

Anand Mohan Sahay (1898-1991)

Indian Revolutionary in Japan

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Where Is The Flag of England?

And the winds of the world made answer
North, South, East and West—
Wherever there's wealth to covet,
Or land that can be possessed.

Wherever are savage races
To cozen, coerce, and scare
Ye shall find the vaunted ensign:
For the English flag is there!

And where the beachcomber harries
Isles of the Southern sea,
At the peak of his hellish vessels
Tis the English flag flies free.

The Moon full oft hath cursed it,
With the bitterest dying breath
and the Arab hissed his hatred,
As he spits at its fold in death.

The hapless Fellah has feared it
On Tel-el-Kebir's parched plain
And the Zulu's blood has stained it
With a deep indelible stain.

It has floated o'er the scenes of pillage
It has flaunted o'er deeds of shame,
It has waved o'er the fell marauder
As he ravished with sword and flame.

It has looked upon ruthless slaughter
And massacre dire and grim
It has heard the shrieks of victims
Drown over the Jingo hymn.

Where is the flag of England?
Seek the land where the natives rot:
Where decay and assured extinction

Must soon be the people's lot.

Go! Search for the once glad islands,
Where disease and death are rife,
And the greed of a callous commerce
Now battens on human life!

Where is the flag of England?
Go sail where the rich galleons come
With shoddy and "loaded" cottons
And beer and Bibles and rum.

Go, too, where the brute force has triumphed
And hypocrisy makes its lair
And your question will find its answer,
For the flag of England is there!

Henry Labouchere (1831-1912)

In these days when Japan has transformed from a military empire to a peaceful economic behemoth, it is often overlooked that from the Russo-Japanese War through the Pacific War a powerful Japan was seemingly a beacon of hope for some individuals in colonial South and Southeast Asia. Their number was relatively small when compared with those anti-colonials who went to Europe or North America. For even though Japan's proximity was greater than that of the West, the language barrier was very significant. Moreover, what there was of colonial education focused understandably on the history and culture of the colonial homelands and rarely even mentioned anything Asian.

While there was some support in Japan for South and Southeast Asian anti-colonialism, it came from the margins of Japanese society. Until the mid-1930s the Japanese government cooperated closely with the South and Southeast Asian colonial regimes. This was because of the important and profitable trade arrangements between Japan and those colonies. Further, after 1910 with the annexation by Japan of Korea, Japan had joined the ranks of the colonial powers and was loathe to encourage anti-colonial activities anywhere.

It should also be noted that the vaunted Japanese police maintained the most intense surveillance of political "agitators" of whatever stripe, and in particular, of foreigners of any nationality or any profession. Indeed, the contemporary historian of activists like Sahay, is extremely dependent upon police archives for

information. One is necessarily impressed (or depressed) by the specificity and the detail of these records, especially in an era without the technological advances in surveillance techniques we know today.

Further, the only immigrant settlement in Japan from South and Southeast Asia was the small group of Indians mostly concentrated in Kobe. They were overwhelmingly involved in the cotton and cotton goods trade. As merchants these Indians in Japan were largely either apolitical or extravagantly loyal subjects of His Majesty, the King of England. Indeed, the records of the British Embassy in Tokyo as well as those of the British consulates in, for example, Kobe reveal the close ties between the crown's representatives in Japan and the resident Indian community.

It was this atmosphere in which Anand Mohan Sahay sought to stimulate Indian nationalism. As the paragraphs that follow demonstrate, his intentions seemingly never wavered. However, the response to his activism by Japanese and by resident Indians in Japan was lukewarm at best. In that context Sahay's apparent persistence was quite remarkable although the impact of his agitation was, in the end, rather minimal.

* * *

On September 8, 1944 the United States Office of Strategic Services, forerunner of the CIA, issued a restricted report entitled "Indian Minorities in South and East Asia: The Background of the Indian Independence Movement Outside India." The authors wrote: "The story of the Indian nationalist movement in Japan is a summary of the life histories of a small number of Indian revolutionaries who used their contacts with the Japanese to further their own, and what they believed to be their country's ends."[\[1\]](#) This prescient observation, which still seems very viable today, is followed in the report by five very brief biographical sketches including one of Anand Mohan Sahay who was "said to be completely unscrupulous, dishonest and insincere" in political matters. One informant (name withheld) believes he could be bought by anyone prepared to pay the price of securing his support. The same source accuses him "of extorting funds from Indian merchants to support himself and his various enterprises."[\[2\]](#)

Such an appraisal of Sahay is in direct contrast to his own self-appraisal contained in the portion of his memoirs recorded by Prof. Nagasaki Yoko.[\[3\]](#) It is likely that the "whole truth" about A.M. Sahay will never be known, but in the paragraphs which follow I would like to try to record and analyze his life and

times in Japan and, in so far as possible, to put them in the context of the rather rarefied atmosphere of Indian nationalist activities in Japan, in particular between World War I and World War II.

