.

<sup>55</sup> Minute of meeting between G. S. Bozman, Costley-White, Mr. Middleton, 28 Mar, 1956, FO 1110/929, PR1085/6/G.

<sup>57</sup> David Cole to G.S. Bozman, 23 Apr. 1956, FO 1110/929, PR1085/9.

<sup>58</sup> J. M. C. James to Ronald Belcher, 31 Aug. 1960, FO 371/152546.

<sup>67</sup> J. S. Bennett to L. C. Glass, 25 Jan. 1962, FO 1110/1560, PR 10545/1.

<sup>68</sup> 'India,' 5 Dec.1967, FCO 95/290.

<sup>71</sup> J. S. Bennett to L. C. Glass, 25 Jan. 1962, FO 1110/1560, PR 10545/1.

<sup>72</sup> COS (62) 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 6 Feb. 1962, [Kew, United Kingdom National Archives, Public Record Office], DEFE [Ministry of Defence Records] 32/7.

<sup>73</sup> COS (62) 75<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 27 Nov. 1962, DEFE 32/7;

<sup>74</sup> 'India', 5 Dec. 1967, FCO95/290; J. S. Bennett to L. C. Glass, 25 Jan. 1962, FO 1110/1560, PR 10545/1.

<sup>75</sup> Peter Joy, 18 Nov. 1963, FO 1110/1698, PR 10567/119.

<sup>76</sup> Aspects of the Sino-Indian border war have been addressed in work by Amit R. Das Gupta and Lorenz M. Luthi (eds.), *The Sino-Indian War of 1962: New Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2017); Steven A. Hoffmann, *India and the China Crisis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Neville Maxwell, *India's China War* (London: Cape, 1970); Yaccov Vertzberger, *Misperceptions in Foreign Policy Making: The Sino-Indian Conflict 1959-1962* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984); Liu Xuecheng, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute and Sino-Indian Relations* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994); and Srinath Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India: A Strategic History of the Nehru Years* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010).

<sup>77</sup> Norton minute, 23 Apr. 1963, FO 371/170671, FC1061/55.

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- <sup>78</sup> Kerr to Bishop, 30 Oct. 1962, DO 191/99; J. K. Drinkall, 14 Nov. 1962, DO 191/99, ‘I.R.D. Work in Connection with the Sino/Indian Dispute.’
- <sup>79</sup> Gore-Booth to CRO, 28 Dec. 1962, FO 371/170669, FC 1061/20.
- <sup>80</sup> Le Quesne to Peck, 26 Jan. 1963, FO 371/170670, FC1061/36.
- <sup>81</sup> Macmillan to Home, 22 Oct. 1962, FO 371/164914, FC 1061/94; Harold Macmillan, *At the End of the Day, 1961–1963* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 228–9.
- <sup>82</sup> Kennedy/Macmillan talks, Nassau, 20 Dec. 1962, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963*, vol. XIX, (Washington: GPO, 1996), 451.
- <sup>83</sup> Belcher to Pickard, 26 Aug. 1963, DO 196/2.
- <sup>84</sup> Le Quesne to Peck, 26 Jan. 1963, FO 371/170670, FC1061/36.
- <sup>85</sup> Fry to Warner, 28 Nov. 1962, FO 371/164924, FC1061/290.
- <sup>86</sup> Moore minute, 21 Feb. 1963, FO 371/170670, FC1061/36.
- <sup>87</sup> ‘UK Brief for NATO Far Eastern Experts Meeting,’ 14 Mar. 1962, FO 371/164871.
- <sup>88</sup> Foreign Office Note, 23 Nov. 1962, DO 191/99.
- <sup>89</sup> ‘Extract from Record of Secretary of State’s Talk with Mr. Nehru,’ 26 Nov. 1962, DO 196/199.
- <sup>90</sup> J. K. Drinkall, 14 Nov. 1962, DO 191/99, ‘IRD Work in Connection with the Sino/Indian Dispute.’
- <sup>91</sup> Donald Kerr to W H A Bishop, 19 Dec. 1962, DO 191/99.
- <sup>92</sup> ‘India,’ 5 Dec. 1967, FCO95/290.
- <sup>93</sup> For an insightful analysis of the impact of the Sino-Indian dispute on New Delhi’s relations with Moscow, see, in particular, Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 42–43.
- <sup>94</sup> J. K. Drinkall, 14 Nov. 1962, DO 191/99, ‘IRD. Work in Connection with the Sino/Indian Dispute.’
- <sup>95</sup> Donald Kerr to W H A Bishop, 19 Dec. 1962, DO 191/99.
- <sup>96</sup> ‘India,’ 5 Dec. 1967, FCO95/290.
- <sup>97</sup> Donald Kerr to W. H. A. Bishop, 19 Dec. 1962, DO 191/99.
- <sup>98</sup> Peter Joy, 18 Nov. 1963, FO 1110/1698, PR 10567/119.
- <sup>99</sup> ‘India,’ 5 Dec. 1967, FCO95/290.
- <sup>100</sup> ‘India,’ Dec. 1967, FCO95/290.
- <sup>101</sup> Peter Joy, 18 Nov. 1963, FO 1110/1698, PR 10567/119.

