Global Maoist Optics Among Diaspora: The Indian Workers' Association during India's Food 'Crisis', 1965-69

Abstract

This article considers the Indian Workers' Association (Great Britain) [hereafter IWA]'s responses to food scarcities in India during the late 1960s. It reveals Maoist optics informed IWA critiques, departing from coexistent appraisals articulated in leftist circles in India. In doing so, the article demonstrates the relevance of worldviews, idioms and paradigms emanating from global conjunctures beyond places of origin among diaspora. IWA luminaries were embedded in revolutionary anti-colonial networks shaped by decolonization and the global Cold War, and bestowed substance upon Maoism in these contexts. Ultimately, this informed IWA perceptions of causes and solutions to the food 'crisis': in their characterizations of reliance on external aid as indicative of post-1947 India's semi-colonial status; in portrayals of Soviet 'social imperialism' in India during the Sino-Soviet Split; or in demands for radical land reform based on a selective rendering of the Chinese model, which downplayed the consequences of the 'Great Leap Forward'.

Keywords

agriculture; China; decolonization; development; diaspora; food; imperialism; India; IWA; Maoism.

Introduction

On Friday, 16 June 1967, a 'mob' of Indian demonstrators forcibly entered the embassy of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the diplomatic enclave of Chanakyapuri, New Delhi. In an ensuing scuffle, fourteen embassy staff and protestors were injured, cars and windows in the vicinity were burnt and broken, and the Chinese flag was torn down. 'As they attacked the building', *The Times* in London reported, 'the Indians drove 40 donkeys carrying labels reading

"Mao's thoughts" into the embassy grounds'.[1] This incident, and its attendant anti-Chinese sentiments, had a longer history, stretching back to longstanding territorial frictions between these two expansive, abutting states in Asia, which led to the China-India War of 1962.[2] But its immediate stimulus was a diplomatic confrontation between India and China that summer, which had escalated over the previous twelve days. During this time, embassy officials in both Beijing and Delhi were accused of conducting espionage, placed under restrictions of movement, brought to trial, and/or ultimately expelled from the country in intensifying reciprocal measures.[3]

Meanwhile, far away in Birmingham in the British Midlands, Jagmohan Joshi, general secretary of the Indian Workers' Association (Great Britain) (hereafter IWA), released a statement on the organization's behalf condemning the 'hooliganism' of the Indian demonstrators. 'These actions', he wrote,

> in no way represent nor are they in the interests of the mass of the Indian people who are fighting against the oppressive and reactionary rule by the Indian ruling class represented by the Congress Government. The friendship of the two peoples is the greatest need of the hour and anything which impedes this must be combated. The [IWA] for its part will do everything possible to fight for the friendship of the people of India and China and expose all forces which attempt to weaken the fight against imperialism and neo-colonialism.[4]

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[1] 'Mob Storms Chinese Embassy in Delhi', *The Times*, 17 June 1967, 4.
[2] Bérénice Guyot-Réchard, *Shadow States: India, China and the Himalayas, 1910–1962* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).
[3] For a recent popular history from an Indian nationalist perspective, see Probal Dasgupta, *Watershed '67: India's Forgotten Victory Over China* (Juggernaut, 2020).
[4] 'IWA Statement on Hooliganism at the Chinese Embassy in Delhi', 18 June 1967, MS 2141/A/4/16, Papers of the IWA, Library of Birmingham, Birmingham (hereafter, IWA papers).

Joshi's effort to contest anti-Chinese sentiment back 'home' is revealing of how, contrary to the demonstrators in Chanakyapuri, the IWA leadership in diaspora adopted a favourable disposition towards the PRC and Mao Zedong Thought. By equating India's contemporary condition with the 'oppressive and reactionary rule' of indigenous elites, and the ongoing presence of 'imperialism and neo-colonialism', Joshi 'translated' recognizable Maoist rhetoric and ideology based around class struggle and national self-determination and applied them to an Indian context.[5] This article suggests an analogous approach was evident among IWA leaders during a concurrent Indian food crisis in the late 1960s, which departed in meaningful ways from contemporaneous critiques expressed in radical leftist circles back in India.[6] It reveals how the IWA leadership deployed a pre-1949 Chinese 'semi-colonial' paradigm alongside growing schisms between Beijing and Moscow to denounce the Indian government's reliance on American and Soviet aid during their efforts to diminish scarcities. It goes on to demonstrate how the importance accorded to radical land reform by Joshi and other IWA luminaries was based upon a selective rendering of the successes of the PRC's Great Leap Forward, which overlooked its role in precipitating the Great Chinese Famine. Examining India's food crisis via these diasporic optics, this article ultimately captures the unique significance of a Maoist worldview to the radical anti-colonial and communist imaginaries of key figures in the IWA during the global Cold War.

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[5] Ipek Demir, *Diaspora as Translation and Decolonisation* (Manchester University Press, 2022).

[6] See Benjamin R. Siegel, *Hungry Nation: Food, Famine, and the Making of Modern India* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 161, 177, 181; and, David C. Engerman, *The Price of Aid: The Economic Cold War in India* (Harvard University Press), 252, 261, for a discussion of various positions adopted by leftists within India in relation to food. For criticisms of American imperialism and Congress policy on the left more generally in postcolonial India, see, Shalini Sharma, '"Yeh Azaadi Jhooti Hai!": The Shaping of the Opposition in the First Year of the Congress Raj', *Modern Asian Studies* 48, no. 5 (2014), 1358-88; Boris Niclas-Tölle, *The Socialist Opposition in Nehruvian India 1947-1964* (Peter Lang, 2015).

Throughout the late 1960s, the IWA employed Maoism and the PRC as alternative sources of inspiration through which to construct their diasporic and claims-making identities. This article reveals how these ideas and examples were encountered through the IWA's entanglement in webs of radical activism, shaped by the changing contours of decolonization and the global Cold War. It was such embeddedness that informed the IWA's unique perception of the food crisis and its connected issues, such as development and land reform. Maoism ensured the views of the IWA leadership departed considerably from contemporary critiques evident among leftist opinion in India.

However, Maoism did not only shape the IWA's activism and identity formation. This article also suggests that it provided the necessary basis to make their evaluations of the food crisis comprehensible among a global revolutionary movement that existed beyond the IWA's own diasporic community. In other words, Maoism contributed fundamentally to IWA ideas about the organization's own positionality, demonstrating the broader significance of their engagement with global contours that existed beyond their ongoing situatedness in places of origin and arrival. Its leadership thereby not only connected with other radical anti-colonial activists but also deployed such connections to position and perceive of themselves as much more than an organization solely representative of the Indian diaspora in Britain. By adopting this global historical perspective, this article ultimately captures how Maoism emerged as apposite conjunctural material to construct IWA responses to India's food crisis. Mao Zedong Thought and the Chinese paradigm helped to not only locate the organization's worldview but also render their perceptions intelligible within the wider circulation of global revolutionary ideals. Without this global context, we fail to sufficiently understand why the movement was attractive to its members and capable of advocating for its positions during the late 1960s.

In demonstrating the significance of the IWA's embeddedness within global revolutionary networks connected with Maoism, this article suggests the need for further

attentiveness to questions of space and scale within diaspora studies.[7] Such questions have, of course, long shaped radical scholarly accounts of the transformative potential of 'diasporic space' in challenging dominant national(ist) shibboleths. Such is apparent in the productive deployment of diaspora in the wider context of cultural, racial, and ethnic studies: whether exemplified in an emphasis on movement and circulation in Gilroy's 'Black Atlantic'; in Brah's argument that diaspora space is constituted through a 'point of confluence' that can stimulate forms of syncretism and hybridity; or in the adaptation of Bhabha's notions of liminality, interstitiality, and a distinctive 'third space' beyond home and host in diasporic contexts.[8] However, critics have suggested an underlying tendency towards abstraction in such work, where diasporas are increasingly separated 'from any spatial moorings'; or, alternatively, a prevailing emphasis on the actions of diasporas in the here and now, primarily as they relate to their present location in the urban centres of the global north and west.[9]

By contrast, this article scrutinizes a specifically historical and empirically grounded illustration to demonstrate the significance and potential accorded to worldviews emanating from contexts beyond those of origin (and arrival) amongst diaspora. It demonstrates how Maoism contributed to IWA ideas about its own positionality and connectedness within a global revolutionary movement, whilst also recognizing the significance accorded to direct comparisons between India and the PRC among the IWA leadership. By bringing global history into more direct dialogue with diaspora studies, this article contributes to further departures from the spatial domains that have traditionally constituted the latter.

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[7] See also, Claire Alexander, 'Beyond the "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora": a Response to Rogers Brubaker', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 9 (2017): 1547-9.

[8] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Verso, 1993); Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (Routledge, 1996), 208; Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 2004 [1994]).

[9] Alexander, 'Beyond "'Diaspora' Diaspora"', 1548.