Anand Mohan Sahay (1898-1991) was born of a landholder's family in Bhagalpore, Bihar, India. At the beginning of 1923 Sahay, who had been a medical student at Patna University and had dropped out of school in 1920 to join the Indian National Congress Committee decided to go to the United States to study pharmacy and then to return to India to resume his activities on behalf of Indian independence. However, when the Bihar authorities refused to issue him a passport valid for travel to the United States, he made up his mind to go to Japan first and to try to get a valid travel document from the British representatives there. May 6, 1923 Sahay left Calcutta by steamship for Japan. He had been granted passport No. 2302, dated Patna, 19 February 1923 by the then Bihar and Orissa Government. His ostensible intent, according to his application, was to study electrical engineering in Japan. British authorities noted that Sahay had been a private secretary to the leading Bihar politician Rajendra Prasad (1884-1963).[\[4\]](#)

Arriving in Kobe, Sahay had two immediate disappointments. First, despite Kobe being the site of the major concentration of Indians in Japan, those Indians, who were largely merchants and traders, seemed disinterested in Indian politics probably, in Sahay's view, because of fear of losing their British passports. Second, as in Bihar previously, Sahay was again in Japan denied a passport valid for travel to the United States.

Rather than returning to India, Sahay decided to remain in Japan where he believed he could promote both the cause of Indian freedom and Indo-Japanese friendship. Accordingly, by the following year, 1924, Sahay had organized and become head of the Japan Committee of the Indian National Congress. At first Sahay supported himself by teaching English at the Kobe YMCA, where he not only had opportunities to meet with the small number of Indian students and young merchants living in Japan but also with Japanese young people whom Sahay was eager to influence.

Nevertheless, in the 1920s in Japan propaganda on behalf of Indian independence was difficult to disseminate. Japanese newspapers were not receptive to direct public attacks on the British since the Anglo-Japanese Treaty was still in force. Moreover, Japanese attitudes generally toward other Asians clearly required some aggressive consciousness raising. Sahay began to try to

contribute to the latter by writing brief biographies for the Japanese press of nationalist leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and C.R. Das (1870-1925).

At the same time Sahay was purporting to be a secret agent of Asian revolution and used a flimsy cover, an import/export firm called "International Traders," to further that particular self-image. In fact, it was as a self-styled traveling salesman for International Traders that Sahay sailed from Japan for South and Southeast Asia on Nov. 6, 1926. He reached Calcutta early in 1927 and apparently met briefly with Nehru and the Muslim nationalist Moulana Azad (1888-1958). While in India, Sahay married the niece of the prominent political figure C.R. Das. In September, 1927 Sahay with his new wife set sail for Japan and, according to the story, the night of his departure he met Subhas Chandra Bose (1897-1945) for 15 minutes. Bose, who had just been released from prison in Mandalay, is supposed to have given Sahay his blessing and encouragement to pursue political agitation in Japan.

Apparently inspired by his Indian sojourn, on his return to Japan Sahay in 1928 in Kobe reaffirmed his leadership of the Indian National Congress. Accordingly, a report from the British Embassy in Tokyo to the Foreign Office in London described Sahay as "the ring-leader in anything done in the way of anti-British propaganda."[\[5\]](#) However, the same report stated that "as far as can be ascertained Sahay refrains from any incitement to violence and that the energies of his party are confined to more or less legitimate methods."[\[6\]](#)

A more specific analysis of Sahay's activities in Kobe suggested that Sahay was an exception in Kobe where the Indian community was overwhelmingly a mercantile one whose "members had come to Japan not to mix in politics, but to make money, and their discontent with the British rule is little in evidence except when their money making is interfered with."[\[7\]](#) This memorandum, although condemning "Sahay and his ilk,"[\[8\]](#) commented that, while these individuals "indulged in much talk, the results seem small."[\[9\]](#)

In January 1929 Sahay sent articles on the Kobe branch of the Indian National Congress Committee to Indian newspapers. On March 15, 1929 Sahay, in his capacity as Secretary of the INCC, Japan wrote the All-India Congress Committee to inquire whether formal recognition had been afforded to the Japan branch. At the same time he reported his efforts to have the Kobe Indian community boycott social functions held in honor of the visit to Japan of the Duke of Gloucester.[\[10\]](#)