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- <sup>102</sup> For details of the expansion of Soviet propaganda into the post-colonial world from the late 1950s, see, Kristin Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire that Lost the Cultural Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 153-156.
- <sup>103</sup> Peter Joy, 18 Nov. 1963, FO 1110/1698, PR 10567/119.
- <sup>104</sup> Leonid Shebarshin, *Ruka Moskvyy* (Moscow, 1992), cited in, Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive II: The KGB and the Wider World* (London, 2005), 317–18.
- <sup>105</sup> ‘India,’ 5 Dec. 1967, FCO95/290.
- <sup>106</sup> Ram Singh helped to facilitate publication of a letter, purportedly written in 1924, from Kanpur prison, by S.A. Dange, the chairman of the CPI. In the letter, which Dange denounced as a forgery, he offered to work covertly for the British colonial government. One British official noted that the letter’s publication, ‘has done much to damage the pro-Russian faction of the CPI and has precipitated a split in the party.’ Cynthia Stephenson minute, 20 Apr. 1964; Peter Joy to C. F. R Barclay, 9 Apr. 1964, PR FO 1110/1829, 10567/73/G.
- <sup>107</sup> ‘India,’ 5 Dec. 1967, FCO95/290.
- <sup>108</sup> Frank Miles to D N Brinson, 28 Jul/ 1972, FCO 95/1278.
- <sup>109</sup> ‘India,’ 5 Dec. 1967, FCO95/290.
- <sup>110</sup> ‘India,’ 5 Dec. 1967, FCO95/290.
- <sup>111</sup> See, Stella Rimington, *Open Secret: The Autobiography of the Former Director-General of MI5* (London: Hutchinson, 2002), 75.
- <sup>112</sup> Peter Joy, 18 May 1963, FO 1110/1698, PR 10567/63.
- <sup>113</sup> Peter Joy to Sir Charles Duke, 6 Feb. 1964, FO 1110/1829, PR 10567/29/G.
- <sup>114</sup> Peter Joy to Eric Norris, 10 Dec. 1964, FO 1110/1830, PR 10567/208/G.
- <sup>115</sup> Interview with Jonathan Davidson, Washington DC, Jun. 2013.
- <sup>116</sup> J. G. McMinnies to Cynthia Stephenson, 2 Mar. 1966, FO 1110/2081, PR 10567/19; H.H. Tucker to J. G. McMinnies, 18 Apr. 1966, FO 1110/2081, PR 10567/19.
- <sup>117</sup> ‘India,’ 5 Dec. 1967, FCO95/290.
- <sup>118</sup> J. G. McMinnies to Cynthia Stephenson, 23 Mar. 1966, FO 1110/2081, PR10567/32 (B).
- <sup>119</sup> Memorandum of Conversation between Dingle Foot, and Pandit, 26 Nov. 1965, [Kew, United Kingdom National Archives, Public Record Office], PREM [Prime Ministers Records] 13/2160.
- <sup>120</sup> *The Times*, 3 January 1966.

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- <sup>121</sup> Memorandum of meeting between James and Freeman, Karachi, 1 and 2 Feb. 1966, FO 371/186952, F1041/30.
- <sup>122</sup> J. G. McMinnies to Cynthia Stephenson, 23 Mar. 1966, FO 1110/2081, PR10567/32 (B).
- <sup>123</sup> Chester Bowles, *Promises to Keep: My Years in Public Life, 1941-1969* (New York: Harper, 1971), 544.
- <sup>124</sup> Chester Bowles, 'Defection of Svetlana Alliloueva, [sic], 15 March 1967, NSF, Intelligence File, Box 3, Folder Svetlana Alliluyeva (Stalin), Lydon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, Texas. See also, Svetlana Alliluyeva, *Only One Year* (London: HarperCollins, 1969).
- <sup>125</sup> K. R. Crook to Mr. Joy, 4 Jul. 1967, FCO95/290.
- <sup>126</sup> 'India,' 5 Dec. 1967, FCO95/290.
- <sup>127</sup> John Freeman to Sir Saville Garner, 11 Apr. 1967, FCO95/290.
- <sup>128</sup> Commonwealth Office to New Delhi, 10 Feb. 1967, FCO 37/74.
- <sup>129</sup> Terence Garvey to J. O. Wright, 29 Dec. 1971, FCO 95/1278.
- <sup>130</sup> T. C. Barker to Mr Sutherland, 5 Jan. 1972, FCO 95/1278.
- <sup>131</sup> O. Kerr to Mr Cortazzi, 14 Jul. 1976, FCO 84/52.
- <sup>132</sup> 'IRD Work', c. Feb. 1975, FCO 95/1768.
- <sup>133</sup> C.O. Hum to Mr Seaward, 15 Oct. 1975, FCO 37/1595.
- <sup>134</sup> 'Annual Report of IRD in India, 1967-1968', FCO 37/43.
- <sup>135</sup> J. O. Kerr to Mr Cortazzi, 14 Jul. 1976, FCO 84/52.
- <sup>136</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>137</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>138</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>139</sup> L V Appleyard to J A Birch, 21 Feb. 1972, FCO 37/109.
- <sup>140</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>141</sup> 'South Asian Heads of Mission Conference – Information Work,' 3 May 1973, FCO 37/1213.
- <sup>142</sup> Tuck, 'British Propaganda and Information Operations against Indonesia, 1963–66', in Kennedy and Tuck, *British Propaganda*, 145-168.
- <sup>143</sup> 'Information Research Department', c. 1970, FCO 79/182.