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ARTICLE



Breath of Revolution: Ghadar Anti-Colonial Radicalism in North America and the Mexican Revolution

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the links forged between members of the Ghadar Movement and Mexican radical activists and organisers in North America during the early twentieth century. It argues that during the opening two decades of the century, Mexico and its convulsed politics offered radical anti-colonial Indian activists in North America an inspiring example and a source of important tactical, symbolic and ideological resources in their fight against imperialism and oppression. By exploring the points of contact, proximity and affinity between Indian and Mexican radicals in the years prior to and immediately after 1917, I argue that the turbulent politics of revolutionary Mexico and the thrust of Indian anti-colonialism came together in marginal but meaningful ways at a time of global revolutionary change.

KEYWORDS

Ghadar; Indian anarcho-syndicalism; Indian anti-colonialism; Mexican Revolution; Pandurang Khankhoje; radicalism in North America; Ricardo Flores Magón

Whence do you come from, oh light breeze, causing such anxiety and sadness? Who are you?

From every corner of the world, I bring a future of justice; I am the breath of Revolution.

‘*Sopla*’, Práxedes Guerrero, 1910.¹

In the pivotal summer of 1917, a young man known as M.N. Roy crossed the border between the United States and Mexico after being arrested in New York for his involvement in a transnational web of anti-British activities. Roy later recalled that the large and unknown country south of the border was immersed ‘in a state of permanent revolution’ and ‘appeared as the land of promise’. Mexico offered the young fugitive not only an escape route from the transnational apparatus of colonial surveillance, but also a promising prospect in both political and experiential terms. Once in Mexico, and even if unable to proceed further, he would at least get the chance to ‘take active part in a revolution’.² Indeed, in Mexico, he would transit from being an obscure

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1. Práxedes Guerrero, ‘*Sopla*’, *Regeneración* (15 Oct. 1910), p. 2; translation from Spanish by the author. All translations henceforth are by the author.
2. M.N. Roy, *Memoirs* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1964), p. 46.

anti-colonial activist to a major figure of the international Left. Although the story of Roy's stay in Mexico has been told many times,³ in this article, I will argue that the young Roy's arrival in Mexico cannot be seen as a mere historical coincidence or the result of pure contingency; rather, I will show that his presence in revolutionary Mexico was made possible by a series of links—material, ideological, racial and symbolic—that brought together Mexican and Indian radicals associated with the Ghadar Movement on the west coast of North America in the years prior to 1917. I will show that during the opening two decades of the twentieth century, Mexico and its convulsed politics offered Ghadar activists in North America an inspiring example, and was a source of important tactical, symbolic and ideological resources in their fight against imperialism and oppression. In the eyes of the Ghadarites, these links opened a revolutionary horizon that was at once both foreign and strangely familiar. Moreover, these points of contact generated new and exciting tactical and symbolic possibilities which, for a brief time and in unexpected ways, brought together the thrust of Indian anti-colonial radicalism and Mexican revolutionary politics. During the years before the shock wave of the Bolshevik triumph in Russia, the Mexican Revolution (1910–20) appeared in the eyes of this community of Indian migrants as the foremost example of revolutionary politics.

This article seeks to expand our understanding of the role of South Asian agents and networks in the global revolutionary ferment that spread across the world in the opening years of the twentieth century. During this time, numerous radical trends and collectivities emerged in many areas in response to the increasingly violent dynamics created by imperialism and capitalist expansion during the later years of the nineteenth century. As part of this revolutionary moment, it is possible to perceive diverse processes of hybridisation of local and situated political agendas in the light of the impact generated by the spread of radical ideological and political articulations around the world and the emergence of new spaces of exchange and intermediation. Recent work has highlighted the importance of South Asian radical politics in the creation of an 'internationalist moment' of intellectual and ideological exchange marked by the coming together of localised projects of anti-colonial resistance and diverse radical articulation and struggles emerging across Asia, Europe and the Americas.⁴

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3. Michael Goebel, 'Una biografía entre Espacios: M.N. Roy. Del Nacionalismo Indio al Comunismo Mexicano', in *Historia Mexicana*, Vol. 62, no. 4 (248) (April–June 2013), pp. 1459–98; Isabel Huacuja, 'M.N. Roy and the Mexican Revolution: How a Militant Indian Nationalist Became an International Communist', in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 40, no. 3 (2017), pp. 517–30; Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City: Mexico City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 93–168, 248–82; Daniel Kent Carrasco, 'M.N. Roy en México: Cosmopolitismo Intelectual y Contingencia Política en la Creación del PCM', in Carlos Illades (ed.), *Camaradas: Una Nueva Historia del Comunismo en México* (Mexico DF: Secretaría de Cultura y Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2017), pp. 37–71.
 4. Nirode K. Barooah, *Chatto: The Life and Times of an Indian Anti-Imperialist in Europe* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004); Arun Bose, *Indian Revolutionaries Abroad, 1905–1927: Selected Documents* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 2002); Suchetana Chattopadhyay, 'Muhajirs to Bolsheviks: 1917 and Early Communists from Colonial India in Central Asia', paper presented at the Revolutionary Longings Conference, Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 8–10 Mar. 2017; Harald Fischer-Tiné, 'Indian Nationalism and the "World Forces": Transnational and Diasporic Dimensions of the Indian Freedom Movement on the Eve of the First World War', in *Journal of Global History*, Vol. 2, no. 3 (2007), pp. 325–44; and Ali Raza et al. (eds), *The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds, and World Views 1917–1939* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2015).

