

Dear Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru: Goa and the Foundations of the Indian National Liberation Movement¹

Querido Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru: Goa e as fundações do movimento indiano de libertação nacional

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the understudied early liberation movement in Goa, under the leadership of Tristão de Bragança Cunha (Chandor, 1891-Bombay, 1958), evidencing its building in the intersection of local, national, and international histories, since Cunha achieved the recognition of the Goa Committee in the Indian National Congress. The ideas and views elaborated by Cunha in those years set the core ideas and political basis of the influential wing led by him in Goan nationalism. The study is substantially based on a set of documents, unapproached before, accessed in 2018 at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Archive (New Delhi).

Keywords: Indian Liberation Movement; Goa Committee of the Indian National Congress; League Against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression; T. B. Cunha, 1891-1958; Jawaharlal Nehru, 1889-1964.

RESUMO

O presente estudo aborda o pouco estudado início do movimento de libertação em Goa, sob a liderança de Tristão de Bragança Cunha (Chandor, 1891-Bombay, 1958), evidenciando a sua construção na intersecção de histórias locais, nacionais e internacionais, desde o momento em que conseguiu o reconhecimento do Comité de Goa do Congresso Nacional Indiano. As ideias e perspectivas elaboradas por Cunha nesses anos estabeleceram as ideias centrais e a base política da influente ala do nacionalismo goês que liderou. O estudo é substancialmente assente num conjunto de documentos, não abordado até agora, acedidos em 2018 no Nehru Memorial Museum and Archive (Nova Deli).

Palavras-chave: Movimento de Libertação Indiano; Comité Goês do Congresso Nacional Indiano; Liga Contra o Imperialismo e a Opressão Colonial; T. B. Cunha, 1891-1958; Jawaharlal Nehru, 1889-1964.

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This paper addresses the understudied early liberation movement in Goa, under the leadership of Tristão de Bragança Cunha (Chandor, 1891 – Bombay, 1958), evidencing its building in the intersection of local, national, and international histories, since he achieved recognition of the Goa Committee in the Indian National Congress. The ideas and views elaborated by Cunha in those years set the core ideas and political basis of the influential wing led by him in Goan nationalism. My point is that, already in those years, T. B. Cunha positioned himself as an anticolonial nationalist with an agenda regarding India's liberation from foreign domain. This conclusion is substantially based on a set of documents, unapproached before, accessed in 2018 at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Archive (New Delhi). The discussion incorporates the outcome of my PhD research (2013) in addition to the 2018 work on T. B. Cunha's years in Paris.

Within the colonies under the Portuguese Empire in the twentieth century, the small and dispersed territories that constituted the *Estado da Índia* (State of India) were the first ones to be liberated from its domain: Dadra and Nagar-Aveli, in July-August 1954 led by Goan nationalists, and the remaining (Goa, Daman and Diu), in December 1961, started by India's takeover of Goa. India's military intervention followed the failure of diplomacy in the Indian-Portuguese conflict about the political future of those territories, a conflict that evidenced that their historical and geopolitical weight was incommensurably more significant than their dimension or economic interest. Portugal distinguished for being the first European player in the region, having established the centre of its Oriental Empire in Goa in early sixteenth-century. The country was also known for being the last to fall and the only to refuse a negotiated retreat.

Between 1961 and 1974, with the end of the dictatorship started in 1926, the Portuguese government, both for national consumption and before the United Nations, defended that after centuries of belonging those territories were as Portuguese as Lisbon. Against the will of their populations, they were now illegitimately occupied by a foreign power with imperial ambitions and colonial attitudes. With invasion fell India's mask of a pacifist state, subscriber of international law. Loyal to its formalist notion of coherence, much to the taste of the jurists that moulded the *Estado Novo* (New State), starting with Salazar, the dictatorship continued to sustain a fictional management of *Estado da Índia* through different official organisms, assuring the "election" of deputies to the National Assembly by their migrant and refugee communities, and supporting different political organisations initiated by these communities as long as they refused the new political reality. From the point of view of the dictatorship, this

symbolic rather than practical attitude was inevitable. It was important to nourish its claims for the restoration of legitimacy, and to maintain the narrative started by the end of World War II of a country that formed an unbreakable unit of loyal Portuguese spread from Minho to Timor. At stake was above all the outcome of the wars for independence of its African colonies started also in 1961, military conflicts classified by the regime as “terrorist” subversions that, against their populations as in the case of India, were fomented and financed by obscure foreign interests.

As for India’s leadership after long years of diplomatic impasse and internal discussions around the *Case of Goa*, and in a context where India aimed leadership of the Non-Aligned Countries and of the liberation of the South, the decision in the dawn of 1961 to end European domain in the subcontinent appeared as an unpostponable solution. By that time, T. B. Cunha had already passed away, but his allies welcomed the step that for long he had been defending, namely at the exile newspaper *Free Goa*, founded by Cunha in 1953.

THE BIRTH OF THE GOA COMMITTEE IN THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Born in one of the wealthiest Catholic families of Goa, T. B. Cunha had a Francophone education. After studying in Pondicherry, in 1912 he joined one of his brothers in Paris to specialize in a promising field: electronic engineering. He ended staying in this capital of cultural and political vanguards, being uncertain if he actually took the profession. What is known is that at least since the early 1920s he became active in the propaganda of Indian nationalist movement, having specially moved between anticolonial and left political circles, namely the Third International. As shared in 1927 by the Goan newspaper *A Índia Portuguesa*, his interests evidenced an intellectual engagement with cultural as much as with political modernity:

His mobility not only in the political but also in the artistic French ambiance allowed him to serve as consultant to judge António de Noronha when he travelled to Paris to purchase a collection of modern art to the gallery, the first in Goa, of the Institute Vasco da Gama reborn in 1925 under the patronage of the General-Governor, Jaime de Morais (Emanuel, 1927).