This article also builds on the rich scholarship on transnational engagements with Maoism, which has increasingly turned towards the application of Mao Zedong Thought beyond China in the global south. Yet such work has tended to focus upon the use and applicability of Maoism in relation to social movements in national contexts, such as among the Naxalites in India or *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) in Peru. Less attention has been paid to Maoist movements in diasporic contexts or as connected between and among each other.[10] Yet as Wei has pointed out, in Maoist theory, 'The Third World is not necessarily located only in Asia, Africa and Latin America, but may be close at hand – as every place of poverty and every destitute person is the Third World'.[11] This is of particular significance in an era shaped by successive patterns of relocation to the global north and west from the (formerly) colonized world. In this vein, a further strand of scholarship has examined the global connections between Maoism and African-American activism in the US, effectively demonstrating how Mao's oppressor-oppressed dichotomy was considered particularly applicable to the civil rights and black power movements.[12] More recently, Duan has revealed how African-American activists perceived their engagements with Mao's China as necessarily global, citing, for example, the mutual pride of Malcolm X and Julius Nyerere when discussing the PRC's successful detonation of an atomic bomb during a meeting in Dar es Salaam in October 1964.[13] Liu has

[10] Arif Dirlik, 'Mao Zedong Thought and the Third World/Global South', *Interventions* 16, no. 2 (2014): 233-56; Julia Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History* (Penguin Random House, 2019), chs. 7, 9–11; Alexander C. Cook, ed., *Mao's Little Red Book: A Global History* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), chs. 6–8, 14.

[11] Teng Wei, 'Third World', in *Afterlives of Chinese Communism: Political Concepts from Mao to Xi*, eds. Christian Sorace, Ivan Franceschini, and Nicholas Loubert (Verso, 2019), 285.

[12] Robeson Taj Frazier, *The East is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination* (Duke University Press, 2015); James G. Evans, 'Maoism, Anti-Imperialism, and the Third World: The Case of China and the Black Panthers', *Made in China Journal* 6, no. 3 (2021), https://madeinchinajournal.com/2021/11/08/maoism-anti-imperialism-and-the-third-world/.

[13] Ruodi Duan, 'Black Nationalism and Maoism: Revisiting the Relationship', *Made in China Journal* 9, no. 1 (2024), https://madeinchinajournal.com/2024/02/23/black-nationalism-and-maoism-revisiting-the-relationship/; see also, Yunxiang Gao, *Arise, Africa! Roar, China! Black and Chinese Citizens of the World in the Twentieth Century* (University of North Carolina Press, 2021).

likewise noted how Claudia Jones, a Trinidadian American communist activist based in London since 1955, penned a similar endorsement of the bomb in *The West Indian Gazette and Afro-Asian Caribbean News* and visited the PRC shortly before the end of her life.[14]

This article reveals the existence of an additional link in the chain of global Maoist solidarity. This network extended beyond the PRC, anti-colonial liberation movements in Africa, and radical African-American activists to incorporate the Indian diaspora in Britain. During her time in London, Jones maintained both an intimate and professional relationship with the prominent IWA member Abhimanyu Manchanda.[15] Equally, just four months after Malcolm X's visit to Dar es Salaam, he arrived in the small town of Smethwick, just outside Birmingham in the British Midlands. His visit was at the invitation of Joshi's predecessor as IWA general secretary, Avtar Jouhl, in the context of the vitriolic debate over Commonwealth immigration in this constituency ahead of the 1964 general election.[16] These examples indicate how leading figures within the IWA discerned Maoist optics through their engagement in radical anti-colonial networks that transcended India and the British Midlands. The next section of this article demonstrates the significance of these global affinities whilst establishing the IWA's organizational origins, its subsequent divisions, and its demographic composition. After outlining the nature and implications of American and Soviet aid amidst postcolonial Indian planning in the subsequent section, the remainder of this article examines how the IWA

[14] Zifeng Liu, 'Decolonization Is Not a Dinner Party: Claudia Jones, China's Nuclear Weapons, and Anti-Imperialist Solidarity', *The Journal of Intersectionality* 3, no. 1 (2019): 21-45.
[15] Carole Boyce Davis, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Duke University Press, 2007), 53-4.
[16] 'Malcolm X's visit to Smethwick to fight racism remembered 50 years on', *Birmingham Mail*, 16 February 2015, https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/malcolm-xs-visit-smethwick-remembered-8653592; Elizabeth Buettner, '"This is Staffordshire not Alabama": Racial Geographies of Commonwealth Immigration in Early 1960s Britain', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 42, no. 4 (2014): 724.

deployed Mao Zedong Thought to elucidate their own perception of the causes and solutions to India's food crisis.

Global Maoist Networks and the IWA

The IWA was first formed by Punjabi migrants to articulate the interests of a relatively small working-class Indian diaspora in Britain during the late interwar period.[17] At this time, the organization was primarily comprised of single male individuals from the Punjabi districts of Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar and Ludhiana. These districts constituted a fertile *doāb* (literally 'land between two rivers') in central Punjab. Many had faced economic hardship shaped by inadequate access to land, itself a longstanding legacy of the Punjab Land Alienation Acts of 1900 and 1907 under British colonial rule and subsequently exacerbated by the Great Depression. Migration was perceived as a remedy for such ills.[18] Making use of migratory patterns associated with family and village networks and shaped by military service and employment as *laśkar* ('lascars', i.e. merchant seamen), these individuals spread out from Britain's ports and military bases and congregated in its industrial towns and cities, principally Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton in the Midlands, and Southall in Greater London.[19] In these locations they often found work as 'peddlers' and semi-skilled labourers.[20] Over the next two decades, IWA membership was supplemented and new branches established in the context of growing networks of intra-Commonwealth migration from the Indian subcontinent

[17] There is some dispute about when and where the organisation was founded. See, Sasha Josephides, *Towards a History of the Indian Workers Association* (Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, 1991), 9.

[18] Roger Ballard and Chris Ballard, 'The Sikhs: The Development of South Asian Settlement in Britain', in *Between Two Cultures*, ed. J.L. Watson (Basil Blackwell, 1977), 21.

[19] Mirpuri migrant communities, by contrast, tended to congregate through networks of chain migration in the industrial towns and cities of Yorkshire and Lancashire, whilst Bengali communities were primarily to be found in East London.

[20] 'The Indian Workers' Association', 14 April 1942, L/PJ/12/645, India Office Records, British Library, London.

and East Africa.[21] During this period, the IWA became the most representative organization amongst the Indian diaspora in Britain: one assessment suggests the national organization had 32,000 members in 1965, during a period when there were roughly 20,000 individuals of Indian descent in the Midlands.[22] At the same time, the IWA remained a body principally composed of individuals with ethnic origins in central Punjab: De Witt suggests that in some locations more than half of all adult male Punjabis were members.[23]

The increasing size of the Indian diaspora and its diverse patterns of dispersal within Britain augmented the organization's heterogeneity and displays of local autonomy, ultimately resulting in two major factional splits during this period. In the early 1960s, the Southall branch of the IWA under Vishnu Sharma separated from the IWA (GB), with the former citing the ascendancy of communists within the latter.[24] Over the course of the next two decades, the Southall IWA came to be associated with the Indian Overseas Congress, whilst the IWA (GB)'s principal centre of gravity shifted towards the Midlands from Greater London.[25] The IWA (GB)'s next two general secretaries, Jouhl (1961-64) and Joshi (1964-79) were both based in Birmingham. In 1967, the IWA (GB) again splintered. However, 'Because this split was of the centralised body it affected all the branches and resulted in two local IWAs existing in most areas' across the Midlands.[26] This article focuses on Joshi's IWA (GB) (which it refers to by

[21] Ceri Peach, 'Demographics of BrAsian Settlement, 1951–2001', in *A Postcolonial People: South Asians in Britain*, eds. N. Ali, V.S. Kalra, and S. Sayyid (C. Hurst and Co., 2006), 168-81; cf. Adam McKeown, 'Global Migration, 1846-1940', *Journal of World History* 15, no. 2 (2004): 177-83.
[22] See, 'Immigrants Back War, But Not Clashes in Britain', *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 September 1965, 23.
[23] John De Witt Jr., *Indian Workers' Associations in Britain* (Oxford University Press, 1969), 47.
[24] Josephides, *Towards a History*, 13.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 14-16; Edward Anderson and Patrick Clibbens, '"Smugglers of Truth": The Indian Diaspora, Hindu Nationalism, and the Emergency (1975-77)', *Modern Asian Studies* 52, no. 5 (2018): 1769-70.
[26] Josephides, *Towards a History*, 17.

the shorthand IWA), whilst recognizing the ongoing ability of these different factions to collaborate on issues of common concern.[27]

A range of scholarship has explored the factional differences and splits within the IWA, incorporating perspectives on the significance of clientelism and individual personalities, cultural interactions within the United Kingdom (UK), and members' political affiliations in both Britain and India.[28] Yet what is often missing or downplayed within these analyses is a recognition of the global context, stretching beyond home and host, in which IWA ideology under Joshi's general secretaryship was developed and transformed. In one sense, such connections reflect the longer history of transnational revolutionary anti-colonial networks apparent among Punjabis in British India and diaspora, incorporating at times affinities with the Comintern.[29] Some scholarship has also begun to explore these links in the context of the earliest iterations of the IWA during the 1930s and 1940s, focusing upon connections and continuities with the Ghadar movement.[30] However, the IWA under Joshi's leadership reconfigured such networks in a milieu shaped by the growing significance attributed to Mao Zedong Thought. Critical to the emergence of novel Maoist orientations amongst the IWA were

[27] For evidence of continuing collaboration, see, 'Letter from Jagmohan Joshi to Southall IWA', 2 July 1964, MS 2141/A/4/7, IWA Papers; see also Talvinder Gill, 'The Indian Workers' Association Coventry 1938–1990: Political and Social Action', *South Asian History and Culture* 4, no. 4 (2013): 557.