May 8, 1929 Jawaharlal Nehru wrote the Secretary of INCC, Japan requesting 100 rupees as an affiliation fee thus officially recognizing the Japan branch of INCC.[\[11\]](#) Apparently because of the boycott directed at the Duke of Gloucester, on 10 May 1929 Sahay wrote Nehru that he was "moving about with a body-guard kindly provided by the Japanese Government." "The Japanese police," Sahay wrote, "were no different from the Indian police, so polite, so well behaved."[\[12\]](#)

Sahay in subsequent years organized the Indo-Japanese Young People's Association (1934), India Lodge for Indian students coming to Japan (1932), Kansai Indo-Japanese Association (1933), Kyoto-Indo-Japanese Association (1934), *Nichiin Doshikai*, Osaka (1938). Sahay also made a number of speeches before a variety of Japanese groups, organizations and companies. For example on December 6, 1930 he spoke to the employees of the Ujigama Electric Company at their annual dinner in Osaka. Sahay, as in all his public utterances, gave a vivid description of vicious British misrule in India and then requested that his listeners make a sympathetic study of the cause of India.[\[13\]](#) He was also responsible for an English language publication "Voice of India" which was published in Kobe as a monthly beginning in 1930. By Volume II "Voice of India" was half in English and half in Japanese and usually appeared every fortnight. Clearly the "Voice of India" was from the outset a personal vehicle for Sahay, and each issue emphasized his activities, his speeches, and his opinions. To the British diplomats in Japan, however, Sahay's "Voice of India" was nothing more than a form of anti-British propaganda.

In May, 1934 Sahay attended a meeting in Tokyo of the Association for the Spiritual Alliance of Asian Youth.[\[14\]](#) As Secretary General of this organization Sahay would be coming to Tokyo once a month, and he was therefore investigating possible residences in Tokyo.

In October of 1934 the British consul in Kobe, one G.H. Phipps, sent a confidential memorandum to the India Office in London.[\[15\]](#) Phipps wrote that "with the probable exception of Sahay and one or two students, the entire Indian community at Kobe is a mercantile one."[\[16\]](#) Since they had come to Japan to make money, they did not, according to Phipps, "mix in politics."[\[17\]](#) Sahay, however, Phipps wrote, acts as host and chief of staff whenever "agitators" visit the area. But, "Sahay and his friends do moreover abstain so far as one can ascertain from incitement to violence, not only in Japan, where fear of police interference would operate, but also in India, and confine their energies to more or less legitimate methods."[\[18\]](#)

Phipps also interestingly suggested that the British consulate depended on the local Hyogo Prefecture authorities for information. Further, he intimated that the Japanese authorities accorded "very tepid" support to the "seditionists" regarding such activities as a "useful weapon to keep in reserve."[\[19\]](#) The local authorities, according to Phipps, were preoccupied with "dangerous thoughts" regarding Japan itself.[\[20\]](#) He also noted that the authorities had to be extremely careful since they never knew whether in a given case the Army might be a behind the scenes participant.[\[21\]](#) In the case of Sahay, specifically, Phipps stated: "There must obviously be some moneyed person or organization in the background who finances this publication [Voice of India] and defrays Sahay's salary."[\[22\]](#)

Interestingly, Phipps concluded that only by the use of "paid agents" could perhaps closer observation of the local Indian community be conducted. However, Phipps vehemently criticized such a tactic since the likelihood of such individuals becoming double agents was very real in a Japan which was paranoid about espionage. "Agents of this nature would be far more dangerous than valuable," he wrote.[\[23\]](#)

That the Japanese authorities had their own concerns about Indian political activists is evident from the extensive files in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs archives. These files contain detailed reports on Indians in Japan as well as extensive interviews with Japanese who had traveled to India. One report, for example, dated October 7, 1930 covered the annual meeting of the Indian National Congress Committee of Japan at Futehari Company in Kobe. About twenty members including former president Futehari attended the meeting. The secretary, A.M. Sahay, reported on general affairs and finance, and new officers were elected. Finally, the group discussed the possibility of sending representatives of the INCC of Japan to the INC convention in March, 1931. It was decided to send two representatives to be chosen later by an ad hoc committee.[\[24\]](#)

This same report also stated that the group had decided on the contents of Volume 2 of the "Voice of India":

1. Gandhi and Peace.
2. Bombay, ruled by a Parliament
3. New phase of oppression in India
4. The right of revolution
5. Proclamation of the League of Asia
6. Meaning of India for Britain

7. Report on the prohibition law for police officers.
8. Recommendation of British products
9. British Empire and Christ
10. The true picture of British imperialism (an article)
11. The Congress is ready for sincere peace (an article)[\[25\]](#)