A central node of this historiographical reappraisal has focused on the activities of the Ghadar Movement. Building on early accounts that interpreted the Ghadar as an early form of militant anti-colonial nationalism,⁵ recent work has enriched our understanding of the trajectories of its members and ideas by framing the tale of the Ghadar through the history of migration,⁶ global intellectual radicalism⁷ and the dialectic between diasporic movements and anti-imperialist politics.⁸ By examining the relevance of Mexican revolutionary politics to the Ghadar, the arguments presented in this essay contribute to this ongoing reappraisal by showing that the history of the affinities forged by members of the Ghadar went beyond the circuits of struggle and exchange fostered by imperial power. Apart from the links that joined them with anti-colonial radicals in other colonial locations like Egypt or Ireland, the Ghadarites in North America were drawn to the revolutionary process taking place south of the border and to the activities of Mexican radicals in California and the American south-west. In this sense, by focusing on the local and global significance of an Indian and Mexican interface in the Americas, this essay advocates for the need to read the history of the Ghadar Movement alongside the international history of the Mexican Revolution⁹ and the transcontinental networks created by radical anarcho-syndicalist organisations active across North America during the years leading up to World War I.¹⁰

The paper is divided into four parts. In the first two, I focus on the anti-colonial radicals who came before Roy: the motley crew behind the Indian Independence League and the *Ghadar* newspaper who, between 1903 and 1917, were actively organising on the west coast of the United States and were in constant contact with Mexican activists and thinkers. I show that these contacts opened up a space of discussion and exchange which facilitated the spread of information regarding the revolutionary upheaval taking place south of the border among Indian immigrants. In the third section, I look at the organising and conspiring that led to the famous Hindu–German conspiracy case to show that during 1915, Mexico and the Mexican Revolution were used by anti-colonial Indian radicals as a cover, an alibi and a useful escape route. In the last section, I focus on the trajectory of Pandurang Khankhoje, an agronomist and

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5. Harish K. Puri, *Ghadar Party: Its Role in India's Struggle for Freedom* (New Delhi: Communist Party of India, 1997); and Harish K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement: A Short History* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2011).
 6. Seema Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny: Race, Surveillance, and Indian Anticolonialism in North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
 7. Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).
 8. See the essays in the special issue, 'The Ghadar Movement', in *Socialist Studies/Études Socialistes*, Vol. 13, no. 2 (Fall 2018).
 9. Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Daniela Spenser, *Stumbling Its Way through Mexico: The Early Years of the Communist International* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011); Christina Heatherton, 'The Color Line and the Class Struggle: The Mexican Revolution and Convergences of Radical Internationalism, 1910–1946', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Southern California, USA, 2012; and Claudio Lomnitz, *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón* (New York: Zone Books, 2014). For this article, I also consulted the Spanish-language edition, Claudio Lomnitz, *El Regreso del Camarada Ricardo Flores Magón* (Mexico DF: Era, 2016), and I refer to this version throughout the text.
 10. Peter Cole et al. (eds), *Wobblies of the World: A Global History of the IWW* (London: Pluto Press, 2018); Peter Cole and Paul van der Walt, 'Crossing the Color Lines, Crossing Continents: Comparing the Radical Politics of the IWW in South Africa and the United States, 1905–1925', in *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies*, Vol. 12, no. 1 (2011), pp. 69–96; and Kenyon Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America* (Urbana/Chicago: Illinois State University Press, 2015).

political activist linked to the Ghadar network who settled in Mexico in 1924. After being one of the central figures of the radical Indian milieu of the west coast in the early years of the twentieth century, in the 1920s, Khankhoje became involved with important figures of the Mexican Left associated with both the Communist International (KOMINTERN) and the Peasant International (KRESTINTERN). The final section forms part of a larger ongoing project focused on Khankhoje's political and ideological entanglements in Mexico during the post-revolutionary decades. The first two sections draw on diverse secondary sources, newspapers and autobiographical texts; the third and fourth sections are structured around the analysis of the Khankhoje papers located at the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in New Delhi, a rich collection of documents, mostly in Spanish, barely studied by historians before now.

Anti-colonial Indian activists and transnational radicalism in California

On 1 November 1913, the first issue of the legendary weekly newspaper, *Ghadar*, was published at the Yugantar Ashram in San Francisco. It marked the first contribution made by Indian immigrants to the growing radical public sphere on the west coast of North America in the opening decades of the twentieth century. Thereafter, a growing number of organisations and leaders of the different strands that formed the varied universe of Indian radical politics on the west coast coalesced around *Ghadar* and its editors. This process brought together groups like the Indian Independence League and the Pacific Coast Hindi Association and figures such as Lala Har Dayal and Pandurang Khankhoje to form what has been described as 'the missing link' and 'source of hidden continuity' between the most radical wing of anti-colonial Indian nationalism and the many-sided internationalist radicalism brewing across the world in the years prior to World War I.¹¹

The *Ghadar* newspaper was the result of a several-years-long process of organising among Indian communities that had begun settling across the North American west coast since at least 1903. In this process of organising, a central role was played by figures like Pandurang Khankhoje, Sohan Singh Bakhna, Kanshi Ram and Lala Har Dayal, the editor of the newspaper. Such men had headed the creation of the Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society in 1912 and the Pacific Coast Hindi Association (PCHA) in 1913 as part of an effort to create a common political platform for the Indian community which was concentrated around Stockton and Sacramento in California, Vancouver in Canada, the Imperial Valley in southern California and Astoria in Oregon. From this collective effort, a political party, also named Ghadar, was formed in 1913; it promoted an eclectic blend of anarchist communism, syndicalism, romantic socialism and militant anti-imperialism.

The arrival, settlement and organising of these men took place against the backdrop of a major process of economic transformation taking place on the west coast, dating from the second half of the nineteenth century. Following the discovery of gold in 1848, California had gone from being an isolated and backward region to become one

11. Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia*, p. 3.

of the most important mining centres in the world and an increasingly important agricultural producer. The completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 linked the west coast to the rest of the United States, greatly increasing the potential for the region's economic growth. As a result, a corporate and labour-intensive form of capitalism rapidly evolved there, which drew workers from around the world and engendered the emergence of international and multiracial enclaves in cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles and urban centres like Stockton, Sacramento, El Centro and Yuba. This in turn generated increasing economic and racial tensions, but also led to new forms of political engagement across language, cultural and ethnic divides. The flow of people and ideas to the enclaves created by capitalist expansion led to the creation of a complex network of radical political groups and the growing exchange of publications, texts and political ideas among socialists, anarchists and syndicalists from diverse backgrounds. During the early years of the century, the region hosted one of the most diverse and cosmopolitan Left-wing movements in the world.¹² However despite the constant efforts of Left-wing organisations to end racial discrimination and prejudice in America's labour movement, racism was deeply entrenched among socialist and anarchist activists of European descent, and negative stereotypes of 'Asians' and Mexicans remained common.