[28] De Witt, *Indian Workers' Associations*; Rashmi Desai, *Indian Immigrants in Britain* (Oxford University Press, 1963); Josephides, *Towards a History*; Gill, 'The IWA Coventry'.

[29] Ali Raza, *Revolutionary Pasts: Communist Internationalism in Colonial India* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), chs 2 and 3.

[30] Silas Webb, '"The Typical Ghadar Outlook": Udham Singh, Diaspora Radicalism, and Punjabi Anticolonialism in Britain (1938-1947)', *Socialist Studies* 13, no. 2 (2018): 38-57; Virinder S. Kalra, 'Poetic politics: From Ghadar to the Indian Workers Association', in *Routledge Handbook of the Indian Diaspora*, eds. J. Chatterji, and D. Washbrook (Routledge, 2013), 203-215. The Ghadar movement was a radical anti-colonial transnational movement initiated by diasporic Indians from central Punjab on the west coast of the United States in the early twentieth century.

shifting perceptions that 'the centre of world revolution' was 'now moving from Moscow to Beijing', in the context of overlaps between decolonization and the global Cold War.[31]

The late 1960s witnessed the growing pre-eminence of theories that 'explicitly broke the connection between imperialism and political power' within radical circles, given the shift away from direct forms of European rule in Asia and Africa.[32] In these circumstances, Mao's characterization of pre-1949 China as 'semi-colonial' and CCP revolutionaries as engaged in 'national liberation' served as a paradigmatic example among radical anti-colonial activists, seemingly pre-empting contemporary conditions in 'third world' contexts.[33] Maoist rhetoric and the PRC paradigm accentuated the significance of revolutionary anti-imperialism within communist discourse, demarcating US imperial activity in postindependence Asia and Africa as its prime target. It was in such circumstances that Mao and the PRC came to oppose the progress of East-West détente from the late 1950s, representing Khrushchev's policy of 'peaceful coexistence' as abandoning the maxims of Marxism-Leninism and betraying the revolutionary imperatives of international communism.[34] Central to such criticisms were attempts to differentiate between the modern histories of China and Russia. In 1967 Mao claimed, '[T]he pursuit of a revisionist line in China is not as easy as in the Soviet Union'

[31] This phrase was used by Chinese Premier Zhou En-lai at the tenth plenary session of the eighth congress of the Chinese Communist Party (henceforth CCP) in September 1962. See, Kuisong Yang and Yafeng Xia, 'Vacillating between Revolution and Détente: Mao's Changing Psyche and Policy toward the United States, 1969-1976', *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 2 (2010): 397-8, fn. 11.

[32] Jon Wilson and Andrew Dilley, 'The Incoherence of Empire. Or, the Pitfalls of Ignoring Sovereignty in the History of the British Empire', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 1 (2023): 197.

[33] For more on the specificity of the Chinese experience, as well as subsequent continuities in other 'colonial' contexts, including India, see, Anne Reinhardt, *Navigating Semi-Colonialism: Shipping, Sovereignty, and Nation-Building in China, 1860-1937* (Harvard University Press, 2018).

[34] See, for example, 'On Khrushchev's Phoney Communism and Its Historical Lessons for the World: Comment on the Open Letter of the Central Committee of the CPSU (IX)', *Peking Review*, no. 29, 17 July 1964, 7-28.

because the latter 'was born on the foundation of tsarist imperialism, whereas China used to be a semi-colonial and oppressed state, enslaved by the imperialists for more than 100 years'.[35]

Among key figures in the IWA, such as Joshi, Manchanda and Ranjana Ash, growing division and competition between China and the Soviet Union shaped new ideological affinities.[36] Born in Birbhum in the Bengal presidency, Ranjana Ash was a literary critic with special interest in the writings of the Nigerian left-leaning postcolonialist Chinua Achebe. She undertook an MA in African studies at SOAS and played an active role in the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination.[37] Ranjana was married to the journalist Bill Ash, an American naturalized as a British subject after joining the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second World War. She met Bill whilst he was acting as the BBC's head of operations in India, during which time he became a committed Marxist. By 1968, they were founding members of the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) (CPB (ML)), accusing the extant Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) of towing the 'revisionist' Moscow line. During the late 1960s, Bill was a regular visitor to the Chinese legation in London, where he met the CPB (ML) founder Reg Birch.[38] In turn, Birch delivered the inaugural address at the IWA's annual conference in Leicester during 1967.[39] Bill also spent a week in Beijing in 1970, during which

[35] See, 'Memorandum of Conversation between Chairman Mao Zedong and Comrades Hysni Kapo and Begir Balluku', 3 February 1967, Record 117302, Wilson Center Digital Archive, https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/memorandum-conversation-between-chairman-mao-zedong-and-comrades-hysni-kapo-and-beqir.

[36] Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton University Press, 2008); Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

[37] 'Ranjana Ash Obituary', *The Guardian*, 19 November 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/nov/19/ranjana-ash.

[38] William Ash, *A Red Square: The Autobiography of an Unconventional Revolutionary* (H. Baker, 1978), 210–1.

[39] 'Letter from Joshi to "Colleagues"/"To the Press"', n.d. [1967], MS 2141/A/1/2, IWA Papers.

time he discussed Maoist doctrine with Zhou Enlai and developed an enduring friendship with the writer and CCP politician Yao Wenyuan, of 'Gang of Four' notoriety.[40]

Joshi, meanwhile, first arrived in Britain to train as an accountant in 1958. In addition to joining the IWA, he almost immediately became involved in radical leftist and anti-racism organizations. During the late 1960s, this included a prominent role in instigating the formation of the Black People's Alliance (BPA). Adopting a worldview capable of incorporating Indian workers within formulations of Black Power in Britain, the BPA united a collection of twenty-one organizations representing militant Maoist perspectives amongst Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, and African diasporic communities.[41] Joshi's associates in the BPA included Roy Sawh, a Guyanese anti-racism activist and committed Maoist of South Asian descent, who at this time led the Universal Coloured Peoples and Arab Association.[42] He also corresponded with Ahmed Gora Ebrahim, a South African national of South Asian descent who served as the foreign representative of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) of Azania.[43] Ebrahim spent time in postcolonial states with socialist and non-aligned sentiments in Africa, such as Egypt, Algeria, and Tanzania. He also represented the PAC in Asia, where he encountered Maoism, earning the sobriquet 'the man from Peking' in a *Times* article after his visit to meet militant diasporic organizations in London in June 1967.[44] Joshi's own affinity with Mao Zedong

[40] The Gang of Four, comprised of Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Wang Hongwen, and Wenyuan, were a political faction who rose to prominence during China's Cultural Revolution. They were subsequently put on trial for their role in the Cultural Revolution's excesses. For the connections between Bill Ash, Zhou Enlai and Yao Wenyuan, see, Ash, *A Red Square*, 232–3.

[41] 'Militants win new converts', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 28 April 1968, 19.

[42] See, for example, 'Letter from Roy Sawh, Universal Coloured Peoples and Arab Association, to Jagmohan Joshi', 27 March 1968, MS 2141/A/4/1, IWA Papers; cf., 'You have the power to ruin Britain, immigrants are told', *Birmingham Evening Mail*, n.d. [December 1968], MS 2141/A/7/17, *ibid.*

[43] 'Statement by Ahmed Gora Ebrahim, Rep. of PAC of Azania in Asia, "The Pan Africanist Congress of Azania Salutes the launching of Revolutionary Weekly "Lalkar"', n.d. [1967]. MS 2141/A/4/15, IWA Papers.

[44] 'Black man in search of power: 5; The Man from Peking; A News Team Inquiry', *The Times*, 15 March 1968, 10.

Thought culminated in his visit, along with Jouhl and the IWA President, Teja Singh Sahota, to Mao's birthplace at Shaoshan, Hunan Province, only fourteen months before his death from a heart attack while attending an anti-racism rally in June 1979.

After Claudia Jones's equally untimely death, Manchanda briefly took on his partner's responsibilities as editor of the *West Indian Gazette*. In 1965 he was expelled from the CPGB after publishing a criticism of the Soviet Union for 'engaging in a partnership' with the United States 'to suppress national liberation movements' in Congo and Vietnam 'under the flag of the U.N.'.[45] In July 1966 Manchanda delivered an address as an invited member of the Indian delegation at the Emergency Meeting of the Afro-Asian Writers' Bureau (AAWB) in Beijing, which confirmed this organization's split along Sino-Soviet lines.[46] Manchanda referenced this split in his speech, dismissing the Moscow-affiliated version of the AAWB headquartered in Cairo as the 'treacherous and dirty conspiracy and disruptive action of the Soviet revisionist writers, supported by their Dangeite Indian stooge'. This was a deliberately derisive reference to the Communist Party of India (CPI)'s leader, Shripad Amrit Dange and his 'Indian clique of revisionists', who 'shouted louder against China … and supported the reactionary government of India' during the 1962 China-India War.[47]

Manchanda's reference to the CPI and Dange encourages reflection on the extent of IWA connections with radical politics in India. Like Joshi and many others within the IWA leadership, Manchanda was an active member of the Association of Indian Communists in Great Britain (AICGB). He became associated with its 'left-wing' when the AICGB itself

[45] Manchanda, 'Editorial: Partners in Aggression', *West Indian Gazette and Afro-Asian-Caribbean News*, April/May 1965, https://abhimanyumanchandaremembered.weebly.com/partners-in-aggression.html.