Cunha’s return to Goa by the end of July 1926, after living for 14 years in Paris, happened in a moment of political stress. Two months earlier, the 28 May

right-wing military coup in Portugal ended its First Republic, starting a dictatorship that would last for 48 years. In addition to put an end to political instability and economic crisis, the movement was particularly motivated to reverse republican colonial policies by affirming Portugal's position as owner of a Colonial Empire that should be at the service of Portuguese interests. The laws that followed confirmed the will to end any signs of democracy and local autonomy, in Portugal and in its colonies. As it was straightforward pointed by Cunha's cousin, the republican journalist Luís de Menezes Bragança (Chandor, 1878-1937), the Portuguese reactionary turn was tributary of a vaster European movement towards nationalist regimes guided by antidemocratic, racist, and imperial ideologies.

While T. B. Cunha left unexplained his return to India, it is plausible that he anticipated the impact of the military coup. Also, although well established in France, being a Portuguese citizen, his place there regarding British Indian politics and anticolonial resistance, even if influential at moments, seemed condemned to marginality. Differently, in Goa Cunha could aim a central role in resistance to the Portuguese, linking it with Indian national and international anticolonial stages.

Upon his return, Cunha offered two interviews on imperial politics to the newspaper *A Índia Portuguesa* (The Portuguese India), followed by a set of articles chiefly on international politics, and thereafter regularly contributed to other periodicals. In May 1928, he published at the typography of one of such periodicals, the *Bharat* (India), the influential booklet *O que é o imperialismo?* (What is imperialism?, Cunha, 1928a), announced as the “thesis of Indian nationalism”, being largely debated in local press (Lobo, 2013, p. 481).

Months later, he started the process to create and affiliate a Goa Committee of the Indian National Congress (INC), an initiative that achieved a foundational symbolism to Goan nationalism. The recognition of this Committee by the INC was to happen at its annual session, held in Calcutta between 29 December and 1 January, 1929 (AICC, 1929a, b and c). T. B. Cunha, the delegate of the Committee at the session, was accompanied by other members of the organisation and by a number of Goan journalists, namely Menezes Bragança (Lobo, 2013, p. 485). This moment has been mostly referred by historians for its foundational importance, but has deserved little research (Tombat, 1995; Parobo, 2015; Assunção, 2020). This paper will evidence how it linked to a turning point in Indian-British relations, in the INC and in anticolonial internationalism, and how Cunha worked to articulate these stages with his in-

tervention in Goa and to introduce Goa in India's nationalist agenda and information network.

The Nehru Report on a constitution for India, issued in 1928 by the All India Parties Commission (AIPC), was created to oppose Simon Commission. The negotiation of Motilal Nehru's draft built serious tensions at the AIPC, namely between those that demanded for Dominion Status (Motilal supported by Gandhi) and those that claimed for Independence, as defended by Jawaharlal Nehru. Motilal's son, in fact, had obtained, at the historical 1927 Madras session, the INC's vote for independence, and in August 1928 founded the Indian League for National Independence (ILNI). As a result of discussions within the AIPC, the Nehru Report ended in compromise, demanding Dominion Status conditioned to a deadline, after which radicalization was promised.

In the book *Comrades against imperialism* (2018), Michelle Louro defends that Jawaharlal's position regarding the direction of the Indian nationalist fight may not be separated from his internationalist turn while travelling in Europe between March 1926 and December 1927, from where he returned to attend the INC Madras meeting. In fact, as already underlined by researchers in the footsteps of Nehru's own memoirs, mid-1920s Europe had great intellectual impact in the future first Prime-Minister of India, as he found a cultural and political ambience and maintained an international net of left intellectual and political contacts that opened "a new world" to him (Nehru, 1936). In this ambience, he ended up attending and influencing the Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism and for National Independence gathered in Brussels in February 1927, where the League Against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression (LAI) was born. In Louro's words, "the Brussels Congress captivated Nehru's political imagination and accentuated the interplay of nationalism and internationalism in his conceptualization of India and the wider world" (Louro, 2018, p. 21). Consequently, as General-Secretary of the All India Congress Committee (AICC), he assured the affiliation of the INC in the LAI and the Madras vote towards independence.

As founding member of the LAI, committed to colonial liberation and anti-imperialism, the fact that Jawaharlal ended up subscribing the Nehru Report motivated violent attacks by the Comintern, which was taking over the LAI against its original pluralism. In due time, Nehru started distancing from the organisation, yet his new awareness of the importance of activism in international stages would have direct impact in the organisation of the INC. In fact, aiming at opening the field of action of the INC, he achieved at the Calcutta

session the approval to open the organisation to affiliation of Indian nationalist organisations abroad (AICC, 1929a).

It was thus because of Nehru's initiative that the Goa Committee turned possible. During Nehru's visit to Europe, having established his base in Switzerland from where he circulated, it is uncertain that Cunha, on the eve of leaving for India, found the opportunity to meet him. But it is undisputable that both moved in the same circles, and that directly or indirectly had a channel of communication, as Cunha was clearly close to the positions of the Swaraj Party led by Nehru (Lobo, 2018). This means that Cunha was surely aware of Nehru's plans and seized the opportunity to organize the committee and prepare its affiliation in the Calcutta meeting.

The short registers of the process of affiliation of the Goa Committee are accessible at the printed reports and proceedings of the AICC annual meetings, yet there is a small set of unpublished correspondence and other documents exchanged by T. B. Cunha and Jawaharlal Nehru, guarded at Nehru's archive, in particular the AICC files, which illuminates the ambiance that surrounded the existence of the Goa Committee and these leaders' positions in such an ambiance. These documents have no less historical interest in what regards their relationship in those years of political uncertainty and enrich our knowledge of their postal relationship, as only extracts of few letters were published before at the monumental collection of Nehru's selected writings. The set expands from 1929 to 1931 mostly written until September 1929, with only one dated May 1931, and clearly reveals missing letters within the timeline. Along with his coeval first efforts to publish in British India, these letters mark Cunha's entrance in English expression, with which he was unfamiliar, as a necessary tool to intervene in and interact with the nationalist circles of the British imperial world.