In spite of these ongoing frictions, the west coast of North America, and particularly California, provided a space of great freedom and opportunity for young immigrants. In his memoirs, Pandurang Khankhoje, founder of the PCHA and second-in-command of the initial Ghadar Party, reminisced about his arrival in the US in 1908: 'For the first time in my life', he declared, 'I felt free, safe, and could enjoy for a moment (a) great adventure'.¹³ Many of the figures associated with Ghadar, including Khankhoje, Har Dayal and Dana Gopal Mukherji, were able to not only secure a living wage, but also to study, discuss and move around freely in their adopted land. This freedom contrasted dramatically with the oppressive reality of British India, marked by a harsh regime of surveillance and repression against young nationalists and activists involved in the mobilisation thrust associated with the Swadeshi Movement of the early twentieth century.¹⁴

As well as the opportunity to enrol in institutions of higher education, daily life for Indian immigrants on the west coast became a school of intellectual radicalism and political activism. As part of a stint as an agricultural labourer in Oregon, for example, Khankhoje narrated his encounter with members of the International Workers of the World (IWW, or 'Wobblies') and, through them, his 'first introduction to socialist thought'.¹⁵ In a similar vein, M.N. Roy reminisced about how, in the US, he came into contact with diverse intellectual and political trends including anarcho-syndicalism, socialism and pacifism defended by the various radical circles.¹⁶ During these years, many strident Indian anti-colonial nationalists like Roy and Khankhoje learned about

12. Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, p. 88.

13. Savitri Sawhney, *I Shall Never Ask for Pardon: A Memoir of Pandurang Khankhoje* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2005), p. 64.

14. Sucheta Chattopadhyay, 'Being Naren Bhattacharji', in Vijay Prashad (ed.), *Communist Histories, Vol. 1* (New Delhi: LeftWord Books, 2016), pp. 29–71.

15. Sawhney, *I Shall Never Ask for Pardon*, p. 83.

16. Roy, *Memoirs*, p. 27.

working-class causes which went beyond narrow anti-colonial agendas to open the door to a new internationalist horizon of thought and action. The fluid ideological climate of the region provided men like Khankhoje with an opportunity to develop new ties of camaraderie and to reconsider their politics in the light of other radical ideas taking shape and being discussed around them.

Among these new points of reference, the political process taking place in Mexico became especially salient and important. Once again, the experience of Khankhoje is particularly revealing. Having spent some time as a student of agriculture at the University of California Berkeley, in 1909, Khankhoje secured a place in the prestigious Mount Tamalpais Military Academy at San Rafael, California. Khankhoje's presence at Tamalpais demonstrated the need felt by Ghadar members to gain proficiency in military techniques as part of their anti-colonial activism. The Ghadar Movement was seen as a continuation of the 1857 Mutiny,¹⁷ and important leaders like Khankhoje saw violence and armed action as an imminent part of the movement's activities.¹⁸ It was there that, through a Mexican acquaintance, he first learned about the events occurring in Mexico. He was struck most potently by the story of the 'great leaders', Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón, who were described to him as the most important leaders of the virtuous struggle being fought by the Mexican people 'against wealthy and oppressive landowners'. For Khankhoje, the appeal of the struggle in Mexico became coupled to an existential affinity that emerged between Indian and Mexican immigrants on the west coast. He later recalled how, while working, he was 'often taken for a Mexican'. He was indeed surprised to confirm that 'those Mexicans', unlike others grouped together under the amorphous label of 'Asians', looked just like him.¹⁹ As we will see in the next section, in the years leading up to and immediately following the appearance of the Ghadar, the engagement between Indian radicals and the entourage of the Flores Magón brothers grew considerably. In the early 1910s, the racial and experiential affinities experienced by men like Khankhoje with Mexican workers and radical politics contributed to the coming together of the thrust of the Mexican Revolution with the wide universe of Indian anti-colonialism.

The Mexican cause

The first major social revolution of the twentieth century, the Mexican Revolution, inaugurated diverse trajectories of thought and political action that had a direct impact on radicals acting north of the US–Mexico border. Among Left-wing activists and organisers on the west coast during the early 1910s, the events taking place in Mexico were largely interpreted as a broad mobilisation against capitalist imperialism in defence of working-class solidarity and in favour of the creation of a new revolutionary culture.²⁰ For activists of all nationalities on the west coast, the recurring news of the social mobilisation taking place south of the border and the writings of famous

17. Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*.

18. Sawhney, *I Shall Never Ask for Pardon*, p. 30.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 63–72.

20. Spenser, *Stumbling Its Way through Mexico*, p. 2.

journalists like John Kenneth Turner and Ethel Duffy painted a picture of Mexico as a land of revolutionary upheaval fighting against injustice and slavery.

In the growth of support for ‘The Mexican Cause’ among Left-wing circles in California, including those involved with the Ghadar, the activities of Mexican anarcho-syndicalist groups associated with the Mexican Liberal Party (PLM) headed by Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón were of crucial importance.²¹ Ricardo, the main leader of the PLM and editor of *Regeneración* newspaper, was an active union organiser in California and southern Arizona. An eclectic thinker, he combined in his writings strands of libertarian communism, romantic nationalism and early socialism, while in his political activity he was a convinced anarcho-syndicalist. In the years leading up to 1914, the Magonistas established themselves as a well-known group among labour unions and activists in California, Texas, Arizona and Oregon.²² Mexican workers and organisers collaborated with other non-white unions like the Furesuno Rodo Domeikai (Fresno Labor League), which was created in 1909 with Mexican support and which rallied more than 2,000 Japanese workers.²³ As a result of their active political involvement and their rejection of racial divides between workers, the Magonistas seemed to non-white migrant workers on the west coast as an example that invalidated the degrading stereotypes that linked Indians, Mexicans and other communities with images of sloth, ignorance and corruption. Due to their salience to foreign groups active in the US during the opening years of the twentieth century, the Mexican anarchists appeared as an important model for activists involved in Ghadar. According to a biographer of Har Dayal, he was a declared admirer of the Flores Magón brothers.²⁴ Moreover, during the last years of his life, Ricardo Flores Magón, locked in a cell and going blind in Leavenworth Federal Prison, was seen as an important symbol of the selfless struggle against oppression by Ghadar leader Taraknath Das.²⁵