[46] For more on this organization in the context of the Sino-Soviet Split, see, Pieter Vanhove, '"A world to win": China, the Afro-Asian Writers' Bureau, and the Reinvention of World Literature', *Critical Asian Studies* 51, no. 2 (2019): 144-65.

[47] 'Speech by A. Manchanda of Indian Delegation, Afro-Asian Writers' Emergency Meeting', 4 July 1966. MS 2141/A/4/15, IWA Papers.

splintered in the context of divisions within the CPI: the formation of a new Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)) was in part related to the CPI's adherence to the Moscow line.[48] After the events at Naxalbari in 1967,[49] which led to a further split in communist ranks, Manchanda, Joshi and other leading figures within the IWA heralded the Naxalites as the true liberators of India,[50] precipitating their split from the CPI (M) affiliated IWA (GB) associated with Prem Singh.[51] However, whilst the institutional files and individual papers of Joshi and Jouhl in Birmingham contain articles relating to Naxalbari, including one penned by the leader of the new Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI (ML)), Kanu Sanyal, the archives are otherwise devoid of any form of direct correspondence with personalities associated with this organization.[52] This corroborates Josephides's contention that Joshi's faction did 'not have … links with any party in India'.[53] In part, this might be explained by the Naxalites' ongoing armed insurrection, which resulted in counterinsurgency operations by the United Front government in West Bengal, a coalition that contained CPI (M) members. The scenario in India was thus very different to the circumstances in which transnational affinities were fostered by IWA leaders in extra-originary contexts, epitomized here by direct contact with Beijing and participation in radical diasporic Afro-Asian networks.

In addition, the leadership preserved links with what *The Times* described in March 1968 as 'the official Maoist network in western Europe … centred on Brussels'. Here, the pro-

[48] 'Black man in search of power: 5', *The Times*.
[49] The Naxalbari uprising was an armed peasant revolt in West Bengal supported by Maoists within the CPI (M). For a review of recent literature on Naxalbari, see, Alpa Shah and Dhruv Jain, 'Naxalbari at its Golden Jubilee: Fifty recent books on the Maoist movement in India', *Modern Asian Studies* 51, no. 4 (2017): 1165-219.
[50] 'Uncorrected Resolution on India', n.d. [November 1967], MS 2141/A/1/2, IWA Papers.
[51] The links between the 1967 split within the IWA (GB) and its links to politics in India is apparent in 'Report of the General Secretary presented by J. Joshi at the National Conference of the IWA, GB, held on 7th and 8th November 1970 at Nottingham', MS 2141/A/1/4, *ibid*.
[52] Kanu Sanyal, 'More about Naxalbari', n.d., MS 2141/A/4/16, *ibid.*
[53] See, Josephides, *Towards a History*, 18.

PRC Belgian Communist Party under Jacques Grippa operated a bookshop, Le Livre International, with 'official status' as the 'representative of the Foreign Language Publishing House of Peking, North Korea and Albania', and an associated printing press. Brussels, claimed *The Times*'s exposé, was also the place of publication of *Lalkar* ('Challenge'), the IWA's Punjabi-language newspaper, with Jouhl as editor and Manchanda serving 'on the editorial board'.[54] It is in this context that we can also speculate how multiple copies of the *Peking Review* were able to make their way into IWA hands during this period.[55] Joshi was also complicit in fomenting these connections. Writing to an unknown recipient perhaps associated with these publishing networks on 1 January 1968, he asserted, 'Here in Britain the overseas Indians have made many requests to the IWA for the Quotations of Mao-Tse-Tung in our own languages'. He thereby solicited '350 copies in Urdu, 50 in Hindi, and 500 in Punjabi' of Mao's Little Red Book, translations of which were printed by Beijing's Foreign Languages Press.[56] It was these conduits, rather than direct links with Maoists in India, which provided the IWA leadership with the means to channel Mao Zedong Thought during this period.

At face value, Joshi's letter might also be taken as evidence that an interest in Mao and Maoism extended beyond key figures to encompass IWA members and the wider diaspora. Yet it is difficult to establish the veracity of such claims, given the top-down nature of the IWA archive. Given the problems with identifying the authentic voice of 'ordinary' members, the rest of this article instead focuses on writings and speeches as indicative of ideological choices amongst the IWA's organizational leadership and its most prominent members and affiliates. These individuals were embedded in global Maoist networks that extended beyond points of origin and arrival, shaping their conceptualisations of India's food crisis during the late 1960s.

[54] 'Black man in search of power: 5', *The Times*.
[55] See, for example, copies of the *Peking Review* in MS 2141/A/7/21, IWA Papers.
[56] 'Letter from Joshi to unknown recipient', 1 January 1968, MS 2141/A/4/2, *ibid.*

India's Food Crises and External Aid

That food and agricultural development emerged as critical and contentious issues in IWA diasporic imaginaries at this juncture was related to the impact of two failed monsoons back 'home' over the course of 1965-66 and 1966-67. However, it also reflected a longer history of food insecurity and famine in colonial and postcolonial India.[57] Among Congress nationalists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the regularity of agricultural dearth had served as evidence of the pernicious impacts of British rule, which, in their view, 'had impoverished India in part by exposing it to the whims of the global economy'.[58] During the post-independence period, discussions around agricultural development took on renewed significance in the context of India's planned economy and the desire for agricultural self-sufficiency. Yet Indian policymakers frequently disagreed over whether 'industrialization was a precondition for agricultural improvement' or 'the application of scientific knowledge to agriculture was the most urgent task, given that the economy would continue to depend mainly on agriculture in the foreseeable future'.[59]

The principal emphasis within the second five-year plan (1956-61) was upon infrastructural and 'industry-first' approaches, during which time agricultural improvements were relatively limited. Soviet delegations of economists and technical advisers were critical to this initial emphasis on industry, as Khrushchev sought new Asian partners.[60] The emphasis on projects, industry and central planning amongst Soviet policymakers in India coincided with the ideas of Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, a leading figure within the Indian Planning

[57] Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Nino Famines and the Making of the Third World* (Verso, 2001), chs. 1–2.
[58] Taylor Sherman, 'From "Grow More Food" to "Miss a Meal": Hunger, Development, and the Limits of Post-Colonial Nationalism in India, 1947–1957', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 36, no. 4 (2013): 575.
[59] Akhil Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India* (Duke University Press, 1998), 44.
[60] Vojtech Mastny, 'The Soviet Union's Partnership with India', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 12, no. 3 (2010): 52, 53.

Commission in the mid-1950s.[61] However, emphases on industrial planning resulted in the relative lack of meaningful Soviet and Indian investment in agricultural development.

For the US, South Asia's geopolitical significance was linked to limiting the spread of Soviet and, increasingly, Chinese, communist influence. However, in contrast to Soviet policies, American officials and economists placed greater emphasis on improvements in agriculture during their own developmental initiatives. Critical to such conceptions were concerns that poverty and economic shocks such as India's foreign exchange crisis of the late 1950s could foster conditions conducive to communism. The new significance accorded to South Asia in American Cold War calculations meant greater attention was paid to ameliorating prospective crop shortages created by population growth, unpredictable monsoons, and inattention to agricultural development within India's planning regime.[62] The Indian government first began engaging with the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act (PL480) to resolve an erstwhile food crisis in 1956-57.[63] Larger deals with the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations were subsequently negotiated by Indian officials with free market inclinations, such as S.K. Patil, the food and agriculture minister in the early 1960s, in an effort to overcome rationing and other controls over food.[64]

Soviet and American development schemes in an independent India thereby ran in parallel to one another, advocating different methods and approaches. They garnered supporters and detractors amongst different coteries of Indian officials, politicians, and the press, both bolstering and reflecting internal ideological divisions within India. Yet both aid programmes

[61] Engerman, *The Price of Aid*, 91, 93, 97.
[62] Engerman, *The Price of Aid*, 140; see also, Merrill, *Bread and the Ballot*, ch. 5.
[63] Prior to PL480, American aid had previously helped resolve an Indian food crisis in 1950-51. See, Benjamin Siegel, '"Fantastic Quantities of Food Grains": Cold War Visions and Agrarian Fantasies in Independent India', in *Decolonization and the Cold War: Negotiating Independence*, eds. Leslie James and Elisabeth Leake (Bloomsbury, 2015), 25-6.
[64] Merill, *Bread and the Ballot*, ch. 6.

initially had unfavourable impacts on Indian agricultural production and self-sufficiency, contributing towards another Indian food crisis by the late 1960s. Whereas India's agricultural output was at 89 million tonnes during 1964-65, this dropped to 72 million tonnes for 1965-66, albeit then growing again marginally to 75.1 million tonnes in 1966-67.[65] These scarcities emerged at a time when the previous PL480 agreement had expired in June 1965. Over the next two years, food aid served as a bargaining chip for Lyndon B. Johnson's US administration to incentivize policy change in India. This included a 'short-tether' approach to the approval of individual shipments of aid to India, in return for a variety of commitments on the part of the governments of Lal Bahadur Shastri (1964-66) and Indira Gandhi (1966-): the implementation of American-style agricultural reforms through deregulation; the opening of the Indian economy to additional 'American agricultural products such as hybrid seeds, pesticides and fertilizers'; currency devaluation; and a more favourable foreign policy towards American intervention in Vietnam.[66]

Given India's longstanding commitment to nonalignment, and its status as an ongoing recipient of Soviet economic and technical assistance, Johnson and his advisers framed growing American influence in India as a significant geopolitical acquisition. This wider global context, shaped by contemporary Cold War dynamics and a longer history of famine under British colonial rule, provided the necessary background to the IWA's interventions in debates over the causes and consequences of India's food crisis. However, as the rest of this article suggests, it was engagement with global Maoism that shaped the specific nature of these

[65] Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), 235.