LAUNCHING A NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND MANAGING DIFFERENCE IN INDIA

The overall tune of the Cunha-Nehru correspondence expresses intellectual and political cordiality and complicity, observable not only in the will to collaborate and to exchange ideas, but also, for instance, when signalling or facilitating access to articles and bibliography of national or international interest. Similarly to what he was performing near Goan press, mostly through translations, Cunha tried to enrich the Indian nationalists' information sources with news and discussions that were running in French language left press. For in-

stance, on 17 January 1929, refers that French press published news about Afghanistan – under a civil war with interference of British-Soviet tensions – of interest to India, to which Nehru answers, on 22 January, asking for cuttings or extracts. One month later, 25 February, Cunha points that Henri Barbusse’s *Monde* (recently founded) published some articles on India, and offered to send a copy if Nehru did not receive the weekly magazine. Having moved in the same circles as the head of the French *Comité Pro-Hindou* (March, 2019) founded in 1924, Cunha had actually been his source about Indian reality in the seminal polemics that in 1921-1922 the French intellectual maintained with Roman Rolland around Gandhi and the significance of pacifism (Lobo, 2018, p. 51). It is likely that upon his return to India, in addition to following Barbusse’s publications, Cunha occasionally fed his periodical with news and comments about Indian politics. In the same letter, Cunha again refers news about Afghanistan, this time at the French edition of the *International Press Correspondence*, but guessed that many in India received the multilingual Marxist journal. In fact, on 2 March, Nehru confirms the reception of the last periodical and confides that had now ordered the subscription of the *Monde*, but would thank Cunha for sharing the referred special issue. This kind of exchanged continued along the following months.

The collection starts with a letter by Nehru on 16 January, where the General-Secretary of the AICC explained the commitment to Congress rules that accompanied the affiliation of the Goa Committee and asked to be kept informed about Goa’s situation. Coincidentally, the following day, Cunha also wrote to Nehru from his ancestral home in Cansaulim, where he established the headquarters of the Committee. He regretted they missed the opportunity to speak lengthily before leaving Calcutta. The letter points that some conversation happened along those days. He thanked the many facilities provided in Calcutta and appealed for support to the Goa Committee.

Among other issues, in this 17 January letter Cunha approaches the increasing degrading political ambiance created by the Portuguese dictatorship. The Goan refers that when returning home found “the most stupid and severe censorship for the press established by the Portuguese government in order to check our propaganda”. In face of the situation, “the only remedy for us... is to give publicity to our grievances through the press in British India. Even the translation of the statements I made in the Indian press were suppressed”. In his letter, Cunha asked Nehru’s help near the “people” of the *Free Press*, a nationalist press agency and journal recently born in Bombay, to start reporting the Goan situation. As a proof of what was going on, Cunha referred he was

attaching a sample of “the way they treat our papers. No reference is allowed to the Congress activities. We are quite desarmed [sic]”.

Cunha's demand was promptly responded on 22 January by Nehru and by his under-secretary with the contact of the founder and managing editor of *Free Press*, Swaminathan Sadanand, who they had already alerted about Cunha's request. The file also contains the correspondence with Sadanand regarding this issue. Nehru's message is one of the few letters sent by him to Cunha to be partially reproduced at his selected works (Nehru, 1972-1973). There the AICC leader shows interest in accompanying the censorship activities in Goa, although he shared his belief that “censorship is a peculiarly annoying thing but ultimately it does not do very much harm” (Nehru, 1972, p. 424). Nehru also offers to help Cunha divulging statements near the nationalist press and even to publish some of such statements in his Congress bulletin.

In fact, in his 17 January letter, Cunha sent a largely censored front page of the 5 January edition of the newspaper *Pracasha*, which had as its principal editor Luís de Menezes Bragança, with regular contributions by T. B. Cunha. The local political ambience was such that, when returning from Calcutta, several members of the Committee were called by the Governor for explanations, a situation reported by Cunha to Nehru on 28 January. Even Menezes Bragança had to publicly defend his position as an independent journalist, against political intrigue, for attending the meeting when, as a Portuguese citizen, he was an elected member for the opposition at the local Government Council. In one of such articles, he declared that what really represented a peril to Portuguese presence was local “general softening of the spines, the debauchery of personality in a frightening scale, this mentality of slaves that is spreading” (Bragança, 1929, pp. 1-2).

This was a moment of change in local political situation, as in December previous censorship to press, already established in Portugal since 1926, reached Portuguese India before it extended to other colonies, as Cunha points on 28 January. By that time, the Portuguese public prosecutor in Goa, Rocha Diniz, a declared republican, was by force of circumstances in charge of the local government, as the Governor-General was seriously ill having passed away by mid-1929. Rocha Diniz, whose liberal ideas and passive resistance to Lisbon's orders were later recognized by Menezes Bragança, tried to minimize the impact of censorship by instructing the censors to have a restrict interpretation of their task (Bragança, 1965, p. 96). In fact, during these initial times, notwithstanding tightening of press control, local press achieved to divulge texts and opinions already unimaginable in the Portuguese metropole. Still, as other writers,

T.B. Cunha saw several articles prohibited or suffering severe cuts. As he confides to Nehru on 25 February, texts published in the *Bharat*, to which Cunha abundantly contributed by this time, had resulted in a process and heavy fine to the editor and owner of the newspaper, Hegdó Dessai. On 17 May, while Rocha Diniz still headed local government, Cunha shared with Nehru that censorship had turned “very mild”. He offered as reason for such change an effort to restore confidence on news reports, given that censored press had achieved total discredit near public opinion. In his words, “now, practically, the censors only object to the critics against censorship itself allowing everything else.”

