
Spies and Bomb-Throwers

In May 1910, the stout, bronchial, philandering Edward VII died of pneumonia. His unspectacular reign had only begun in his sixtieth year when, as a result of the death of his mother Queen Victoria, he had been drawn from among the ranks of the unemployed to become King. During his nine years on the throne he had snorted at Lloyd George's budget proposals, made substantial amounts of money with the assistance of the financier Sir Ernest Cassel, and sought succour and comfort from his mistress, Alice Keppel. The bluff monarch used her as a tactful and effective conduit to his ministers, some of whom he found 'deplorably common'. After his death, Edward was replaced as King Emperor by his rather straitlaced son George, a stiff, dull, unimaginative character with a tobacco-stained beard and a sober approach to public duties.

King George V's coronation in 1911 was a spectacular propaganda coup, a myriad of Indian princes and imperial prime ministers filling Westminster Abbey for the seven-hour ceremony. His role as ruler of the British Empire was re-emphasized later that year, when he and Queen Mary sailed across the Arabian Sea and he became the first reigning British monarch to visit India. This was the age of high imperialism, when brute force was to an extent forsaken in favour of pomp as a means of asserting authority. The strategy succeeded in a limited way, although the British were perhaps more impressed by it than their subjects.

Huge celebrations and parades were arranged for the royal visit. In an amazing feat of organization, a giant *darbar* (see glossary) was held in Delhi, involving officials and potentates from all over India, numerous tented camps and even the laying of a light railway system with sixteen stations. Security was tight, and a twenty-one-year-old Irish Protestant called Philip Vickery, freshly commissioned into the Indian Police, was given the awesome job of guarding the King Emperor's cream 'bedroom tent' every night.

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New tables of precedence were printed, cinematographic photographers appointed, maps of the various miniature tented cities prepared, a polo ground dusted down, crowds brought in by train from the Punjab to cheer, and a photograph of the new ruler distributed to every village in India. Elaborate processions took place, the five-year-old Nawab of Bahawalpur riding past on a camel, saluting the monarch with a short sword. A problem arose when the Maharajah Gaekwar of Baroda arrived at a presentation wearing full court dress and priceless jewels, and then proceeded to strip down until he wore only 'the ordinary white linen everyday dress of a Mahratta'. At this point, he was observed to make 'a very inadequate obeisance' to the King.

As for His Majesty, he mounted a white horse and rode out to meet the people, followed by the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge. George V had refused to sit on an elephant, and chosen to wear an unremarkable grey-banded 'Curzon' topee rather than a crown, so few people realized who he was. He tried making 'salaams' at the crowd, which helped a little. 'H.M. told me,' wrote Hardinge, 'that he was disappointed at his non-recognition by the people.'¹ Hardinge, who had been a friend of the rumbustious Edward VII and thought Mrs Keppel an 'excellent influence' on him, seems from his memoirs to have been unimpressed by his new sovereign.

Matters improved a little the following day when the King and Queen went to the Red Fort, Delhi's most significant edifice. There they donned their jewels, including a new crown, which had been conveyed to India specially for the occasion, and 'kindly consented to show themselves to the thousands of natives', presumably in imitation of Shah Jehan.² King George's ADCs, trussed up in their regimentals, must have looked a little less exciting than the half-naked eunuchs who used to accompany the Mughal emperor to his public audiences at the same venue three centuries earlier. Still, George V made an announcement which may have been remarkable enough for the comparison to be ignored. It was sufficiently important that not even Queen Mary had been told of it in advance: the Government of India was to be shifted from Calcutta to Delhi, where a magnificent new city would be built.



‘Does India exist?’ wondered Salman Rushdie in 1987. ‘If it doesn’t, what’s keeping Pakistan and Bangladesh apart?’³

The idea of India, or at least of *Bharat* or *Mahabharat* (the Sanskrit term for India, or Great India), has always been locked into the cultural identity and oral history of its inhabitants. For four millennia its boundaries have altered and mutated. From the inside, or from a distance, India appears sprawling, inclusive and plural, a land of infinite variety: how, ask the insiders, could the people of its border regions wish to be attached to anybody else? From its frontiers, it looks hulking, monolithic and over-assertive: how, ask the outsiders, can its brutalities and contradictions be so readily ignored by its own people? Like China and the United States, India seems the centre of the universe when you are there, and a monolith when you are not.