[66] Kristin L. Ahlberg, '"Machiavelli with a Heart": The Johnson Administration's Food for Peace Program in India, 1965–1966', *Diplomatic History* 31, no. 4 (2007): 672; Engerman, *The Price of Aid*, ch. 7; Siegel, *Hungry Nation*, ch. 6.

interventions, emerging as a thread that connected leading figures in the IWA with the circulation of global revolutionary ideals.

Semi-Colonialism and Social Imperialism

As contemporary onlookers, the IWA understood much of the late 1960s food crisis in the context of the impacts associated with dependency on the provision of American aid in India. Manchanda's speech at the AAWB meeting in July 1966 serves as a case in point. During this speech, Manchanda declared, 'the Indian Government has mortgaged the country['s] economy, freedom and sovereignty to the imperialists, especially U.S. imperialism, for a mess of potage'.[67] Manchanda's reference to Esau's preparedness to give up his right to primogeniture in return for a rough meal of lentil stew in the book of Genesis is instructive. By deploying this food-related biblical idiom, Manchanda sought to explicitly connect his perception of the imperial subservience of the Indian government to its reliance on American aid to resolve the food crisis. In addition, Manchanda leant into the term's anti-colonial credentials: the phrase was previously employed by the revolutionary Hindu nationalist Vinayak Damodar Savarkar to describe Indian subjugation under British colonial rule in 1922.[68] From Manchanda's perspective, obsequiousness to American interests after independence determined India's practical deviation away from its 'glorious anti-imperialist heritage'.[69] Manchanda thereby adopted a common refrain in radical circles, drawing upon India's recent colonial history to criticize contemporary Indian subservience in the context of food aid.

Manchanda's use of the word 'mortgage' during his speech is also of interest: whilst PL480 was provided in the form of grants, other American aid related to incentivizing agricultural development, such as the '$50 million non-project loan for the purchase of

[67] 'Speech by A. Manchanda'.
[68] Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* (S.S. Savarkar, 1969 [1922]), 127.
[69] 'Speech by A. Manchanda'.

fertilizer' in December 1965, were to be paid back with interest over time.[70] In a similar vein, IWA leaders proposed a resolution ahead of their 1967 annual conference condemning 'the Govt of India's subservience to the US and other imperialist powers through its continual begging for credits'. This policy had been pursued by an American lobby in New Delhi, involving Morarji Desai (as finance minister), B.K. Nehru (as commissioner general for economic affairs) and others on the Indian right since the late 1950s, initially to resolve the foreign exchange crisis. To the IWA, however, aid in the form of such 'bilateral agreements signed with the govts of the US, UK, France etc or through international agencies controlled by the US such as World Bank, Agency for International Development', was 'nothing more than a weapon used by these governments to exploit India's economic resources as well as exerting pressure over India's political life'.[71] These criticisms reflected the realities of concessions to American firms and policymakers in the context of aid, a reality increasingly apparent by the late 1960s in the context of Johnson's 'short-tether' approach.

In early 1966, Shastri was due to visit Washington to discuss further aid to resolve the crisis. Ahead of his proposed visit, the full text of a letter outlining American conditions for aid, including rupee devaluation, was leaked to the leftwing Bombay weekly *Blitz*, appearing under the headline "Yankee Moghul's Fatwa" in early January 1966. The reference to the Mughal Empire was intended to leave the reader in no doubt about America's imperial objectives. Shastri's death in the early part of the year meant that Indira Gandhi instead visited Washington in March, shortly after assuming the premiership. Her administration implemented devaluation in June. Despite attempts 'to put a positive spin' on this process, 'the decision was widely and loudly criticized from all sides within India', including amongst CPI politicians and the radical press. Many of these criticisms turned on India's 'new status as "economic vassals"

[70] Engerman, *The Price of Aid*, 251.
[71] 'Uncorrected Resolution on India', n.d. [1967]. MS 2141/A/1/2, IWA Papers.

of the West'.[72] A similar position was adopted by the IWA leadership. Manchanda immediately raised the spectre of American imperialism to explain the decision: in his view, the Indian government had 'been forced to devalue' the rupee by 57.5 per cent against the dollar as a result of 'the dictates of its Washington masters'.[73] Joshi elaborated on the consequences of devaluation during his conference report in Leicester the following year: 'U.S. and other Imperialist countries will pay nearly half of the price for India's raw materials, while India will have to pay twice the price for the food and other imports from abroad. Even the interest on foreign loans will be doubled'.[74] In these ways, IWA criticisms echoed wider censure of government policy and American aid among leftist circles in India.

What distinguished IWA perspectives on foreign intervention during India's food crisis was the accentuated use of Maoist terminology, the purported relevance of the Chinese paradigm, and the significance accorded to the Sino-Soviet Split. In his writings and speeches, Mao had sought to emphasize the limited transformations and pernicious impacts wrought by over a century of primary indirect imperialism or 'semi-colonialism' in China. The IWA made similar statements in their representations of the transition from colonial rule to independent statehood in India. In a pamphlet entitled 'Long Live Indian Revolution', for example, the Leicester branch of the IWA described 'The sham independence declared in 1947 was nothing but a replacement of the colonial and semi-feudal set up with a semi-colonial and semi-feudal one'.[75] Such declarations were informed by Maoist interpretations of 'semi-colonial' Chinese history.

[72] Engerman, *The Price of Aid*, 252, 261.
[73] 'Speech by A. Manchanda'.
[74] 'Report of the General Secretary presented by Mr. J. Joshi at the National Conference of IWA, GB', 11 November 1967. MS 2131/A/1/4, IWA Papers.
[75] IWA Leicester, 'Long Live Indian Revolution', n.d. MS 2141/A/8/10, IWA Papers.

In circumstances shaped by the renewed civil conflict between the Kuomintang and CCP after Japanese withdrawal in September 1945, for example, Mao had identified informal American imperialism as the biggest external danger to China's independence. In this context, he suggested the economic aid and diplomatic recognition accorded to Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) by the American government was 'a smoke-screen … so as to reduce China virtually to a U.S. colony'.[76] Likewise, the author of an anonymous[77] annotated typescript article in the IWA archive also postulated 'that British Imperialism had to submit to U.S. Imperialism in letting her takeover and adopt a neo-colonial rule' after 1947. The phrase 'neo-colonial rule' here served as an effective epithet, through which the IWA leadership tarnished American intervention in India.[78] The author subsequently quoted back the words of the former US secretary of state (1953-59), John Foster Dulles, who they described as 'one of the most discredited spokesmen of U.S. Imperialists'. Dulles, they contended, had claimed, '"Had the Western powers insisted on keeping their colonial rule intact then a violent revolution would have been inevitable which would have led to the complete annihilation of western forces"'.

As a result, '[t]he so-called independence of 1947' in India could be represented by leading figures within the IWA as 'the result of a conspiracy hatched by Imperialists in collusion with the emerging native capitalists against the revolutionary people's forces'.[79] In making these claims, the IWA leadership refracted germane aspects of Mao Zedong Thought

[76] Mao, 'The Truth about U.S. "Mediation" and the Future of the Civil War in China', 29 Sept. 1946, in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung* [*SW*], 5 vols. (Foreign Languages Press, 1965-77), vol. 4, 109.
[77] Given the overlap between the institutional papers of Joshi's faction of the IWA (GB) and the papers of Joshi and Jouhl within the Birmingham archive, the article's author is most likely to be one of these two individuals.
[78] In another context, Cooper has persuasively argued that 'We are not faced with a stark choice between true independence – whatever that might mean in an interconnected and unequal world – and colonialism by other means … [I]f neo-colonialism has its uses as an epithet, it is less useful as an analytical tool'. See, Frederick Cooper, 'Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective', *Journal of African History* 49, no. 2 (2008): 179-80.
[79] 'Anonymous annotated typescript article on the economy, culture and politics of Pakistan', n.d. MS 2141/A/4/16, IWA Papers.

to explicate the nefarious impacts of American influence and delineate the presence of 'semi-colonialism' in a post-1947 Indian context.

Adopting the phrase 'neo-colonial' replicated conceptions of analogous activity identified among contemporary radical anti-colonial activists with Maoist credentials. The IWA archive also includes a 1968 pamphlet published in Ladbroke Grove, London, by the British Black Panther movement, which contains a 'Message to the Black People of Britain by President Kwame Nkrumah'. Nkrumah was the first leader of an independent Ghana, who had been deposed in a 1966 *coup d'état* whilst on a state visit to North Vietnam and China. The Panthers' commitment to Maoist ideals is apparent in their preface to Nkrumah's message, where they described Nkrumah's exile in Guinea through parallels with Mao's biography: 'It is our firm conviction that Kwame Nkrumah has not yet fulfilled his mission. Like Chairman Mao in Yenan, he has merely withdrawn to regroup his forces as a prelude to the final onslaught that would retrieve Mother Africa from the rapist clutches of colonialism, neo-colonialism [etc.]'.[80] Both the Panthers and the IWA, parts of a shared global revolutionary movement, deployed Maoist ideas to understand their own diasporic positionality in Britain. In his message, Nkrumah used similar phrasing to the British Panthers to argue that the African diaspora was 'in Britain not by chance or by choice', but 'because British neo-colonialism is strangling you in your home countries'.[81] Significantly, Avtar Jouhl adopted comparable language when explaining the reasons behind the presence of imperial and Commonwealth subjects in Britain:

[80] Panthers Working Committee, 'Preface', *Black Panther Pamphlets*, 1 (n.d. [1968]). MS 2141/A/4/15, IWA Papers.
[81] 'A Message to the Black People of Britain by Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah', in *Ibid.*

> Immigrants in Britain are not here of their own choice but because of conditions that exist in their own countries – conditions brought about to a great extent by British imperialism … Even after achieving the independence their economy still remains under the stranglehold of British and other overseas monopoly firms. Mass unemployment and poverty is still there. This is the main reason … which forced hundreds of thousands [of] immigrants to migrate to Britain.