Soon after, with the end of Rocha Diniz assignment, the issue returns to this correspondence. On 17 July he announces that a new General-Governor (João Carlos Craveiro Lopes) was soon to arrive. Cunha was worried with his will to harden local situation and sent a vehement appeal to the INC leader, in terms that reveal how structural racial tensions and mutual prejudices in local society were being put at the service of the racist policies of the dictatorship:

A military man who is responsible for the ruthless suppression of the republican revolt in Porto last year. He has already announced [sic] that he comes here to suppress the nationalist movement. All civil administrators who were Indians have been replaced by military Portuguese half-casts [Lusodescendants equivalent to Anglo-Indians]. [...] we will require the full support of the Congress to fight this sort of brute.

For this purpose I would ask you to recommend us to the editors of two leading Bombay papers, the Bombay Chronicle and the Indian Daily Mail to accept our information and our articles, for we will have to expose the repressive policy. Here the press has been gagged and the man who comes is responsible for establishing the censorship.

Censorship and other forms of persecution to free journalism, along with occasional negotiation of self-censorship, would suffer fluctuations in the years that followed only to harden by mid-1930s when the regime finally imposed a ban to all expression of dissent.

Cunha's problems in Goa did not limit to the relationship with the Portuguese power, it extended to the way his propaganda was received by local elites, in particular the Catholic sector, a situation that in his 1928 booklet *O que é o Imperialismo* had attributed to a “mentality of slaves” after centuries of Portuguese domain. In his letter written on 28 January, the Goan shared his difficulties:

I would like some strong [...] only to awaken the goanese to the reality of the foreign rule. Our countrimen [sic] here have a peculiar mentality so different from that of the Indians in British India. It is the result of more than 400 years of Portuguese rule. That is why our work here has to be done in different way from other parts of India where the nationalist movement is so advanced. I do not know what will be the next step. We must be prepared for any thing [sic].

Nehru's response on 12 February is not in this set, but an extract published in his selected works (Nehru, 1972, p. 424) is significant, as he tries to calm Cunha's anxieties while offering a more balanced explanation to Goan difference and forecasts how the situation would develop:

I realise that conditions in Goa are different from conditions in other parts of India. But the difference in these conditions is largely due to the fact that Goa is a small enclave in what has for long been considered more or less foreign territory. Now that the feeling of common nationality is developing these differences will decrease.

The situation that we have been following helps understanding what was erased and saved by the censors' blue pen in the January publication sent by Cunha. The issue in question printed in its front-page the translation of an article about the Goa Committee published by Calcutta's nationalist daily *Forward*. The article was based on Cunha's declarations, if not actually written by him. Arguably, Cunha knew that Jawaharlal was aware of its contents, as he sent the article in Portuguese without offering a translation. More important for him was to evidence the immense white spot of censored text, an editorial practice of resistance, lately prohibited, to evidence the impact of censorship in newsprint. Few days later, the *Bharat* also tried to release the article with the same results. From such cuts it becomes evident that the censors' pencils were particularly active regarding references to the situation in Portugal and in Goa. Yet, remarkably and contrary to Cunha's suggestion, nationalist declarations were allowed without a shiver:

These conditions and the sufferings of the people is contributing to offer strength to the organisation of the National Congress where are some of the most representative personalities of the country. The new ideal of Independence of the Congress satisfies all Indians belonging to any part of India without respecting the juridical distinctions created by the foreigner to his own use and benefit. The Goans are convinced that their salvation is in the union with their brothers of the

great India to fight in the combat that is being prepared against the foreign oppressors. The ideal of Independence seduces them more because contrary to the demand of the “Dominion Status” it does not ignore them and appeals to all Indian independently of the distinction of the political regimes under which he presently lives (Comité Goez do Congresso..., 1929, p. 1).

This statement is particularly interesting as it embryonically formulates one of Cunha’s main theses, which he would recurrently reinforce and develop in the years to come: adhering to the idea of an Indian nation drawn by the geography of the subcontinent that favoured the creation of common historical and cultural ties; such idea could not but include all its populations. The statement has subjacent that Indianness supported these populations’ right to claim Indian citizenship. Conversely, this vision carried the obligation (and the right) to join the fight for liberation from foreign oppression, a fight which rules were not established by the colonizers. Contrary to Dominion Status, a concession to the dominators’ parameters and agenda, Nehru’s demand for independence paved the way to think deeply about the significance of independence and the process of liberation. Investing in an autonomous building of an independent Indian nation-state and coherently coordinate action was not compatible with the containment of Indian liberation within the realm of the British Empire. Goa’s fights, as that of other Indians, were not to be taken independently, they were to be understood as a common liberation process from foreign domain of India.

Shortly after these first letters happened the most relevant exchange about the Goa Committee’s status, revealing the difficulty of this discussion. On 25 February, Cunha shared his discomfort with the attribution of only one delegate to the AICC, when others were granted two. He argued the Committee’s membership was at least equally strong in number and quality as the others, and furthermore recalled the figures of Goan population in Goa and abroad. Although admitting some “peculiar conditions of inferiority on the national point of view” when compared to other Indians, considered that such circumstances did not justify discrimination.

Nehru’s letter that originated Cunha’s protest was written on 12 February and unfortunately it is not in the lot found in Delhi. Yet there is his response to the protest, on 2 March, where he pointed that the New York and London branches represented several American and British Committees and, yet had only two delegates each. He recalled the special position of outside committees in relation to ordinary delegates, as they enjoyed full membership privileges at

the Subjects Committee. In their case, membership and not population mattered, and Cunha should appeal to the Congress Working Committee to reconsider its decision based on membership figures. Cunha did send such numbers, most probably when reporting the GC's activities. It was not possible to find this document, but the AICC's 1929 Lahore Congress Report confirms Cunha's argument regarding membership, as it discloses that the Goa Committee had more members (386) than the London (121), New York (350) and Kobe (51) branches. In comparative terms, these figures about the new-born Goa Committee are relevant as membership implied formal commitment, which in the ambiance of the dictatorship carried significant risks.