A few identifiable traces of collaboration between Indian and Mexican radicals can be found in the press of the day. By the time *Ghadar* started to be published by the Yugantar press, *Regeneración* had set a decisive precedent for non-English-language newspaper success on the west coast. *Regeneración* had such a reputation and published such a large amount of news relating to ‘Wobblie’ activities that, in 1913, an observer erroneously called it the “Hispanic” weekly of the IWW.²⁶ The links between the Magonista mouthpiece and *Ghadar* point to the possibility of tracing the dialogue or, at the very least, the mutual recognition between their respective editors and collaborators. In 1914, for example, *Land and Liberty*, a newspaper edited by William C. Owen, also began to be published from the Yugantar Ashram. Owen, a former International Workers Association member, was a well-known anarchist who had for years been the

21. For more on the ‘Mexican Cause’, see Lomnitz, *El Regreso del Camarada Ricardo Flores Magón*, pp. 19–39.

22. William D. Raat, *Revoltosos: Mexico’s Rebels in the United States, 1903–1923* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1981), pp. 65–83; and Philip Mellinger, *Race and Labor in Western Copper: The Fight for Equality, 1896–1918* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), pp. 35–7.

23. Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State*, p. 104.

24. Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia*, p. 67.

25. Christina Heatherton, ‘University of Radicalism: Ricardo Flores Magón and Leavenworth Penitentiary’, in *American Quarterly*, Vol. 66, no. 3 (Fall 2014), pp. 557–81.

26. Paul Frederick Brissenden, *The Launching of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1913), p. 82, cited in Kenyon Zimmer, ‘“A Cosmopolitan Crowd”: Transnational Anarchists, the IWW, and the American Radical Press’, in Peter Cole et al. (eds), *Wobblies of the World: A Global History of the IWW* (London: Pluto Press, 2018), pp. 28–38.

editor of the English-language page of *Regeneración* and was a well-known champion of transnational anti-imperialism. This internationalism was also defended by Mexican anarcho-syndicalists. On 18 April 1914, the front page of *Regeneración* printed a strong indictment of the unjust arrest of Har Dayal, who was described by the Magonistas as a 'great Hindustan philosopher and champion of Social Revolution'.²⁷

Outside the universe of the radical press and union activism, the ambiguous position occupied by both Mexicans and Indians in the racial hierarchy of the time meant members of the two communities came together in the hustle and bustle of daily life. The closeness between them is perhaps most clearly evidenced by the emergence of a community of Punjabi–Mexicans during the 1910s in California. Due to California's anti-miscegenation laws, marriages between people of different races were unlawful. However, after 1916, marriage licences were routinely issued to Punjabi men and Mexican women, leading to the rapid consolidation of a new community created by shared social circumstances and cultural affinities.²⁸ Not only were Indians and Mexicans united in a common condition of landless immigrant wage labour caught up in the dynamics of capitalism in the US, they were also brought together by a shared exclusion from easily identifiable racial categories like 'Black', 'Asian' or 'White'.

Beyond these identifiable meeting points, it is perhaps not too adventurous to point to a few traits of the struggle of Mexicans like the Magonistas, which must have been attractive to Indian anti-colonial radicals in the US. The Magonistas framed their politics as part of a fight for the recovery of a supposedly traditional social order ravaged by the implantation of Western models and capitalist imperialism. In 1914, Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara, a member of the inner circle of the Magonista Junta, published a book in which he declared:

Everything that is bad about what we know as Mexican is the work of a small, parasitic section originally foreign to the nation; and all that is good about what we consider to be Mexican (and about which the world in general knows very little)—arts, crafts, poetry, kindness and good faith, the heroic struggle for democracy—is the work of the working classes and the native races.²⁹

For the Magonistas, revolution in Mexico had to include a re-evaluation of the past of these 'native races', the greatness of which served to prove that Mexicans could effectively rule themselves.³⁰ The need to defend an imagined tradition of an authentically non-Western social order echoed constructs of a virtuous 'Indian civilisation' that had been defended by Indian anti-colonialists of various hues since the late nineteenth century.³¹ In the case of the Ghadar, this crystallised in the defence of a tradition of 'Indic enlightenment' fed by local traditions of dissent and protest.³² It is reasonable to

27. 'Contra la Deportación de Har Dayal', *Regeneracion* (18 April 1914), p. 1.

28. Karen Isaksen Leonard, *Making Ethnic Choices: California's Punjabi–Mexican Americans* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992).

29. Lázaro Gutiérrez de Lara and Edgcumb Pinchon, *The Mexican People: Their Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Doubleday, 1914), p. 5, cited in Claudio Lomnitz, *El Regreso del Camarada Ricardo Flores Magón* (Mexico DF: Era, 2016), p. 201; parentheses in original.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

31. See Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *Talking Back: The Idea of Civilization in the India Nationalist Discourse* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011); and the young Gandhi's defence of Indian civilisation in M.K. Gandhi and Anthony Parel (eds), *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

32. Radha D'Souza, 'The Conceptual World of the Ghadarites', in the special issue 'The Ghadar Movement', *Socialist Studies/Études Socialistes*, Vol. 13, no. 2 (Fall 2018), pp. 15–37.

assume that the promotion of *indios* (indigenous peoples) as defenders of this virtuous tradition brandished by Mexican revolutionary leaders like the Magonistas might have spurred the enthusiasm of these Indians who, far from home in America, learned about the struggle of a non-white people in a neighbouring country called Mexico. The contingent emergence of these new sites of exchange allowed them, perhaps for the first time, to think of the struggle against Western forms of economic and symbolic dominance as a collective global enterprise. In the next section, I will show that for the Ghadarites, as a result of the engagement between Indian radicals and German emissaries engaged in anti-British activities in the 1910s, Mexico soon went from being the abstract setting for an inspirational revolt to a tangible and accessible territory available as an escape route, a smuggling site and a potential training camp.