Conceptualisations of ongoing neo- and/or semi-colonial activity informed by Maoist ideology thereby connected the IWA in diaspora to a wider revolutionary movement, as part of an imagined community that extended well beyond South Asia. The Panthers' pamphlet outlined a list of organizational objectives which paralleled contemporaneous demands among the IWA, including the provision of 'land' and 'bread' in 'all countries in which Black people live'.[82] As a result, the pamphlet's presence within the IWA archive might be considered indicative of the ways in which Mao Zedong Thought emerged as a connective tissue that bound the IWA to other radical global activists, shaping their unique perception of India's food crisis.

For Mao, one particular illustration of semi-colonialism in China was apparent in the capacity of 'the imperialist powers' to pursue 'a policy of cultural aggression … to train intellectuals who will serve their interests and to dupe the people'.[83] This was echoed in Joshi's report as general secretary at the 1967 conference, when he claimed how, 'through various economic and military aids and, especially PL 480, the imperialist government of the U.S.A. … even plans to subvert and corrupt the peoples' culture with the "American way of life"'.[84] In the proposed resolution at the conference, the IWA leadership suggested this was evident in

[82] 'What We Want in the Black Panther Movement', *Black Panther Pamphlets*, 1 (n.d. [1968]). MS 2141/A/4/15, IWA Papers.
[83] Mao, 'The Chinese Revolution and the CCP', December 1939, *SW*, vol. 2, 312.
[84] 'Report of the General Secretary'.

'the growing array of US experts who are in every department of the government as well as infiltrating India's educational, cultural and recreational agencies'.[85] According to Mao, the influence of imperial powers in pre-1949 China also extended to their capacity 'to dump their goods' and 'operate many enterprises in both light and heavy industry' without necessitating the formalization of colonial control.[86] Joshi likewise commented caustically on how, 'when … surplus U.S. grain stocks could not be sold, the great U.S. "generously" dumped these surplus stocks on semi-colonies like India'. Just as Mao captured the operation of foreign capital in pre-1949 China, Joshi noted how one condition of American assistance was 'the brazen demand that private capital, both foreign and local, must run the fertiliser and other key industries'.[87] In deploying language like 'dumped' and 'semi-colonies' whilst delineating equivalent evidence of indirect imperialism, Joshi utilized Mao's depiction of pre-1949 China to question American beneficence in post-independence India.

A similar turn of phrase was employed by Joshi and Sahota in a memorandum they submitted to Indian premier Indira Gandhi ahead of her attendance at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London in January 1969. In their eyes,

> Indian peasants suffer from the dumping of US surpluses and the nation suffers from the colonial habit shared by the [S]oviet Union as much as [A]nglo-US imperialism of buying cheap and selling dear. While jute is bought at declining

[85] 'Uncorrected Resolution on India'.
[86] It was only with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in September 1931 that a 'big chunk of semi-colonial China' extending beyond the coastal 'concessions' had come under direct Japanese rule. See, 'The Chinese Revolution and the CCP', 312.
[87] 'Report of the General Secretary'.

> prices Soviet manufactured goods are more expensive than average world prices. Instead of increasing India's industrial development it has been retarding it.[88]

Joshi and Sahota thereby claimed that the implications of the Indian government's reliance on foreign aid replicated colonial patterns of trade, persistently positioning India in an inferior position within the global economy.

IWA appraisals were also distinguished from contemporaneous critiques of India's reliance on foreign aid by the significance accorded to Maoist optics during the Sino-Soviet Split. By the late 1960s, growing division and competition between the PRC and the USSR ensured the IWA also represented Soviet activities in India as reflective of 'imperial' activity in a new guise, and thus comparable with US interventions. Joshi and Sahota's disparaging representation of a 'shared' Soviet 'colonial habit' can be read as indicative of this trend. In his analysis of Soviet aid in India, Engerman has noted how, across the first two decades of the Cold War, most Soviet policymakers continued to envisage a world economy oriented towards exporting primary goods from the 'third world', albeit into the USSR and eastern Europe rather than the West.[89] It is in these circumstances, shaped by disapproving representations of Soviet 'social imperialist' interventions after the Sino-Soviet Split, that we can understand Joshi and Sahota's critique of a Soviet 'colonial habit' in India. This is also apparent when Joshi and Sahota's memorandum is contextualized against other materials contained within the IWA archive. The Leicester branch's 'Long Live Indian Revolution' pamphlet also suggested that 'With the weakening of the power of British Imperialism the World over, the Indian ruling classes have now hired themselves out', not only 'to U.S. Imperialism', but also to 'Soviet

[88] 'Memorandum to Mrs Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, Submitted by Indian Workers' Association Great Britain', 7 January 1969. MS 2141/A/4/16, IWA Papers.
[89] Engerman, *Price of Aid*, 297.

Social Imperialism'.[90] Likewise, in an undated article entitled 'News from India', for example, Aparna Roy[91] argued 'there is no major contradiction between the Soviet Union and the USA in India'.[92] The recognition of this Soviet disposition shaped IWA caricatures of 'social imperialism's presence in India during this period.

Critical to the emergence of these perceptions of Soviet activity in India was the IWA's embeddedness within global Maoist networks. Such is apparent in a letter to Joshi ahead of the IWA's 1967 Conference in Leicester from A. Campos, responding to an invitation from Joshi to attend. Campos, a self-described 'nationalist from Mozambique' with Maoist predilections residing in London, made a similar comparison to Roy when describing Soviet and American activity in his homeland: 'The U.S. imperialists and Soviet revisionists are the natural allies of the Portuguese colonialists against our people and their contradictions are only those that exist between two neocolonialist powers each one interested in courting their lackeys'. Campos described Soviet (and American) activities in Mozambique as designed to secure 'sources of raw material' in a way that connected with Roy's critique of the 1968 visit to New Delhi of A.M. Zhafsky, who was at that time deputy director of Gosplan (the Soviet Union's state planning committee). In Roy's eyes, Zhafsky was in Delhi to discuss 'very far-reaching, long-term plans … to tie parts of the Indian economy more closely to the needs of the new revisionist economies of the Soviet Union',[93] where fresh impetus had been placed upon the necessity of productivity and profit under the 1965 Kosygin reforms.[94] These entanglements and synergies

[90] IWA Leicester, 'Long Live Indian Revolution'.

[91] I have been unable to ascertain Aparna Roy's biography. However, the fact that her journalism made its way into the IWA's archive might be considered indicative of the significance accorded to her approach to events in India during this period.

[92] 'Copy typescript article entitled "News from India" by Aparna Roy', n.d. [1968]. MS 2141/A/4/16, IWA Papers. Underlined emphasis in original.

[93] *Ibid.* Underlined emphasis in original.

[94] Michael Kaser, 'Kosygin, Liberman, and the pace of Soviet industrial reform', *The World Today* 21, no. 9 (1965): 375-88.

are indicative of the significance accorded to Maoism as a framework by the IWA, which rendered their perspectives on Soviet activities legible to a global revolutionary movement.

Such perspectives informed Joshi and Sahota's own view that 'as a result of fundamental changes in [the] politics of the Soviet Union, that country has become vitally interested in exploiting India's wealth'.[95] The IWA critique of the Soviet's 'revisionist' economy emerged in specific circumstances shaped by an official Indian request that the USSR provide a ready market for industrial goods produced via erstwhile Soviet-aided projects. Despite the agreement, the composition of trade between the Soviet Union and India remained problematic: 'foods, raw materials and textiles still accounted for 80-90 percent of imports from India' by 1971.[96] Like Campos's argument about Soviet activity in Mozambique, Roy represented the coordination of Indian and Soviet five-year plans in this context as conducive to 'Indian consumer goods [such as shoes, textiles and handicrafts] and raw materials' being 'produced to suit Soviet needs'.[97] As a result, Joshi and Sahota suggested that 'the news that future economic plans of the two governments will be co-ordinating, spells more exploitation for the people of India'.[98] By comparing Soviet and American policies, critiquing Soviet economic 'revisionism', and disparaging its extractive approach to trade in India, the IWA selectively translated global Maoist caricatures of the USSR in a fashion that differentiated their own responses to the food crisis from other leftist critiques back home.