Interestingly, as far as I could research, it is doubtful that Cunha ever attended the Subjects Committee. But this discussion allows to elaborate on the significance of the Goan seize of INC's opening to Indian organisations abroad. Contrary to others, it was not formed by British India subjects, acted in the Indian subcontinent, and its aims went beyond British India's nationalist propaganda abroad. As suggested above, apropos the article published at the *Forward* and reproduced by the *Pracasha* and the *Bharat*, Cunha's application may be read as a thesis initiative that carried associated suggestions. Behind it was a trans-imperial idea of Indian nation and territory that justified the INC to become a trans-imperial organisation and therefore to embrace, structure and coordinate Goan resistance. Such path was doubtfully sought by INC's leaders, but Goan affiliation opened field for speculation.

It is true that Cunha seems contradictory, but even such contradiction evidences the difficulties carried by the venture. In fact, either he expected Goa to enjoy the statute of an Indian province, but then applying under the new rules failed clarification, or he accepted it being treated as a foreign territory. In such case, he needed to admit Goa Committee's vulnerable status and, eventually, recognize that Goa's liberation had to be addressed as a movement autonomous from that of its brothers. In any case, the process reveals both the fracture between the ideal unity of the nation to be built and the plurality of political realities, besides Goan eccentric place in face of India's liberation movement and the conception of the future nation-state, which would never be totally solved.

After the INC's 1934 Constitution, the Committee lost its affiliation like other nationalist organisations abroad British India's Empire. Two letters from late October 1938, also found in the AICC files, exchanged between F. X. Gracías and the General Secretary of the INC, clarifies the change of policy. Gracías was the secretary of the newly formed Goa Congress Committee in Bombay

(GCCB), which had as President T. B. Cunha, by that time mostly living in that city. The secretary inquired if the GCCB would be considered a Foreign Congress Committee or included in the Bombay Presidency Congress Committee CC. He further asked about the Committee's relation with the AICC. At no point the Goan nationalists doubted that some sort of affiliation would be achieved. Lowering such expectations, the AICC General Secretary, by that time J. B. Kripalani, convoked the INC Constitution in answer to the request: "We do not affiliate any Committee outside India. Goa is of course geographically within India but I think some special provision will have to be made for the recognition of committees like yours."

Kripalani's ambiguous answer in what regards the concept of India, and Goan status within it, underscores, as in 1929, the delicacy of Goan situation. Actually, there seems to not have been any provision regarding the issue. GCC in Bombay continued to operate with a name that suggested affiliation in the INC and to repeatedly refer its link to the Goa Committee, not admitting having been extinct by the new INC's constitution or the limb situation that followed. As the volume *Goa Freedom Struggle vis-a-vis- Maharashtra (1946-1960)* edited by B. G. Kunte evidences, for such reason its leaders faced accusations of illegitimate conduct as actual affiliation was inexistent. The creation in 1946 of the autonomous National Congress (Goa) finally seemed to solve the discomfort, but tensions did not disappear.

After 1947, Nehru tried diplomatic negotiation with the French and Portuguese to integrate the enclaves under their domain in the new nation-state. Differently from the French, the Portuguese government refused to open such dossier. Along the Indian-Portuguese conflict Nehru was cautious enough to separate common nationhood from common citizenship: if the first justified Indian claims, the second had to wait for the solution of the political problem. Therefore, in the new nation-state, Goans enjoyed the status of foreigners. There was some hope that massive revolt in Goa would create the conditions to solve the problem. Such presumption failed to understand the complexity of local situation. At once, there were clear divisions and divided feelings about Goan identity after centuries of Portuguese domain and about the cultural and social impact on such identity sequent to integration in the new state of India. These divisions and dilemmas were aggravated by the repressive conditions created by the dictatorship that made impossible democratic discussion about what was at stake and the possibility of self-determination. They were furthermore aggravated by the developments in the Portuguese-Indian conflict that shrank the discussion of alternatives. On the other hand, there was a centenary local sentiment, based on

experience, about the limited capacity of such a small and politically divided population to conduct successful revolts against Portuguese power.

Even if frequently stepping side by side with Nehru, T. B. Cunha regretted such policies, as, in addition to turning fragile his vision of the liberation cause and being discriminatory to Goans, the mere initiative of opening diplomatic negotiations in the way they were done was an acknowledgement of foreign rule and of Goa's foreign status in face of India. As it is being suggested, Cunha believed that the situation of these territories should be considered that of invaded territories and thus an internal affair that required the continuation of Indian fight for its liberation.

ARTICULATING ACTION. THE CASE OF ENFORCED LABOUR AT ASSAM TEA PLANTATIONS

Nehru-Cunha's letters help understanding that the affiliation of the Committee may not have run as anticipated by the Goan politicians, as it developed to a relation in-between national and international affairs. Yet they point that the process helped the growth of awareness of the inevitable impact of British India's fight in local present and future, both on the part of the Portuguese power and of local public opinion. Nationalist feelings weren't anymore seen as restricted to Hindu community under the influence of Maharashtrian propaganda as noticeable since the beginning of the century, or as romantic manifestation of some lettered youngsters from the Catholic elites, as that performed by Goan students in Portugal along the 1920s. The Committee, under Cunha's direction, declaredly aimed at amplifying and transforming dispersed feelings into a political movement. The use of propaganda to raise political consciousness in Goa became crucial, as also became crucial to the aim to create an Indian public opinion that could help the inclusion of the territories under Portuguese domain in India's liberation agenda. In immediate practical terms, access to nationalist circles in British India helped to report local situation, responded to growing political repression and articulate a degree of trans-imperial action.

Still on 28 January 1929, Cunha described the immense local impact of the news about the affiliation of the Goa Committee and revealed his believe that, if aptly pressured, the dictatorship could involuntarily contribute to the nationalist cause, by harshening repression that awakened "the Goanese to the reality of the foreign rule". In such circumstances, Cunha mentioned the inten-

tion of circumventing censorship, by publishing booklets in British India for clandestine circulation in Goa. In fact, still in February he published a booklet in Bombay, *Nationalism and elementary rights*, where he gathered a series of censored articles (Cunha, 1961, pp. 141-160). Likewise, he asked Nehru's help to publish statements and news at nationalist press. Correspondence between Nehru and the AICC's under-secretary and editors prove concrete efforts to help overcoming less collaborative attitudes on the part of nationalist press in British India.