The Mexican cover-up

Towards the end of 1914, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Imperial Germany began instrumentalising a transcontinental network of support for revolutionary groups that aimed to affect the war and economic efforts of Germany's European rivals, the British and Russian empires. This initiative was led by men such as Gottfried von Jagow and Arthur Zimmermann, author of the famous telegram that, in 1917, precipitated the entry of the United States into World War I.³³ Due to the ambitious geographical scope of the German project, some decades ago, it was proposed that imperial Germany, rather than Soviet Russia or China, should be seen as the true pioneer of international revolutionary subversion.³⁴ As part of efforts geared towards destabilising the British Empire, a group of anti-colonial Indians settled in Germany was recruited to form the Berlin Committee. The original plans of the committee included preparing an expedition to Kabul to convince the emir of Afghanistan to invade India from the northwest, a campaign to spread subversive propaganda among Indian recruits in the British Army in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, and the shipment of guns and ammunition to the east coast of India to encourage armed rebellion from within.³⁵ Given the distance between British India and Germany and the complex situation in West and Central Asia following the beginning of World War I, the revolutionary groups of Indian workers and activists in the United States, a country still removed from the international conflict, appeared as valuable strategic allies for the German authorities and the members of the Berlin Committee.

Soon the destiny of Ghadar became entwined with the plans of the German government. In the last months of 1914, Lala Har Dayal and Heramba Lal Gupta, who had

33. This famous telegram was sent on 16 January 1917 by Zimmermann—then acting as head of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs—to the German ambassador in Mexico, Heinrich Von Eckardt. The coded message instructed the ambassador to fix an alliance with the Mexican government against the possible entry of the United States into the war in Europe. The Mexican government was assured of financial and military assistance and, in the case of a German victory, recovery of the territories ceded to the US in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo of 1848. The decoding of the telegram by British intelligence agents was a major factor in the entry of the United States into the war in April 1917. For a classic account of this diplomatic imbroglio, see Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Zimmermann Telegram* (New York: Random House, 1985).

34. Robert Carver North, *M.N. Roy's Mission to China: The Communist-Kuomintang Split of 1927* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), cited in Thomas G. Fraser, 'Germany and Indian Revolution, 1914–1918', in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 12, no. 2 (April 1977), p. 255.

35. Barooah, *Chatto*, p. 62.

fled the US at the beginning of the war, found themselves surviving in Berlin thanks to the support of the network associated with the Berlin Committee. While Dayal quickly severed his connection with Ghadar, Gupta was designated to liaise between the German authorities in the US and the members of the committee. After returning to North America, Gupta kept in constant contact with members of the German foreign service between 1915 and 1917, including notably with Captain Franz von Pappen and agents Gustav H. Jacobsen, Albert Wehde and Paul Boehn. From them, Gupta received significant amounts of money destined to fund anti-British agitations.³⁶

The German-funded Ghadar plot focused on a plan to ship a cargo of guns and ammunition to British India and deliver them to radical anti-colonial groups in Bengal. The baroque machinations of this transcontinental group, which would later hit the headlines of the American press with sensationalist reports of a ‘Hindu–German conspiracy’, marked the entry of many Ghadarites into the historical record, and reflected the tight interlacing of their activities and the strategic objectives of Imperial Germany during the early years of World War I. From the start, the plan unfolded in perplexing ways. In January 1915, a load of eleven containers filled with guns and ammunition was purchased by German consular authorities in New York and sent across the country to San Diego. The original plan was to ship the cargo in early April from San Diego to Socorro Island, a small Mexican territory 400 miles off the west coast of Mexico, on board a ship named the *Annie Larsen*. On Socorro Island, the weapons would be transferred to the *Maverick*, an ‘old oil-tanker’ bought from the Standard Oil Company in San Francisco by Ram Chandra, who had assumed leadership of Ghadar after Har Dayal’s departure. The crew of the *Maverick* would then transport the cargo to a port near Calcutta (now Kolkata). The date set for the two ships’ rendezvous was the last week of April 1915.³⁷

It was now that the spectre of the Mexican Revolution was used as a cover-up. Shortly after its arrival in San Diego, the cargo aroused the suspicion of the American authorities; however, the ‘impression’ was soon created that ‘the stuff’, which had been legally acquired in New York, ‘was intended for the revolutionists, of either one faction or the other, in Mexico’. This seemed confirmed with the appearance of one Juan Bernardo Bowen,³⁸ who presented legal documents authorising him to move the weapons from San Diego to the port of San Blas in the Mexican state of Nayarit. Having completed all the formalities, the *Annie Larsen* set sail from San Diego for Topolobampo in Sinaloa state on 8 March 1915.³⁹ Despite the fact that the ship left port well before schedule, the Mexican Revolution cover story seemed to have been accepted by the Americans. However, the early departure of the ship under the authority of the mysterious Bowen ruined the plan originally outlined by the Indian and German subversives. Despite Bowen’s declaration to the American authorities, the

36. Transcript of District Attorney Joseph Flemming’s statement before a jury, undated, Pandurang Khankhoje Papers (PK), Subject Files (SF) 2, pp. 2–11, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (henceforth NMML).

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 22–35.

38. Bowen was later discovered to be an alias used by a Bernard Manning, who was among the 32 people sentenced in the San Francisco trial against participants in the ‘Hindu–German conspiracy’ in 1917, along with important Ghadar leaders like Taraknath Das and the German agent Franz Bopp; ‘Appendix XII: The San Francisco Trial’, in Malwinderjit Singh Waraich and Harinder Singh (eds), *Ghadar Movement Original Documents, Vol. 1: Lahore Conspiracy Cases I and II* (Chandigarh: Unistar Books, 2008), p. 473.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 35–6.