Radical Land Reform and the China-India Comparative

Another strand of the IWA leadership's critique during the food crisis related to the underwhelming impact of previous land and tenancy reform under the Congress administration. As the suggested financial outlay on agriculture under the second and third plans was projected

[95] 'Memorandum to Mrs. Gandhi'
[96] Engerman, *Price of Aid*, 297, 299.
[97] '"News from India" by Aparna Roy'.
[98] 'Memorandum to Mrs. Gandhi'.

to provide a derisory 15 percent of the increase in output necessary to cover the doubling of demand, the government of India expected the remainder to emerge by investing the 'actual' cultivator with land ownership after the abolition of the *zamīndārī* (landlord) system.[99] During the mid-1950s, Indian planners and politicians associated with the Congress left regularly referred to the value of the Chinese example of land reform, based around land-pooling and collectivization. This was the heyday of *hindī-chīnī-bhai-bhai* ('India and China are brothers') and *pāṅchśhīl* ('panchsheel', five principles of peaceful coexistence) before their disintegration by the 1962 China-India War. Nehru both revered and begrudged the CCP's ability to enhance agricultural productivity on this basis, even whilst rightist criticisms emerged about its impacts, whether within the Congress, Vinoba Bhave's Gandhian *bhūdān* ('bhoodan', translating as 'land gift') movement, or opposition parties such as the Jana Sangh.[100] The significance accorded to a Chinese model was bolstered by the 1954 Soviet delegation in India, which was required under '"directive instructions"' from Moscow 'to highlight the value of Chinese peasant cooperatives as a model for India' that 'could be organized without compulsion'. Subsequently, 'Not one but two Indian study tours followed [this] advice … and travelled to rural China in the mid-1950s'.[101]

However, despite efforts to introduce more radical agrarian reforms during this period, jurisdiction ultimately came under the states within India's federal democratic system, rather than being contingent upon the actions of an authoritarian centre. Despite the socialist pretensions of both Nehru and Indira Gandhi, state-level legislation was frequently watered

[99] Francine Frankel, *India's Political Economy, 1947–1977: The Gradual Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 1978), 136–7.

[100] Siegel, '"Fantastic Quantities of Food Grains"', 31; Siegel, *Hungry Nation*, 166-71; Gupta, *Postcolonial Developments*, 49–51; Frankel, *India's Political Economy*, 139–42; Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Harvard University Press, 2018), 80.

[101] Engerman, *The Price of Aid*, 96-7, 134; see also, Siegel, *Hungry Nation*, 170.

down or ineffectively implemented by provincial Congressmen, bolstering dominant rural interests.[102] Moreover, these interests were also reinforced by American prioritization of a valorized village community as the unit of development in early interventionist initiatives, before the shifts that presaged the Green Revolution in the early 1960s.[103]

For the IWA leadership, the Congress's ineffective implementation of *zamīndārī* abolition was determined by the party's problematic alliance with a 'feudal-capitalist combination' of landlord and big business interests.[104] In his opening report at the 1967 conference in Leicester, Joshi argued that 'the Congress government at the centre and in the various Indian states is based on landlordism and capitalist bosses'.[105] The emphasis here was on the role of state patronage in augmenting the power of dominant social forces, whilst stymying any impetus towards radical land reform. In these circumstances, 'the Indian capitalists and feudal elements' were presented by the IWA leadership in a draft statement ahead of the conference as 'trying to use the state to extract more and more from the Indian people so that they … can increase their profits'. The proposed resolution condemned 'all those refusing to tamper with the privileges of the big peasants and landlords and thus failing to procure the large amounts of food necessary for the people, whilst clamouring that the Indian Govt should obtain more food from the USA'.[106] In the view of IWA leaders, the influence of reactionary social forces upon Congress policymaking also underpinned the latter's inability to satisfy wider society's fundamental right to adequate supplies of food.

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[102] See, for example, Peter Reeves, 'The Congress and the Abolition of Zamindari in Uttar Pradesh', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 8, no. 1-2 (1985): 154-67.

[103] Immerwahr, *Thinking Small*, 85-9, 92-3; on American community development schemes in India more generally, see *ibid.*, ch. 3; Nicole Sackley, 'Village Models: Etawah, India, and the Making and Remaking of Development in the Early Cold War', *Diplomatic History*, 37.4 (2013), 749-78.

[104] 'Uncorrected Resolution'.

[105] 'Report of the General Secretary'.

[106] 'Uncorrected Resolution'.

The perceived failure of land reform meant Joshi could call for the application of more drastic measures by March 1965, 'including putting a stop to the eviction of tenants and the reinstatement of tenants already evicted. An end must be made to landlordism without compensation and the redistribution of their land to the landless tenants and peasantry'.[107] By suggesting the abolition of compensation, Joshi here looked to criticize schemes of recompense frequently provided by state-level governments to large landlords for their loss of land.[108] In recognizing that landlords had frequently evicted tenants in the context of such legislation, Joshi also sought to raise awareness amongst the diaspora of the surreptitious methods employed to maintain elite ownership. In the same issue of *Mazdoor*, Ranjana Ash bemoaned 'the growing power of the big peasants and landlords in the villages and the growing pauperisation of the landless agricultural labourers' despite efforts to implement *zamīndārī* abolition over the past decade.[109] During an era in which the Indian government shifted emphasis towards the deployment of high-yielding variety grains and biochemical inputs, the IWA leadership was instead still insisting, 'unequivocally, that the only solution to India's food problem is a drastic change in the ownership of land and the prevailing system of proprietorship which enables less than ¼ of the population to own ¾ of the land'.[110]

From Ash's perspective, land reform as a solution to India's contemporary food crisis would also help ensure the more equitable distribution of land in post-independence India:

> The inheritors of a great and militant national movement, the peasants and working people of India, thought that 1947 would lead to real democracy in

[107] Joshi, 'Whose Finger?'.
[108] For an example of such schemes, see, Thomas R. Metcalf, 'Landlords Without Land: The U.P. Zamindars Today', *Pacific Affairs*, 40, no. 1-2 (1967): 7; for earlier references to abolition without compensation, see, Siegel, *Hungry Nation*, 155.
[109] Ranjana Ash, 'Why the Arrests?', *Mazdoor*, 28 March 1965. MS 2141/A/5/1/2, IWA Papers.
[110] 'Uncorrected Resolution'.

> which political rights would be backed up by the economic power of the people, where the land would belong to those who till it and where all citizens would get enough to eat, would have a job and would be able to live as full human beings.[111]

In making these arguments, Ash and Joshi reflected longer histories of peasant and leftist critiques of land ownership evident in late colonial and early postcolonial India. Similar ideas had long been apparent among peasant activists who held 'that self-rule would inevitably be accompanied by a shattering of the extant rural order'.[112] Equally, leftist critiques of the failures of government land reform continued to draw upon such motifs during the 1950s and 1960s.[113]

By the late 1960s, the IWA leadership were drawing upon a selection of press clippings they collected from New Delhi daily *The Patriot*, published under the auspices of Aruna Asaf Ali and Edatata Narayanan. Before independence, Ali and Narayanan had been associated with the fledging Congress Socialist Party (CSP), which also initially contained communist members. Disappointed with the Congress's slow progress towards socialism, the CSP separated from its parent organization to become the Socialist Party in 1948.[114] Shortly thereafter, Ali and Narayanan both left the party and 'joined the … CPI just before Stalin's death', but then withdrew around the time of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization drive.[115] However, this did not push them towards Maoist politics: thereafter, *The Patriot*, established in 1958, received patronage from prominent figures on the Congress left, including Nehru and V.K. Krishna Menon. Krishna Menon's own politics are instructive here: whilst serving as India's

[111] Ash, 'Why the Arrests?'.
[112] Siegel, *Hungry Nation*, 156-7.
[113] *Ibid.*, 161, 177, 181.
[114] Niclas-Tölle, *The Socialist Opposition*, 73-88.
[115] 'Aruna Asaf Ali obituary', *The Guardian*, 30 July 1996, https://www.theguardian.com/world/1996/jul/30/india.guardianobituaries.

defence minister (1957-62), he was highly enthusiastic about Soviet military aid whilst deprecating procurements from the US, and was also hypercritical of S.K. Patil and Eisenhower's agreement to expand PL480 in 1960.[116] Equally, Ali maintained links with the USSR, the CPI, and the Congress during the 1960s: she was awarded the International Lenin Peace Prize by the USSR in 1964, became President of the National Federation of Indian Women (the women's wing of the CPI and part of the Moscow-affiliated Women's International Democratic Federation) in 1967, and 'remained close' to Indira Gandhi.[117]

Ali and Narayanan's biographies demonstrate the fluid political affinities amongst leftist leaders within and outside the Congress in India during the first two decades after independence. Articles in *The Patriot* contained within the IWA archive focused on the need for the radical recalibration of agricultural relations in this context. In Ali and Narayanan's view, 'The food production problem stems in the first instance from the indifference of the kisan [*kisān*, i.e. agricultural worker] to put in and get out of land the maximum. As long as he is the second-rate citizen that he is today he will not do this'. To resolve this issue, they prescribed 'immediate and radical land reforms', through which India's rural labourer would 'be convinced that his effort entitles him to all the privileges that other sectors of society claim and are given'.[118] Given their ongoing affinities with the Congress and CPI, we can perceive Ali and Narayanan as seeking to put pressure on the new Indira Gandhi administration to adopt a more radical stance, aligning themselves with socialist elements within the organization and against conservative figures within both the Congress and the Swatantra Party.[119] Under the ex-Congressman C. Rajagopalachari's leadership, the latter had first emerged in response to the Congress Working Committee's 'Resolution on Agrarian Organizational Pattern' in January

[116] Engerman, *The Price of Aid*, 145, 194-207.
[117] 'Aruna Asaf Ali obituary', *The Guardian*.
[118] 'The Food Debate', *The Patriot*, 13 February 1966, n.p. MS 2141/A/4/16, IWA Papers.
[119] For evidence of such pressure, see, Niclas-Tölle, *The Socialist Opposition*, 202-3.