Within this interaction, the most discussed issue was T. B. Cunha's campaign regarding Goans working at Assam tea plantations under enslaved conditions. As happens nowadays in international human trade, the situation occurred in the context of deceptive promises and actual inhuman conditions met in those plantations, in a chain of complicities between greedy agents and plantation owners, allowed by corrupt or indifferent authorities. Already in the first letters changed in January 1929, the issue arose around Mr. T. R. Phookan's addresses and how to reach him to help rescuing the labourers. Cunha and Nehru naturally referred to Tarun Ram Phukan, Assam's prominent leader of the INC.

Thereafter, Cunha articulated with Nehru efforts to denounce the situation near British India's and Goa's public opinions and authorities to aid the workers' return to Goa. Cunha's Marxist mind-set helped the choice and means of intervention, allowing a statement about the social commitment of anticolonial activism. In fact, when in Paris, Cunha had already disclosed near French press, namely at the newspapers *L'Humanité* and *La Vie Ouvrière*, his preoccupation in denouncing how social injustice and abuse was favoured by the capitalist interests that moved Western colonial imperialism.

In what regarded the Assam plantations issue, his appeal to Nehru, the INC's net of politicians and its press channels came to reinforce the campaign in Goa started in February 1928 after small news in December 1927. In this campaign he used, with the active involvement of its editor Hegdó Dessai, the newspaper *Bharat* to denounce the situation near Goan public. Within such campaign, the *Bharat* took the unprecedented step of bringing to a local newspaper the voice of a *Curumbim* (Kunbi) by publishing an interview along two pages of the 12 April 1928 edition. This labourer had recently escaped from one of such plantations and shared his nightmare. It is to be noted that in Goa the own status of these rural labourers, with origin in the original inhabitants of Goa, was placed in the limits of the bottom caste in local caste system (*Sudras*) and the outcaste condition (untouchables), being furthermore bounded by surviving feudal type rela-

tions that guaranteed a condition of servitude (Pereira, 2016; Fernandes; DeSouza, 2022). According to the reportage, what the readers were about to witness was “the pitiful odyssey of a worker from our country, subjected, due to complete lack of protection from our authorities, to the inhuman exploitation of the wealthy British, who are said to be great champions of Civilization and of Christianity” (*A escravatura*, 1928; Cunha, 1961, p. 261). Confirming Cunha’s early efforts to bring the matter to British India’s press, the 21 June issue, also translated at Cunha’s collected works, exulted with the fact that the *Forward*, “organ of the swarajists of Bengal”, that is the party led by Nehru, dedicated a large space to the interview and had reproduced most of it:

The attitude of the Indian nationalist press is in contrast to the silence maintained by our “**free citizens of a free motherland**” from whom the sad facts of their countrymen failed to evoke the least protest of indignation [...] And now? What measures does our Government, our generous Government which only recently passed to itself the certificate of being “the protector of the humble” [...] propose to take? [...] Let the professional panegyrists and stooges of the rulers tell us [...] In the face of such indifference and inactivity we can only count on the solidarity of our brothers from all parts of India to go to the help of our compatriots condemned to forced labour in Assam. The campaign started by the Indian press, by the **Forward** in particular, is the beginning of the common action which is destined to liberate them from slavery.

In 1929, Nehru’s interest in helping the campaign proved to be crucial, by opening gates and offering advice. Thanks to Cunha and Nehru’s joint efforts, along with others like the editor of the *Bharat*, after almost one and a half years the campaign started to produce effect. On 17 July 1929, Cunha announced the return of 10 enslaved Goan labourers found at the Majuli Tea Company plantation:

It is a big triumph to the Congress organisation [...] We are trying now to take full advantage of this great success. We have intensified our campaign and our Committee has gained some prestige by this act. I am thinking now to publish the story of our whole campaign in a booklet.

Five days later, Nehru welcomed the good news, confessing that,

I wish very much that a general agitation could be started about the Assam plantations. I know well that conditions there are very bad. As a matter of fact some

time ago there was a big agitation about it. At the present moment however as you will see from the newspapers our political struggle especially in the Punjab is becoming intense. [...] I hope that you keep me informed of developments especially now that you are going to have a strong military Governor who threatens to suppress you.

Nehru was referring to the campaign that followed the death of Lal Lajpat Rai in December 1928 after being brutally beaten by the British commander of police in the non-violent protest against the Simon Commission, a death that was mourned also in Goa with public manifestations and hartal (closing of all activity) in his honour (Lobo, 2013, p. 497). In this 23 July message, Nehru informed he was forwarding Cunha's statement to *Free Press* but advised him to write directly to the agency to save time. In the meantime, Cunha published the pamphlet *Escravatura hipócrita* (Hypocritical slavery), a compilation until date of the *Bharat* articles, where he especially thanked Nehru and the Hindustan Seva Dal secretary, B. G. Lakore. Yet, Cunha's July rejoice gave way to irritation, noticing on 9 August that his statement divulged by *Free Press* agency had no impact in British India press. Only *Bombay Chronicle* published an article sent through a friend:

It seems that the Assam planters have everywhere powerful friends who help them to conceal their revolting ways of exploitation of the poor labourers, for very few people are willing to assist us in that matter. Our friends from Hubli, where is the office of labour recruiting agency, have never replied to me on this subject. My enquiry about the conditions of work in Assam [...] revealed the frightful state of slavery to which they are reduced there by the british [sic] capitalists, which is more appealing [sic] than I first supposed.