Annie Larsen immediately headed for Socorro Island, where it arrived nearly two months before the set date for the rendezvous with the *Maverick*, which would not leave the coast of California until 23 April.⁴⁰ Having no alternative plan, the crew of the *Annie Larsen* was forced to wait even though their supplies were being slowly depleted. After three weeks, the sailors were running out of water and ‘into a lot of trouble ... and all kinds of mix-ups’. When the *Maverick* failed to arrive on time, the stranded crew was forced to ‘hunt wild goats (and) pick up stragglers’ to avoid starvation. Eventually, they were unable to wait any longer and set sail for Acapulco. They ‘wandered around until the 29 of June 1915, when they put into the port of Hoquiam, Washington [state]’, where the cargo was finally seized by the American customs authorities.⁴¹

Despite confiscation of the cargo, the explanation that the weapons were meant for a revolutionary faction in Mexico was accepted and the case was dropped. However, inquiries were reopened in March 1916 when Alleyne Ireland, an Englishman who claimed to be a reporter for *The New York Times*, visited the office of District Attorney John Preston in San Francisco. Ireland claimed to have more information regarding the *Annie Larsen*’s strange trip, linking its voyage to the clandestine activities of the Ghadar Party which had been in the sights of the Californian authorities since 1913. Preston, who had been involved in compiling files against the British and German consulates for supposed violations of American neutrality laws in 1915, was immediately interested.⁴² During the following months, Ireland shared with Preston information gathered by the British intelligence services evidencing the joint work of German agents and radical Indian nationalists behind the failed shipment. This led to the famous *Maverick–Annie Larsen* trial held between November 1916 and April 1917, which went on to become the longest and most expensive in the history of the United States.⁴³

The Mexican cover-up had been blown. Nevertheless, the importance of Mexico for Indo-German plotting did not end there. Following the detection of Ghadar members in the conspiracy, a widespread crackdown on radical Indian activists across the United States was put in place. Shortly thereafter, another English informant, Charles Lamb, notified Preston’s team about an escape plan devised by Irish and Indian radicals with German assistance, in which ‘more than two hundred’ accused men would seek to escape confinement by fleeing to Mexico. Among this group of fugitives was the second-in-command of Ghadar, Bhagwan Singh, who was arrested while attempting to cross into Mexico in the border town of Naco, Arizona, on 18 April 1917.⁴⁴ This final detail of the unravelling of the Hindu–German conspiracy shows that for the parties behind its planning, Mexico and its convoluted politics were factors of great relevance, which were used not only as cover stories to avoid detection, but also as a possible escape route in case of detection.

40. F.C. Isemonger and James Slattery, *An Account of the Ghadr Conspiracy* (Lahore: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1919), cited in Matthew Erin Plowman, ‘The British Intelligence Station in San Francisco during the First World War’, in *Journal of Intelligence History*, Vol. 12, no. 1 (2013), p. 2.

41. Transcript of District Attorney Joseph Flemming’s statement before a jury, undated, PK, SF, 2, pp. 2–11, NMML.

42. Cited in Plowman, ‘The British Intelligence Station’, p. 16.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.

There is one last loose end in this tangled plot. We still have not considered the destiny of the *Maverick* following the seizure of the *Annie Larsen* by the American authorities. Having failed to secure the latter's cargo on Socorro Island, the *Maverick* kept to its original route to Java where it was met by an emissary of Calcutta's radical anti-colonial circles. This young emissary, who had travelled to Java in anticipation of obtaining the missing cargo of arms, was none other than Narendra Bhattacharya, who would soon adopt the famous pseudonym M.N. Roy. Some months later, he boarded a ship to the United States, once again with German help. He was surely unaware that he would end up replicating the failed strategy followed by Bhagwan Singh and be forced to cross the border into revolutionary Mexico in the summer of 1917.

Pandurang Khankhoje comes to Mexico

In 1911, Pandurang Khankhoje, founder of the Indian Independence League, an agricultural scientist trained at Berkeley and at Corvallis College, Oregon, and an important figure in the Ghadar organisation, crossed the border from Calexico in California to Mexicali in Mexico eager to learn more about the revolutionary events taking place there. What he found initially ignited his enthusiasm: in the vicinity of the city taken by the Magonista forces, the agronomist found plenty of arable land which could be easily irrigated using water from the Colorado River. 'For a fleeting moment', according to his memoirs, 'the beauty of the barrage tempted [me] to dream of settling down to farm the land'. However, following a more detailed analysis of the situation, Khankhoje abandoned his bucolic daydreams and his plans to join the anarchist revolt: '(t)he situation in Mexico shocked me. The revolution was much more violent than I'd thought (and) bands of rogues and bandits roam the countryside'.⁴⁵ Despite this initial shock, Khankhoje did not abandon the prospect of establishing a training camp in Baja California, from whence he thought it possible to prepare a military force capable of travelling back to British India to head an anti-colonial uprising.⁴⁶ Even if Khankhoje's plans never materialised, it is clear that by the early 1910s, the Ghadarites had become aware of the situation in the country south of the border and the possibilities it offered, in contrast to the surveillance spreading across the United States.

Khankhoje's relationship with Mexico preceded his fleeting visit of 1911 and, as we will see below, it would culminate in a three-decade-long stay in the country. Having arrived in the United States in 1906, his first contacts with Mexico came through the friendship forged with Mexican cadets at the Tamalpais Military Academy, where he enrolled in 1909, and his camaraderie with farm workers linked to the various unions backed by the Magonistas and the IWW in the following years. At some point during 1913, in San Francisco, Khankhoje made the acquaintance of Mexican diplomat Ramón P. Denegri, who had been sent to California to procure 'war munitions' for the revolutionary effort in early 1913.⁴⁷ Denegri later became a central figure in the post-

45. Sawhney, *I Shall Never Ask for Pardon*, pp. 93–4.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 100; and Emily C. Brown, *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975), p. 134.

47. Sawhney, *I Shall Never Ask for Pardon*, pp. 63–73; and Marte R. Gómez, *Historia de la Comisión Nacional Agraria* (México: Centro de Investigaciones Agrarias, Secretaría de Agricultura y Ganadería, 1975), p. 308.

revolutionary land reform efforts in Mexico as head of the agrarian commission set up in 1917, and he was instrumental in Khankhoje's Mexican career.