The shape of Britain’s Indian Empire can be loosely linked to ancient times. The concept of India stretches out from the Harappa civilization, centred around the Indus river in the Punjab, which existed over two thousand years before the birth of Jesus Christ, and passes through the Mauryan Empire under King Ashoka in the third century BC, which covered the whole subcontinent except the southern tip. In 997 AD, Indian society – or Hindu society as it would come to be seen by some in retrospect – was tempered dramatically for 950 years by successive invasions and occupations. The territory that academics now call ‘South Asia’ was given a name by Arab and Persian outsiders: Hind, or Hindustan, the land beyond the Indus river.

997 was the year in which Mahmud of Ghazni swept down from Afghanistan, being the first of the Islamic invaders of Bharat who now inhabit the demonology of Hindu nationalism. However, as Jawaharlal Nehru pointed out to his more communally-minded colleagues, Mahmud of Ghazni was a warrior first, and a Muslim second. The sultans of Delhi established themselves, quelling the indigenous Rajputs and maintaining power across northern and parts of southern India with some degree of constancy until the final collapse of Mughal rule in 1856. Tamburlaine entered Delhi at the end of the fourteenth century, and his descendant Babur founded the Mughal dynasty with the aid of matchlock guns and the legendary blood-curdling horsemen of Central Asia. The Great Mughals enjoyed varying levels of popularity among their subjects. Akbar was revered in the late sixteenth century for the abolition of both cow slaughter and the *jizya* – the poll tax on non-

Muslims; Aurangzeb, who took the throne in 1658, expanded his empire ruthlessly.

Portuguese, French and Dutch merchants established their toehold on the coast of India during the sixteenth century. The British at first moved more slowly than their rivals, although once they got started their success was impressive. One of the earliest arrivals, Ralph Fitch, wrote a letter home in the 1580s which was to be echoed by many other young English travellers over the coming centuries. ‘They have a very strange order among them –’ he reported, ‘they worship a cow and esteem much of the cow’s dung to paint the walls of their houses . . . They eat no flesh, but live by roots and rice and milk.’⁴

In the year 1600 these adventurers were granted a royal charter by Queen Elizabeth I, and began trading as best they could, the only difficulty being that they had few goods which appealed to the inhabitants of the Mughal Empire. During the next two centuries they developed their commercial power along the coast of India and into Bengal, and as the Mughal Empire crumbled, secured their own position, beating off French rivalry. Guided by Robert Clive, the gangsters of the East India Company began to expand under the cover of indigenous local rulers, to whom they offered ‘protection’ in exchange for revenue. This privatized imperialism during the period of ‘Company Raj’ represents European incursion into India at its most rapacious. In 1770, bled of its wealth by merchants and their agents, Bengal declined into a disastrous famine.

Three years later, Lord North’s British government regulated the Company, bringing the major ‘presidencies’ of Bengal, Madras and Bombay under the authority of Bengal, whose governor now became Governor General. Twenty years later the *zamindari* system was brought in, whereby tax collectors in Bengal were given title to the land they administered, thus changing India’s concept of land possession for ever. It meant that as debts developed, the ownership of land shifted to absentee landlords and urban bankers. Instead of a fluid, fluctuating system based on the power and patronage of a given ruler, the British brought India new institutions predicated on precise boundaries, laws and regulations. British control became impersonal, using local intermediaries as the link between its own authoritarian bureaucracy and the Indian people.

A new class of English-speaking Indians emerged, with at least a pragmatic degree of loyalty towards the dominant power. Their rulers derided them as ‘*babus*’, or clerks, yet many of them came to use their

knowledge of the British system as a means to undermine its authority. During the first part of the nineteenth century, the British territorial hold expanded through military conquest, extending into the Punjab and Sind. Land was also scooped up under the new 'heirs natural' law, whereby only a verifiable royal son could inherit a local ruler's kingdom.