As a response, on 14 August Nehru immediately wrote to the secretaries of the Hubli based Hindustani Seva Dal and of the Karnataka Provincial Congress Committee, recommending all assistance to the Goa Committee's secretary, and strongly suggested that they entered in contact with Cunha. These examples of the correspondence changed about this matter allow to link the creation of the Goa Committee to the birth of a trans-imperial outlook to Indian realities and problems, as what happened in one empire actually affected the populations living under the other, a perspective that invited all INC, including its Goan branch, to solidary act upon them. As Cunha noticed in the 14 August letter, the new preoccupation of the local government in banning all

references to the INC's intervention in the campaign, also reflected imperialist solidarity in addition to Portuguese subaltern position in face of the British.

THE SECOND WORLD CONGRESS OF THE LEAGUE AGAINST IMPERIALISM, FRANKFURT AM MAIN, 21-29 JULY 1929

Finally, these documents reveal the Goa Committee's involvement with the League Against Imperialism and for National Independence due to T. B. Cunha. On 13 June 1929, he reported Nehru that the League invited the Committee to have a delegate at its second world congress to be held in Berlin (at last minute the venue changed to Frankfurt). The problem was that the Committee could not afford sending a delegate and was not easy finding someone suitable based in Europe. He worried about the representation of Portuguese colonies, as to his knowledge the Goa Committee was the only organisation affiliated to the League. For that reason, he had sent to the League's International Secretariat a thesis on Portuguese Imperialism to be voted at the Congress. On 21 June, Nehru revealed that for the same budget limitations, he nominated Shivaprasad Gupta (a known nationalist businessman) to represent the INC, as he was traveling on his own account. Unfortunately, could not help finding a deputy to the GC, but welcomed the thesis and asked for a copy. On 17 July, Cunha sent the document and informed having wired his friend Luhani in Berlin to represent the Committee.

This friendship with Ghulam Ambia Khan Luhani again confirms Cunha's links with the Indian and international communist circles acting in Paris, where the couple M. N. Roy and Evelyn Trent became key figures by mid-1920. Important instrument in this group's propaganda was the periodical *Masses of India* (1925-1928), initially edited by Trent with the participation of Luhani. The group had also promoted the launch of the abovementioned *Comité Pro-Hindou* to which Cunha was associated, according to the nationalist historian K. N. Panikkar in his introductory note to Cunha's selected writings.

Notwithstanding these links, Cunha maintained a critical position, uncomfortable when free thinking and democratic values started receding in favour of political obedience. On March 1927, already from Goa, he went to the point of attacking – at the Parisian magazine *Europe*, founded by Romain Rolland – the Third International's strategy to India. He found in claims to growing influence in India made by Western communists the unhappy combination of ignorance with racist believe that Eastern masses needed the van-

guard of Western proletariat to promote and guide their fights. Certainly alluding to *Masses of India*, Cunha ironically measured the plausibility of Bolshevik's relevance in India by its main organ of press to guide such struggle: a miniscule monthly leaflet, written in English, printed in Paris, and totally ignoring Indian reality (Lobo, 2018). Such critical positioning allows to understand why before leaving Paris he defended the creation of an Asian Bloc against Western imperialism. A perspective that the Indonesian leaders, with whom he was connected, tried to lead at 1927 Congress where the League was born, having been dissuaded by Nehru's opposition to such break on a solidary positioning in anti-imperialist fight.

Regrettably, Nazism led to the destruction of most documentation of the League, which headquarters were in Berlin. The scarce surviving corpus is now mostly at International Institute of Social History (IISH/IISG) in Amsterdam, being available online. Contrary to my expectations neither the Congress Reports nor the lists of affiliated organisations refer the Goa Committee or Cunha's thesis. Most probably the related correspondence was lost, but it is anyhow open to speculation why the affiliation is not mentioned. I think that Luhani ended not representing the Committee for political reasons. In a Congress marked by the takeover of the League by the Comintern, to which Luhani was still clearly linked, a marginal organisation whose leader turned Western communist role in India into a joke, seems to be a strong candidate to erasure. Additionally, INC's affiliation may have also helped suspicion within the tensions raised by the Nehru Report.

Such result does not obscure T. B. Cunha's consistent work to a broader critic of Portuguese imperialism and to connect it with the emergent global movement. He started such discussion at *A Índia Portuguesa* and *O que é o imperialismo?*, and continued it with the thesis – *Les caractéristiques de l'Imperialisme portugais (Thèse présentée par le Comité de Goa (Inde portugaise) du Congrès National Indou) au second Congrès mondial anti-impérialist* – which fortunately rests among the documents found at Nehru's archive.

The first thing to be noticed is that the manuscript has several sentences underlined, suggesting careful reading by Nehru, who, through this document, was also updating himself to the panorama of Portuguese imperialism. The second is that the publics aimed by the 1928 and the 1929 texts were determinant in the choice of perspective and contents. While the booklet was directed to Goans viewing their political education in what regarded the critic theory of new imperialism and coeval geopolitical tensions, the LAI's text addressed a public familiar with such issues, in fact, the vanguard of anti-imperialist combat. Even the

classification “thesis” at the subtitle was adequate to a congress that aimed at articulating theorization with political strategy. In this case, Cunha’s interest was to provoke the League to extend its action to the Portuguese empire.

The 1929 develops an analysis embryonically present at the 1928 booklet. His argument regarded Portuguese imperial difference for the worst reasons. According to Cunha, being Portugal incapable of updating itself to modern civilization, Portuguese centenary empire was likewise alien to the aims and mechanisms of modern imperialism. The document precisely addresses this issue, underling the different contradictions that the situation carried.

Portugal is a great colonial power. But the characteristics of its imperialism are completely different from those of other great colonial countries and contradict somehow general theory of imperialism. Its situation among the great imperialist colossus is paradoxical. Presently, nothing justifies the important place it occupies among the great colonial powers. Contrary to other imperialist countries, it is completely deprived of a big industry and bank capital. It is lacking the own purpose of modern imperialism.