However, and despite these early contacts, Khankhoje followed a circuitous route to Mexico. In the summer of 1914, shortly after Har Dayal left the United States, Khankhoje fled to Constantinople, where he joined a group led by German diplomat and spy Wilhelm Wassmuss; the group had been commissioned with organising anti-British activities in Persia following the start of World War I. Wassmuss headed a number of 'exotic adventures among the tribes of Southern Persia' during 1915 and 1916 that aimed at weakening Russian and British positions there and in northern Afghanistan. The so-called 'Lawrence of Persia', Wassmuss accidentally provided British intelligence with one of its most important weapons during the war: while avoiding imminent capture, he abandoned a notebook full of official German codes that were used to decipher, among many other documents, the famous Zimmermann telegram of 1917.⁴⁸ For his part, Khankhoje, who felt 'very happy to be away from the Western World', took advantage of his stay in Persia to establish contact with the ruler of the southern state of Fars, Emir 'Ashayer. The emir was evidently impressed with Khankhoje's skills and named him 'minister of education' and 'director of commerce and agriculture'. When Khankhoje left Fars, he travelled on a Persian passport and with a document identifying him as the emir's business representative abroad.⁴⁹

Following the end of the war, Khankhoje settled in Berlin; from there, he travelled to Moscow, the new favourite destination of anti-imperialist revolutionaries from around the world. In the new Soviet capital, he contacted M.N. Roy, who had rapidly climbed the ladder of the international communist hierarchy after arriving in Russia as a representative of the Mexican Communist Party, which he had helped to found in 1919.⁵⁰ But due to quarrels caused by differences between Roy and the members of the Berlin Committee, Khankhoje was forced to leave Moscow and return to Berlin, where he lived until late 1923, earning a living as a door-to-door salesman.⁵¹ In January 1924, following a series of disagreements with his Indian comrades and sick of life in Berlin, Khankhoje sailed for Mexico.

Khankhoje's motives for choosing Mexico as his destination are unclear. He later fuzzily claimed that his memories of 'Mexican revolutionaries ... with their liberal views and their compassion for the poor' fuelled the feeling that 'he could be of some use in that country'.⁵² However, the presence in Mexico of Heramba Lal Gupta, an old friend from the Ghadar years and a major player in the 'Hindu-German conspiracy', must have had some influence on this odd decision. Gupta, who later secured a position as a professor at the National University in Mexico City, had spent some years in Mexico City where he had established contact with various political and cultural figures of the day. After publishing a Spanish translation of Rabindranath Tagore's play, *Chitra*, in 1919,⁵³ Gupta contributed to a number of magazines and journals, and mingled with

48. Thomas Hughes, 'The German Mission to Afghanistan, 1915–1916', in *German Studies Review*, Vol. 25, no. 3 (Oct. 2002), pp. 447–76 (455).

49. Documents signed by His Excellency, the Emir of Ghanshghai State, Fars-Persia, Emir 'Ashayer, Ghanshghai Aspas, 3 Nov. 1921, PK, SF 3, pp. 9, 11, NMML.

50. See Kent Carrasco, '*M.N. Roy en México*'.

51. Sawhney, *I Shall Never Ask for Pardon*, pp. 215–20.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

the international Left-wing bohemian crowd of the city during the 1920s, a group which included figures such as Tina Modotti, Carleton Beals, Edward Weston and Anita Brenner. Despite the scarce information we possess about Gupta, Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo attributes, correctly in my view, his presence in Mexico City to his former acquaintanceship with Roy and the German authorities.⁵⁴

Whatever the reasons behind his decision to move to Mexico, on arriving, Khankhoje quickly drew upon his old west coast contacts and scientific expertise to secure himself a place in the rapidly changing post-revolutionary scene. He initially turned to Denegri, who was then in charge of the Ministry of Agriculture in General Álvaro Obregón's government. Through his old acquaintance, Khankhoje secured a job as a teacher in the National School of Agriculture, which had been recently relocated to the Chapingo Hacienda on the outskirts of Mexico City.⁵⁵ Denegri had headed the move of the school from its original site in Mexico City to Chapingo in 1923 as part of President Obregón's extensive programme of agrarian and educational reform. Relocated to a reclaimed hacienda—the symbol of the exploitative system of land tenure and economic model of pre-revolutionary Mexico—the school aimed to embody the revolution's radical agrarian project, which brought together the libertarian 'voice of protest' of the Magonistas and the yearnings of the Zapatista peasants who had adopted the slogan 'Land and Liberty' as their war cry.⁵⁶ Khankhoje quickly became involved in the creation of novel 'experimental fields' at Chapingo, where new techniques of 'crop improvement' were developed to benefit the *campesinos* of the Texcoco region. These activities, which were aimed at developing 'seeds capable of resisting disease, frost and drought', rapidly drew the attention of Marte R. Gómez, director of the school, who advocated the donation of more than 25 acres of reclaimed land in order to continue Khankhoje's experiments.⁵⁷

As a result of the enthusiastic reception of and great interest in Khankhoje's experiments with corn seeds from Chapingo's authorities, the Indian agronomist soon found himself involved in the dynamics between the Mexican communists and the radical agrarian circles in post-revolutionary Mexico. During his first months at Chapingo, Khankhoje became friends with the communist artist Diego Rivera, who, between 1924 and 1928, was decorating the chapel of the hacienda. Through Rivera, Khankhoje met militant communist artists and activists like the famous Italian photographer, Tina Modotti, who collaborated with Khankhoje to document the latter's experimental work at Chapingo.⁵⁸ The impact of his work among the communist artists in Mexico during the 1920s is made clear by his inclusion in one of Rivera's most important public murals in the Ministry of Education in Mexico City, where Khankhoje appears wearing

54. Tenorio-Trillo, *I Speak of the City*, pp. 252–3.

55. Oficio número 91992 de la Oficialía Mayor, Departamento de Administración, Sección de Personal, 11 de mayo, 1924, PK, SF 4, p. 24, NMML.