In the 1850s telegraph wires were put up and railway tracks laid down, improving communications and strengthening the capacity for coast-to-coast administration substantially. In 1857 there was a widespread uprising against British rule, referred to generally as a 'mutiny', but caused by many factors other than the matter of the greasing of the cartridges for Hindu sepoy's guns with beef fat. The illegal annexation the previous year of the territory of the Nawab of Oudh – the area that became the main part of the United Provinces – was extremely damaging, especially to the Muslim perception of the British. The introduction of the Enlistment Act, under which Indian soldiers could be sent anywhere, even overseas (destroying their caste status if they were Hindus), also helped provoke the revolt. The uprising induced rapacious violence on all sides, while the vengeful reprisals that came in its aftermath destroyed whatever shallow mutual trust existed.

In 1858 the British government introduced major reforms, transferring the rights of the East India Company to Queen Victoria's headgear, the Crown. The responsibility of the Governor General was expanded, although his autonomy was restricted by the appointment of a Secretary of State for India in London, who retained ultimate power. The chain of command stretching from the House of Commons to an Indian village was complex, and varied hugely according to time and circumstance. The Viceroy not only represented the monarch, but also as Governor General was the head of the Government of India, which had demands and views of its own. Racial segregation grew, Europeans confining themselves to clubs and cantonments, and the army was strengthened with British troops. Efforts were made to ensure that Indian soldiers did not come from the part of the country in which they were serving – a tradition that continues to this day. The theory of 'martial races' was developed, the principle being that certain groups within India would naturally make loyal mercenaries, while others would not.⁵

A variation of the *zamindari* system was extended into some other parts of India, so that the *taluqdars*, or administrators, of Oudh could now become hereditary rulers of the lands where they collected taxes.

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The Indian Civil Service or ICS was expanded. In 1854 recruitment had started through open public examination in London, although it was not until fifteen years later that the first Indian applicant succeeded, and he was soon disqualified on a technicality. There was however no legal colour bar in the ICS; it was simply that the system was skewed radically against Indians at every level.

The nature of British administration in India was formalized, and the annexation of territory ended. Small but important enclaves along the coast remained under Portuguese and French colonial rule. Existing indigenous potentates, whose kingdoms made up around a third of the land mass of the Indian subcontinent, were now cultivated as bulwarks against any future uprising, and their loyalty was secured through confirming or renegotiating their treaties with the East India Company.

Several of India's hereditary princes controlled thousands of square miles of land, while others only ruled a few hundred acres. Their lands were incorporated as 'Native States' within the British Indian Empire, and the rulers were left free to practise whatever form of autocracy they chose, providing they remained loyal to Queen Victoria, the fount from whom all power within the Empire theoretically flowed. The remaining two-thirds of the subcontinent, which became known as 'British India', was divided up into administrative provinces. Although the British government now had dominion over an Indian Empire, its powers of direct control were limited.



Lord Hardinge, despite his starchy appearance, was a rather liberal viceroy. His reversal of Lord Curzon's unpopular administrative partition of Bengal, which was announced at the Delhi *darbar* by King George V at the same time as the shift of India's capital, alienated British business interests. Hardinge also infuriated them by joining Mohandas Gandhi in protesting against the treatment of Indians in South Africa, and by overruling the hard-line Governor of the Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, by quashing the death sentence on twenty-four men who had been convicted of dacoity without the production of any hard evidence. This is not to suggest that Charlie Hardinge was entirely progressive. His opinion on the Maharajah of Idar ran as follows: 'He excelled as the best pig-sticker

in India, but he had been trained to fight a boar on foot with only a knife in his hand, and when the boar charged he would jump aside, catch the boar by a hind leg as it passed and kill it with one blow of the knife . . . He was truly “a white man” among Indians.’