1959, which had 'affirmed that India's "future agrarian pattern should be that of cooperative joint farming'.[120] An emphasis on radical land reform was therefore evident within leftist circles both inside and outside the Congress in India, as much as in the writings of Joshi and Ash. However, what distinguished IWA demands in diaspora from those of individuals like Ali and Narayanan was the embeddedness of the former within a Maoist global revolutionary movement amidst a divergence shaped by the global contours of the Sino-Soviet Split.

Unlike individuals associated with the Congress and CPI, IWA leaders continued to adopt highly selective and rose-tinted optics when describing the measures that had been implemented over the past two decades or so in Mao's China, which ultimately led to the worst famine in human history.[121] In his 1965 *Mazdoor* article, Joshi maintained that whilst the Congress had 'failed to supply a solution' to recurrent food shortages in India, the PRC, under 'the correct guidance of a Communist Government has been far more successful'.[122] Such sentiments had become increasingly 'taboo' since the late 1950s in India, in the context of worsening relations between Beijing and New Delhi.[123] In contrast, Joshi utilized statistics and analysis to make approving comparisons of Chinese productivity compared to India during the period of the Great Leap, when the CCP had obligated rapid agricultural collectivization through people's communes in the Chinese countryside. This data and its interpretation were drawn from the work of the American journalist Edgar Snow, who had looked to favourably contrast the situation in China with recurring food deprivation in India. In doing so, Snow sought to temper Western reactions towards the former:

[120] Siegel, '"Fantastic Quantities of Food Grains"', 32; see also, Siegel, *Hungry Nation*, 173-7.
[121] Yang Jisheng, *Tombstone: The Great Chinese Famine*, trans. by S. Mosher and G. Jian (Allen Lane, 2012).
[122] Joshi, 'Whose Finger?'.
[123] Siegel, '"Fantastic Quantities of Food Grains"', 31-3.

> China's food supply has steadily improved compared to that of India … In 1958–59, considered a good year in India, when the population was about 420,000,000 the grain harvest was reported at 75,500,000 tons. The Indian figure might be reckoned as high as 85,500,000 tons however if Indian rice were weighed as paddy or uncleaned as it is in China. Even so that would mean a per person gross output about 10% below that of China in the year of her worst disaster of the century, 1960. Nothing in China is comparable to the hunger and beggary one sees on the streets of Calcutta or the villages of Bengal.[124]

The ultimate veracity of Snow's figures is somewhat doubtful.[125] His commentary on the food situation in both countries can be situated within his wider analysis of both the Great Leap and Great Famine in China. His observations and the data contained within *The Other Side of the River* were the culmination of a five-month tour of China under CCP supervision during 1960. In such circumstances, it is likely Snow was kept away from those areas most impacted by the famine, fostering his assertion 'that mass starvation such as China knew almost annually under former regimes no longer occurs'. His own longstanding relationship with the CCP leadership, dating back to the late 1930s, perhaps also shaped his understanding of who was ultimately culpable for the famine's effects: the Great Leap was described as 'a more or less spontaneous development' shaped by the 'frenzied' and imprudent masses in the countryside, ultimately divesting Mao of blame. Snow argued the consequences of the Great Leap were kept from 'the highest leaders of the country' who were 'deceived by [their] own'

[124] Edgar Snow, *The Other Side of the River: Red China Today* (Random House, 1962), 629. Quoted in Joshi, 'Whose Finger?'.
[125] On the questionable nature of these statistics, see, Snow, *Red China Today*, 627; Howard L. Boorman, 'Review: *The Other Side of the River: Red China Today* by Edgar Snow', *Political Science Quarterly*, 78, no. 4 (1963): 603.

cadres. Elsewhere in *The Other Side of the River*, the famine was described as the consequence of 'natural catastrophes' as much as manmade causes.[126] It was this wider context and selective interpretation that informed Snow's specific comparison with India.

Joshi's handling of Snow's China-India comparative is of great significance for this article. Elsewhere, Joshi regularly collected cuttings of Snow's writings, demonstrating the significance he accorded to such pro-Beijing perspectives.[127] Whilst Snow obliquely referenced the Great Famine in the quoted excerpt, Joshi otherwise made no comment on the adverse impacts of the Great Leap in *Mazdoor*. Joshi's selective 'translation' of Maoism amongst diaspora thereby deemphasized elements of the PRC paradigm where they proved politically inexpedient. Snow's own partial account was instead germane because it provided quantifiable and juxtaposable evidence to support the IWA's demand for radical land reform on CCP lines. It was the failure of the Congress government to introduce such reform that had 'failed to solve the food problem, and brought the country to disaster in the last few months'.[128] Ultimately, Joshi's reading of China's Great Leap and Great Famine via Snow is indicative of how the IWA's distinctive response to India's food crisis was shaped through their embeddedness in global Maoist networks.

Conclusion

As Joshi's handling of Snow's China-India comparative suggests, the IWA leadership frequently deployed certain aspects of Maoist tenets and Chinese history to critique current responses and proffer alternative solutions to India's food crisis during the late 1960s. Whilst drawing upon an intellectual tradition apparent within wider leftist critiques of Indian government policy and external interference back 'home', this article has suggested that what

[126] Snow, *The Other Side*, 172–4, 431. Officially, the famine is still referred to as the 'Three Years of Natural Disasters' within the PRC.
[127] See, for example, the cuttings in MS 2141/A/7/21, IWA Papers.
[128] Joshi, 'Whose Finger?'.

distinguished the IWA leadership's positions on India's 'food crisis' throughout this period was the emphasis they placed upon global Maoist optics. Maoism served as the necessary framework that connected the IWA to a global revolutionary movement, in which their critical perspectives on the food crisis were made understandable among diaspora through the circulation of global Maoist ideas. This meant not only critiquing American developmental interventions as 'imperial' but also making comparisons between US and Soviet aid, where the latter served as evidence of both post-Stalin ideological 'revisionism' and the application of 'social imperialism' in India. In this sense, the IWA leadership held contrasting perspectives not only with those on the political right in India, who favoured American technical expertise and support, but also departed from the views of the Congress left, who had fostered connections with the Soviet Union under Nehru's and Indira Gandhi's administrations. In this context, IWA optics also diverged considerably from CPI understandings of the crisis, given ongoing Soviet patronage of the latter.

Key figures in the IWA positively engaged with Mao's portrayal of 'semi-colonial' pre-1949 China to comprehend current circumstances in India. The relevance of this model related to their perception of India's transition to independence as a harbinger of indirect (rather than direct) forms of colonial rule. For IWA luminaries, similarities with pre-1949 China were evident in the existence of an extractive economic approach conducted via indirect forms of imperialism in India. Equally, the implementation of radical land reform based on a Chinese model continued to be articulated by the IWA leadership long after its denigration in official and leftist circles back 'home'. In prescribing this solution to the food crisis, Joshi's *Mazdoor* article downplayed the dreadful consequences of the Great Leap Forward. That Joshi and other IWA figures continued to venerate Mao Zedong Thought was particularly significant in a post-1962 context, when previous affinities with PRC approaches had been modulated elsewhere.

By highlighting these causes and proffering such solutions to India's food crisis, IWA leaders deployed worldviews and idioms emanating from their engagement with transnational Maoist networks and shaped by their understanding of the overlapping contexts of decolonization, the global Cold War, and the Sino-Soviet Split. Such affinities were not established via IWA participation in leftist networks in India. Unable to develop direct contact with the CPI (ML) after Naxalbari, key figures within the IWA instead fashioned links with wider anti-colonial revolutionary movements engaged with Maoism during this period. Such is apparent in Manchanda's visit to Beijing as part of the AAWB Indian delegation, Ash's connections with the PRC Embassy in London and the CPB (ML), Joshi's correspondence with individuals like Sawh and Ebrahim, and the clandestine publication of *Lalkar* from Brussels. It was these links, too, that facilitated access to publications such as the *Peking Review* and *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, as well as awareness of works such as Snow's *The Other Side of the River*. Joshi's selective engagement with Snow's work supports arguments that suggest it was Maoism's 'perplexing, inconsistent mutability' that informed its 'potency, persuasiveness and mobility' in radical transnational networks.[129] Paradoxically, this remained the case even whilst Maoism was frequently perceived as a coherent and fixed ideology that adhered to Marxism-Leninism and combated the presence of revisionism in leftist circles.

The IWA's engagement in global revolutionary and anti-colonial networks indicates the significance of deploying global historical approaches to diaspora studies. By considering how key figures within the IWA looked to China during this period as an alternative ideological home, this article has delineated a specific historical illustration that captures the weight accorded to contexts and conjunctures beyond 'home' and 'host'. Not only does this have important implications for any consideration of the specific history of the IWA: it also has wider implications. By demonstrating the significance of global connection and comparison,

[129] Lovell, *Maoism*, 59.

we are better placed to appreciate how diasporas also historically positioned themselves beyond social formations constituted by fellow in-group members. An emphasis on the British Indian diaspora provides an additional setting for contemplating the impact of global Maoism. Whereas previous work has often focused on the applicability of Mao Zedong Thought in specific national contexts, this article has revealed how Maoist nexuses acted as a distinctive point of confluence among the IWA leadership, demonstrating how connections forged through engagements with global Maoism shaped the IWA's discrete perspectives on the food crisis back 'home'.