56. Gómez, *Historia de la Comisión Nacional Agraria*, pp. 21–3.

57. Pandurang Khankhoje, 'Nuevas Variedades del Maíz', in *Boletín de Investigación: Estación Experimental Agrícola, Escuela Nacional de Agricultura*, Vol. 1 (1930), p. 5.

58. Tina Modotti's photographs are perhaps the best known of and most eloquent testimony to Khankhoje's early years in Mexico. They show the results of the hybrid crop specimens developed by Khankhoje, and his work as a teacher, organiser and agronomist in Chapingo, Mexico state, and in Veracruz state. They are available online, and the originals are kept in the Fototeca Nacional in Pachuca, Mexico.

a red star on his sleeve and handing loaves of bread to a table of old men, workers, peasants and children.

In December 1924, less than a year after arriving in Mexico, Khankhoje's experimental work figured prominently in the debates of the Second Congress of the League of Agrarian Communities of the State of Veracruz (LCAEV), headed by the agrarian leader and founder of the Peasant International (KRESTINTERN), Úrsulo Galván. The LCAEV sought to present itself as the agrarian complement of the Mexican Communist Party (PCM), and promoted a radical programme that mixed the ideal of communal ownership with the collectivisation of land as its highest aim.⁵⁹ At the 1924 congress, the Free Schools of Agriculture were created. Their aim was to take agricultural education to the peasant classes, especially adult peasants, and to provide practical and scientific knowledge that would contribute to agricultural production, rural co-operatives and the development of an anti-capitalist revolutionary pedagogy.⁶⁰ As a result of his work in the fields of Chapingo, Khankhoje was named director of these Free Schools and he considerably expanded their activity. By 1928, there were six campuses in the rural regions surrounding Mexico City,⁶¹ and by 1933, the project had been implemented in Veracruz, where five more schools were created.⁶² Moreover, in June 1932, Khankhoje was named a member of the 'Department of Technical Agricultural Engineering' of the LCAEV, and led a tour of Veracruz promoting the activities of the league.⁶³ Khankhoje's ascending trajectory among the post-revolutionary Left in Mexico culminated in 1935, with his being named chief of the Office of Agricultural Promotion of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Lázaro Cárdenas administration.⁶⁴

Khankhoje's stay in Mexico has many and contrasting dimensions which merit a longer and more detailed analysis.⁶⁵ However, for the purposes of this article, it is worth pointing out that following his arrival in Mexico in 1924, the itinerant agronomist occupied a relevant yet understudied role in the history of the Left in Mexico. At the same time, his story, merely outlined in these pages, highlights the links forged between followers of divergent radical political trends of the early twentieth century, as well as the parallels and meeting points of the revolutionary processes taking shape in locations outside Europe in the years prior to and immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

59. Jaime Irving Reynoso, *El Agrarismo Radical en México en la Década de 1920: Úrsulo Galván, Primo Tapia y José Guadalupe Rodríguez (una Biografía Política)* (México: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de las Revoluciones de México, 2009), p. 26.

60. Aremio Cruz León and Marcelino Ramírez-Castro, 'Escuelas Libres de Agricultura de México: Proyecto de la Liga de Comunidades Agrarias y Antecedentes de las Escuelas Campesinas', in *Revista de Geografía Agrícola*, Vol. 57 (July–Dec. 2016), p. 145.

61. Sawhney, *I Shall Never Ask for Pardon*, p. 245.

62. Ing. Florencio Palomo Valencia, director general del Ministerio de Agricultura y Fomento, a Pandurang Khankhoje, 10 de Junio, 1933, PK, SF 4, p. 40, NMML.

63. José García, presidente de la Liga de Comunidades Agrarias del Estado de Veracruz, a Pandurang Khankhoje [sic], 1 de Junio de 1932; and Antonio Echegaray, presidente de la Liga Nacional Campesina 'Úrsulo Galván', a Pandurang Khankhoje, 5 de Julio de 1932, PK, SF 6, pp. 1, 5, NMML.

64. Oficio número 03540 de la Tesorería de la Federación, 1 de Enero de 1935, PK, SF 4, p. 24, NMML.

65. For more on Khankhoje's role as a scientist, teacher and agricultural expert in Mexico, see Daniel Kent Carrasco, 'De Chapingo a Sonora: Pandurang Khankhoje en México y el Tránsito del Agrarismo a la Agroindustria', in *Historia Mexicana*, Vol. 7, no. 1 (July–Sept. 2020), pp. 375–421.

Final remarks: The Mexican Revolution and Indian anti-colonial nationalism in the early twentieth century

The revolutionary moment of the opening years of the twentieth century was marked by the emergence of new sites of exchange and organisation across the world and the formation of hybrid responses and reactions to the increasingly violent dynamics created by imperialism, racism and capitalist expansion. This was especially meaningful for those coming from colonial and non-Western regions who, perhaps for the first time, had the means to think about the struggle against Western forms of economic and symbolic dominance as a collective global enterprise. As we have seen in the previous pages, the western and south-western regions of the United States emerged as one of the most important arenas for this emerging brand of ‘subversive internationalism’ in the years leading up to 1917.⁶⁶

Before the triumph of the Bolsheviks in Russia and their promotion of an internationalist project of global revolution, there had been no event capable of rallying these diverse radical strands together in defence of a common cause. However, during the early 1910s, the Mexican Revolution offered a symbolic and ideological point of reference and a powerful example of the possibilities of political transformation for members of the Ghadar present in the United States. For figures like Pandurang Khankhoje, Heramba Lal Gupta and M.N. Roy, the profound changes taking place in Mexico during the first two decades of the twentieth century evidenced the revolutionary potential of non-European actors at a moment of increasing anti-colonial unrest and profound questioning of Western cultural and political superiority. As part of their craving for revolution, these itinerant anti-colonialists organising close to the Mexico–US border and in the face of British imperialism, engaged actively in deciphering, learning from and, in some cases, appropriating the thrust of the Mexican Revolution.

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66. Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier, ‘Introduction’, in Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier (eds), *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s–1930s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 11.