Two days before Christmas 1912, a year after the King’s visit to India, Hardinge alighted at Delhi railway station and clambered aboard an enormous elephant. Sitting in an elaborate silver howdah, he advanced slowly down Chandni Chowk, a thoroughfare of great symbolic significance. It had once been the finest boulevard and market of the Mughal Empire, only to be turned into a charnel ground in the aftermath of the 1857 revolt, when the victorious British hanged countless nawabs, rebels and rajas down the middle of it. Now it had been chosen as the processional route for the Viceroy, who had come to inaugurate the construction of Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker’s new Delhi.

His Excellency had not got far when his helmet shot into the air, a bang was heard six miles away, and the servant holding the State Umbrella was blown to pieces. Hardinge subsequently remembered noticing some yellow powder on his elephant, and feeling ‘as though somebody had hit me very hard in the back and poured boiling water over me’.⁶ An unknown Indian had hurled a bomb at the living symbol of imperial power. One of the Viceregal eardrums burst, and it was to take many years for all the nails, screws and gramophone needles to work their way out of his body. An ADC quickly climbed up onto some wooden cases, and carried the Viceroy down from the howdah like a baby. He was taken to Viceregal Lodge, unconscious. The unsuccessful assassin was never caught, but afterwards a maharajah told Lord Hardinge that he was amazed the accompanying troops had not massacred the crowd in Chandni Chowk, as the Mughals would have done in their day.⁷

The beginning of the twentieth century had seen an upsurge in the use of strategic killing as a political tool. The President of the United States was murdered in 1901 by an anarchist, the Russian premier assassinated in 1911, and, crucially, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand shot dead in Sarajevo in 1914. The attack on the Viceroy Lord Hardinge was the high point of revolutionary terrorism by Indian nationalists. Within political circles there was considerable disagreement over the virtues of the use of violence, some people feeling that the destabilization of imperial structures was the surest route to liberty, others that the crassness of bomb-throwing provided the British with a good justification for using repressive

measures. In the end, violence came to be rejected by most nationalists in favour of Gandhian passive resistance.

Most of the plots laid by Indian revolutionaries, both within India and abroad, were notoriously incompetent and poorly planned. There are many stories of explosions occurring too early or late, or of terrorists being arrested as a result of bragging about their crimes before committing them. Ultimately bomb-throwing proved notably less effective than non-violence in ridding India of British rule, so its perpetrators have tended to be ignored. However, the historian of imperial intelligence Richard Popplewell makes the point that the British authorities were able to defeat them 'only by developing a complex intelligence network on a global scale . . . it is misleading to regard the Indian revolutionary movement as powerless simply because it failed so completely in the end'.⁸

The notion that violent actions should be used as a means of ending British rule had flourished sporadically since 1857, and gained serious support around the turn of the century. In 1897, following celebrations in honour of the birth of the seventeenth-century Maratha warlord Shivaji, a British official was killed in Poona. In 1905 a group of Indian students had set up house in Highgate in London and began to publish a magazine called *The Indian Sociologist*, which preached a romanticized version of India's history and called on all patriots to rise against their oppressors. One of its founders was a brother of the poet and Congress activist Sarojini Naidu. The *Sociologist's* line was that loyalty to Britain assumed disloyalty to India. The magazine was promptly banned, but copies made their way into India through French and Portuguese territories such as Pondicherry and Goa. Explosives and revolvers also arrived by this route, apparently dispatched from Paris, and some of the Highgate students took up military training.

India House, as the Highgate headquarters was named, soon became a centre for subversive activity, and links were established with Irish and Egyptian activists. Travelling fellowships were set up for Indians to come to London and 'study'. The director was Vinayak Savarkar, a fiery twenty-five-year-old man from Maharashtra who was later known as 'Veer', or 'warrior'. While in India he had studied Sanskrit and launched campaigns against the British. He set off for London to qualify as a barrister, fell in love with an English woman called Margaret Lawrence, and wrote a passionate, Hinducentric account of the events of 1857 under the title *The Indian War of Independence*. This was soon added to the viceregal equiva-

lent of the Vatican's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, and it remained banned until 1947. When Mohandas Gandhi spent two nights at India House on a visit to Britain, and attended a subscription dinner of Indian militants as the guest of honour, the other speaker was Savarkar. Accounts of the event note that it was the revolutionary who attracted greater interest and enthusiasm than the conciliator.