In such situation, when justifying its colonial rights, Portugal could only convoke historical rights achieved of being the first European country to establish intercontinental communications and to be installed in strategic places. The matter was that, in present days, Portuguese colonialism became doubly unbearable to the colonized, as they lost self-determination to gain in change nothing but misfortune:

Portugal being itself a materially and culturally backward country, its colonies are affected by this double inconvenience that constitute a serious obstacle to progress of these vast spaces over which it dominates. [...] It results in an absence of the great works necessary for their modernization, the total destitution of the indispensable measures of sanitation, the dilapidation of natural richness and the existence of vast uncultivated countries with their mineral and agriculture richness unexplored, although the Portuguese are installed there after centuries.

According to Cunha, this situation turned the maintenance of the Empire the own purpose of its existence, by means of a senseless bureaucratic and military state apparatus that involved and corrupted a net of metropolitan and local servants.

In its substance, Cunha’s description was not original, as it had been recurrent since the ideological turn that marked the Berlin Conference. It had been

used both internally to claim change of policies to meet the agenda of modern colonialism, and as argument of rival empires, particularly to demand sharing of its African domains. Cunha was aware of such arguments and of the biases that the own idea of Western modernizing mission carried, but accusing Portuguese incompetence as an agent of modernity, when put at the service of the colonized, gained new political significance. It served to refuse any possibility of justifying the continuation of such domain, even within the logics of the ideological defence of colonialism. What prevailed as a consequence of Portuguese colonialism was, according to Cunha, that its existence was a source of mental enslavement, structural deprivation and migration to other empires, a condition that alienated its colonies from modernity and modernization, while at the same time broke the economic, social and cultural tissue of local traditional societies. Following this reasoning, the situation of the Portuguese colonies, in Asia as in Africa, could only lead to the conclusion that “imperialism that elsewhere justifies itself for the material and cultural progress that claims to bring the backward populations cannot even convoke here such justification.”

Internationally, this internal contradiction was only supported because the Portuguese Empire had become no more than a “British protectorate”, a “satellite” of the British Empire, condemned to survive as long as it served British capitalist interests:

This double subjection turns particularly hard the condition of the indigenous of the Portuguese colonies. Economically they are under the forced yoke of British imperialism just as the subjects of the English possessions, and under the political point of view, independently of the disorder and the anarchy that reigns in Portugal's internal affairs after long time, which naturally reverberate in its colonies, they have to march on the trailer of a backward country materially and culturally and deprived of the essential qualities of modern civilization.

Complying with the idea of British imperialism as carrier of the expansion of “modern and universalist culture”, in Cunha's view the situation became particularly unbearable in its Asian colonies, namely Goa and Macao, where the indigenous bourgeoisie possessed

a more modern and universalist culture than a culture with provincial tune as the Portuguese culture. The proximity with great industrial and cosmopolitan centres, like Bombay and Canton, introduced there ways of life and a new social structure that contrasted with too much advantage with the primitive methods of Portuguese organisation. Therefore, the paradox of an imperialist nation that

found itself in conditions of inferiority in face of the countries it maintained under its domain tend to accentuate more and more.

In conclusion:

Portuguese domination participated of the usual misdeeds of imperialist banditry that everywhere oppresses, exploits, starves and massacres. To that, it is needed to add that, for its obsolete and primitive nature, the Portuguese colonial system constitutes a force of regression.

Cunha's thesis had the virtue of, for the first time, linking African and Asian realities under the Portuguese Empire as suffering common consequences of its colonial system, even if their populations had different tools to address them. The fact that when in Paris he circulated both amongst Asian and African anticolonial circles, sharing common grievances, may have been decisive to understand the importance of looking at the connected realities created by empire and to address the League Against Imperialism not only as a Goan but as a spokesman of the victims of the Portuguese Empire. Ultimately, T. B. Cunha insinuated near the LAI's comrades that if liberation from colonial imperialism was a shared claim for self-determination, liberation from Portuguese empire was even more urgent.

EPILOGUE

As referred, Cunha-Nehru correspondence found in New Delhi has an abrupt interruption in September 1929. By the end of that year, INC's annual meeting, gathered in Lahore, projected Nehru as the future leader of India's liberation. On the eve of 1930, Nehru symbolically raised the tricolour Indian flag and on 26 January the INC passed a declaration of independence (Purna Swaraj). In April 1930 Nehru was arrested for six months. On July that year, the Portuguese Government published the *Acto Colonial* (Colonial Act) that turned constitutional the Portuguese Empire, submitting the colonies and its populations to an organic, permanent, subaltern status in reference to Portugal and its interests. The act furthermore affirmed that it was part of Portuguese essence to possess colonies and civilize its populations with Western Christian values. In Goa and among the Goan community in British India, as in other parts of the Empire, the legislation was received with commotion and raised a wave of protests (Lobo, 2013; Machado, 2020). Cunha's cousin, Menezes

Bragança declared, on behalf of the opposition at the Government Council, that “India does not renounce to the right, that peoples have, of reaching their full individuality, until they constitute units capable of directing their destinies, as it is an original right of their organic essence” (Lobo, 2013, p. 518). A time of imaginative resistances, persecutions, imprisonments, and exiles had started to last several decades.

On 9 May 1931, Cunha, still in Cansaulim, wrote Nehru. Denoting that their correspondence continued since 1929, he thanked the Congress leader for his post-card from Ceylon on 30 April and updated him to his latest news. After two and a half months of silence he could not understand, had finally received a reply of the A.I.S.A. (All India Spinners Association) notifying him that they had asked the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati (Gandhi’s Ashram) to send a man to help the Committee, as requested. He closed the letter excusing himself:

If I had to trouble you during your rest it was only because we lost much time waiting this reply and people are here very anxious to begin the work over which they have become very enthusiast after a propaganda of many months. I hope that at least now your intervention will prove useful for the cause of khadi.

In the years to come, Cunha continued his fight both against Portuguese rule and against British India nationalists’ resistance to treat Goan nationalists as equal partners of a common fight and Goa as part of the same country.

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