As various violent outrages took place in India, the British authorities decided, probably incorrectly, that many of them were emanating from India House. Hearing that the police were onto him, Savarkar did a flit to Paris, only to be lured back to Victoria station, where he was promptly arrested and charged with the quaint crime of 'conspiring to deprive His Majesty the King of the Sovereignty of British India'. He avoided execution, but was sentenced to fifty years on the Andaman Islands below the Bay of Bengal, which were India's answer to Alcatraz. Savarkar jumped overboard at Marseilles and ran around the docks barefoot in striped pyjamas seeking asylum before being captured by his police escort and transported into exile. He became a national hero in India, and on his early release founded the hard-line Hindu Mahasabha, which was to be implicated in Gandhi's murder in 1948. Today he is an icon of India's Hindu nationalists.

In 1907, in response to plans to dissect Bengal and in recognition of the fiftieth anniversary of the 1857 revolt, an attempt was made to blow up the province's governor, Sir Andrew Fraser. It failed, but the explosion blew a huge crater in the track behind his train. The unremarkable Viceroy Lord Minto introduced repressive measures across India, and promulgated the Police Act in the Punjab. Two years later an explosive device was lobbed into his carriage, but both he and his wife survived. In the same year two attacks took place in London, their proximity to the heart of imperial power having an important psychological effect on the British government.

First, a pair of young Bengali radicals secured a meeting at the India Office with a senior official, only to slap him, rather flamboyantly, full in the face. Then Sir William Curzon Wyllie, the Political ADC to the Secretary of State for India Lord Morley, was shot dead on the steps of the Imperial Institute. During the subsequent trial, his Punjabi assassin pleaded a political defence on the grounds that he was a patriot and the British were occupying his country. He was hanged at Pentonville prison.

The Government of India's reaction to the killing of the Secretary of

State's closest adviser was sharp. As Morley himself suggested to the Viceroy, 'the ordinary square-toed English constable, even in the detective branch, would be rather clumsy in tracing your wily Asiatics'.⁹ Superintendent John Wallinger, who was renowned as one of the most effective detectives in the Indian Police, was seconded to the India Office in London and made responsible for the personal security of top officials. 'W' as he was termed was 'charged to cooperate with the Home Security organizations here in detecting subversive activities among Indians' in the United Kingdom.¹⁰

Before 1904 the British authorities had no proper police intelligence system in India. To an extent this stemmed from complacency about the stability of their rule, but it was also the result of the lack of any comparable operations in London. The scale of the covert security and intelligence services in Britain today would have been unthinkable a hundred years ago, since during the nineteenth century the British had shown a temperamental aversion to professional intelligence-gathering. For instance, the Governor of the United Provinces was nervous that the Viceroy Lord Curzon's attempt to create a limited all-India police intelligence service might 'develop into a centralized secret Police Bureau such as exists in the Russian Empire'.¹¹ It was not until the First World War that information obtained by secretive means began to play an integral part in the formulation of British government policy.

Curzon was responsible for making substantial reforms to the Indian Police. In 1904 he created a Criminal Investigation Department or CID in each of the provinces of British India, and a central Department of Criminal Intelligence. The latter organization was based in Simla, the summer capital of British India. Initially it had only a small staff, including a fingerprint bureau, a photographic section and a graphologist, and was not permitted to establish a proper secret service, but only to employ informants on a casual basis. The Department of Criminal Intelligence was assisted where necessary by Special Branch and Military Intelligence, and most of its personnel were either British or Anglo-Indian, although a Muslim detective, Munshi Aziz-ud-Din, was made Assistant Deputy Director in 1906.

In 1911 the Director of Criminal Intelligence Sir Charles Cleveland made a bid to raise the prestige of his department by predicting that a 'hidden fire' of violent nationalism was set to sweep across India. He was to be proved right the following year, when Lord Hardinge was blown

off his elephant. Ironically, Cleveland himself had to shoulder the blame, and his reputation within the Indian administration never recovered. Responsibility for investigating the attack was handed over to another eminent police officer, David Petrie, who later became the chief of MI5.

It was the Department of Criminal Intelligence that sent John Wallinger to London to set up a fledgling intelligence section within the India Office, with most of its practical surveillance work being done by British police officers. At first Scotland Yard objected to the presence of 'W' on their patch, and it took him some time to establish a secure position. In the years leading up to the First World War his organization was developed and expanded, and given the name of 'Indian Political Intelligence', or IPI. Wallinger, who was able to speak Marathi, Gujarati and Hindustani, proved so effective at infiltrating Indian groups in Britain and in Paris that his detractors soon fell silent.

In 1915 he was joined by a second high-flying Indian Police officer, who spoke French and German and was charged with expanding and developing the network. He was Philip Vickery, the young Irish man who had guarded the King Emperor's tent at the Delhi *darbar*. They were both given commissions in the British Army – Vickery as a lieutenant and Wallinger as a colonel – so that officially they could work as employees of Military Intelligence. Together they spread their operations across Europe into Italy and Switzerland, and Wallinger even managed to recruit the writer Somerset Maugham as a spy; he subsequently used his controller as the ineffectual 'R' in several short stories. Another of Wallinger's star agents was a Dr Condom, who had to flee Lake Geneva by motorboat when his cover was blown by the Germans. According to Popplewell, the covert battle for India was 'the only area of the intelligence history of the First World War in which human intelligence played a decisive and exclusive role'.¹²

Earlier in the same year a special committee had been set up in Whitehall to tackle the problem of Indian subversion, with representatives from the India Office, the Admiralty, MI5 (which at that time was still known as Section MO5g of the War Office), the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office. It was particularly concerned about covert German backing for Indian revolutionaries, as well as the risk of mutiny among the many Indian soldiers fighting in France. A special security and counter-espionage unit called MI5(g) was set up to focus on India, and by February 1917 it employed twenty-seven officers, of whom eight were Indian

Policemen. Given that MI5 had an entire staff of nineteen people at the outbreak of war, this was a considerable deployment, and one which reflects the paramount importance given to the maintenance of the security of the Indian Empire as part of the overall war effort.

The India-related work of the British security service was to be an incidental cause of its rapid growth, and many of the staff of both MI5 and Special Branch during the decades following the war were recruited from either the Indian Police or other colonial police forces. To the annoyance of the Government of India, London rather than Calcutta, Simla or Delhi was to remain the clearing-house for all intelligence relating to India right up until independence. This could create serious complications, with the Indian authorities at times being unaware of the ulterior motives of the geographers, journalists and plant hunters travelling along their northern borders.

It was not only in Europe that serious wartime challenges arose to British rule in India. Curzon's failed attempt to split Bengal had provoked an upsurge of nationalist protest, and the province had become the focus of both the constitutional and revolutionary faces of the freedom movement. As a baffled King George V once asked a new governor of the province, 'What is *wrong* with Bengal?'¹³ Agitation became so intense that by late 1915 Sir Charles Cleveland felt he was 'losing ground week by week'. At one point there was a serious risk that the province would become ungovernable. A Defence of India Act was passed in 1915 which made repression easier, since it suspended legal remedies by permitting the authorities to arrest, detain and expel suspects without trial or stated cause. When the crackdown came it was swift and savage, coordinated by Charles Tegart, who ran the intelligence branch of the Bengal Police. Like many of the leading policemen in India, Tegart was an Irish Protestant with firm opinions on how to handle native disorder.

According to Sir Percival Griffiths's history of the British Indian Police, which goes by the curious title *To Guard My People*, Tegart was revered among British residents as a fearless genius. He had survived several assassination attempts, was rumoured to disguise himself as an old Bengali woman or a Sikh taxi-driver when visiting unlikely locations, and was said to have informers and secretive shadows all over Calcutta.

Indian accounts of the Bengali revolutionary movement record that he was ruthless in his methods, and renowned for using torture – ice, needles and beating – to obtain information. One Bengali politician remembers

that Tegart 'went out of his way to try out methods of torture on the revolutionaries. He was very efficient, and it was reputed that he was trained at Scotland Yard and specially deputed for repressing the revolutionary movement.'¹⁴ In his working notes for his book on the Indian Police, Griffiths has an admiring recollection from a colleague of the police chief, which never made it as far as the published edition. It recalls that Tegart's favoured method of interrogation involved discharging a revolver several times over a suspect's head, and then pointing the gun into the man's face and asking the key question. As his entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* decorously puts it: 'Even some who had sought his life became, after passing through his hands, his allies and helpers.'¹⁵

Further violent activity was sparked by the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916, when armed Irish Republicans rose in revolt against the British, and revolutionaries in Bengal took up the slogan 'England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity', applying it to their own situation. When a Bengali political prisoner died as a result of a hunger strike, a telegram arrived from the widow of a Sinn Fein 'martyr' saying that Ireland joined India in its grief, and adding, 'Freedom shall come.' Jawaharlal Nehru made the point in his autobiography that even among Congress moderates there was 'little sympathy with the British in spite of loud professions of loyalty . . . There was no love for Germany of course, only the desire to see our own rulers humbled. It was the weak and helpless man's idea of vicarious revenge.'¹⁶

A simultaneous serious threat was arising in Canada and North America. Veer Savarkar's role as public enemy number one had been taken by Lala Har Dayal, an Oxford-educated anarcho-syndicalist who operated out of California. At first he had taken little interest in Indian politics, preferring to foment world revolution, but after the attack on Lord Hardinge's elephant he became fired with nationalist zeal. He established links with Indians in Portland, Oregon, and gained the support of immigrant Punjabi labourers on the west coast of the United States. The group invented patriotic songs with lines like, 'People say the Singhs are no good/Cry aloud, let's kill the whites,' and started a free newspaper called *Ghadr*, or 'Revolt', exhorting their countrymen to revive their 'manliness'. They made much of the fact that a hundred thousand British soldiers could be knocked into the sea in a moment if India's three hundred million people rose against them.

The popular movement spread quickly, and Har Dayal was arrested, only to skip bail and escape. The Indian nationalist threat in North

America was initially tackled by an immigration official in Vancouver called William Hopkinson, but his career as a spy-master ended in 1914 when he was shot dead in the street by a Sikh revolutionary. The police back in India believed that Har Dayal had recruited thousands of overseas revolutionaries who were now ready, with the outbreak of war with Germany, to return home and overthrow British rule. During the course of 1914 a substantial number of Punjabis returning from Europe and the USA were either put under surveillance or arrested pre-emptively.

Despite this, some managed to form an alliance with Bengali revolutionaries, and made plans for an uprising, only to be betrayed by a police informer and arrested before the date of the proposed attack. Eighteen of the accused plotters were hanged, and over a hundred transported for life. This action caused grave resentment within the Punjab, which bubbled with vengeance over the coming years. In addition, German intelligence agents operating in the USA purchased a substantial volume of arms and ammunition, including several thousand rifles. The weapons were loaded on to a schooner called the *Annie Larsen*, which set off for a rendezvous with a larger boat that would deliver the cargo to Calcutta in time for Christmas 1915. There were various errors, and the weapons never reached their destination.¹⁷

After the assassination of Hopkinson, a more elaborate British spying operation known as MI1c was established in North America. It operated without the knowledge of the federal government, although it cooperated with the US law enforcement agencies. After the war it was closed down by the American government. This was a serious blow to the British intelligence community, but IPI were one step ahead, having already secretly recruited their own permanent 'contact' in the USA. In 1919 the contact was joined by his handler Philip Vickery, who remained in Canada and the USA for three years running an undeclared operation.¹⁸

Thus, on three fronts – Europe, North America and India itself – British rule over its Indian Empire suffered a severe test in the period 1907 to 1918. It was not a mass internal uprising or a fatal destabilization, but it was enough to offer a more serious challenge to the long-term maintenance of authority than at any time since 1857. The end of the First World War offered a fresh opportunity for British and Indians alike, with many people, including Gandhi, believing that political liberalization and conciliation was now a serious prospect. Instead, 1919 brought the Amritsar massacre.