Also on October 15, 1930 a report from the Governor of Hyogo Prefecture stated that Sahay reacted vehemently to the news from India that the Viceroy had authorized local authorities to confiscate property which belonged to unlawful organizations. Sahay, understanding "unlawful organizations" to mean the Indian National Congress, spoke out on the issue by writing a letter to the English language newspaper *The Japan Chronicle*. He saw the property seizure concept as potentially destructive of the INC and condemned it accordingly.[\[26\]](#)

Again on March 10, 1931 the Japanese closely observed a special meeting of the INC Japanese Branch called to celebrate the compromise reached between the Viceroy of India and Mahatma Gandhi about the salt monopoly in India. About twenty-five members were present, and A.M. Sahay explained the compromise agreement in detail. It was also unanimously agreed that members would write and contribute articles continuously on the Indian independence movement to the Japanese press including the English language *Osaka Mainichi*.[\[27\]](#)

Nevertheless, Sahay's outspoken Indian nationalism did not seem to have much impact on the Kobe Indian community which was the largest in Japan. In his own mind he saw his local fellow Indians as generally apolitical because of fear that their passports might be confiscated by the British consular authorities. Their lives and their livelihoods were devoted to their businesses, primarily textiles, and therefore they were extremely leery of attracting undue attention to any other non-business facet of their relatively comfortable lives in Japan. Sahay himself, clearly understanding the nature of the Indian community in the diaspora, as was stated, himself assumed the guise of a businessman.

In fact, Sahay supported himself as a teacher of English in the Kobe Foreign Language School as well as through honoraria for speeches given around the country plus contributions from friends and supporters, both Indian and Japanese. Moreover, according to the "Voice of India," Sahay hoped to encourage Indian students to come to Japan, and for that purpose in 1933 he established a so-called India Lodge which was specifically intended to house Indian students coming to Japan. Indeed, the previous year in the "Voice of India" Sahay had written that "Europe and America in general and England in particular had been

receiving most of the Indian students going abroad. Germany, France and the United States were especially receptive and had high standing among Indians, but cost was always so high that only a very few and mostly well to do had gone abroad."[\[28\]](#)

Sahay then went on to note that in Japan the number of Indian students was "insignificant" despite Japan's rapid industrial and technological development.[\[29\]](#) The few who did go to Japan, he wrote, found that their Japanese education was not properly appreciated in India and that employment opportunities were very difficult to find. He also listed several other reasons discouraging to study in Japan: lack of information, the language problem, no organization in Japan to receive Indian students and no Japanese financial support for Indian students.[\[30\]](#) So for Sahay his India Lodge was a very small step to try to encourage Indian students to come to Japan. Moreover, Sahay viewed a good part of his task with the INC as working with youth, both Indian and Japanese.

Sahay had a close personal relationship with one Okumura Ryuzo, General Secretary of the Kobe Branch of the YMCA, who had long been interested in local Indian activities. In 1935, for example, Sahay, Okamura and some twenty-five others founded the *Nichi-In Seinen Kyokai* (Japan-India Youth Association) which was to foster friendship and understanding between young Indians and young Japanese. Sahay and Okumura felt that the expansion of mutual knowledge of their two countries must be undertaken by young men and women, especially since school teaching in Japan ignored India as school teaching in India ignored Japan.[\[31\]](#)

That the Japanese authorities were observing Sahay continuously is evident from the plethora of detailed reports on his activities, whereabouts and contacts. The Foreign Ministry archives also recount in full an article by Sahay appearing in a Kobe newspaper on Mar. 25 and 26, 1931.[\[32\]](#) Sahay sought to counter British propaganda, to the effect that the British were teaching a fissiparous India "democracy and civilization" after which the British would at some future date turn over the administration to the Indians. In the same piece Sahay listed supposed advantages of British rule: primary and secondary schools, universities, railways, telegraph, irrigation systems etc. Then, of course, he proceeded to deny that India had to be a British colony in order to meet those criteria. Interestingly, too, he quoted Henry George at great length to support his position. Sahay also called upon the work of other Western scholars who were unremitting critics of British policy in India.

Then on April 13, 1931 a report from the office of the Governor of Osaka Prefecture described a symposium on Asian problems at the Osaka Club. Sahay, together with other Indians, met with a number of prominent Japanese to plan some sort of organization to promote international peace in Asia. "Though they planned and talked, they dispersed without any final decision."[\[33\]](#)

Curiously, in May the Governor of Hyogo Prefecture reported that Sahay, together with the editor of the magazine *Kumo no Hashira*, was organizing a seminar on the thought of John Ruskin.[\[34\]](#) Although the seminar did not materialize, Sahay delivered a speech on conditions in India to some 200 students at the Furuya English Institute in Osaka.[\[35\]](#)

The next report on Sahay was occasioned by a dinner meeting at the Daimaru Restaurant in Kobe on August 22.[\[36\]](#) The group met at 5:30 p.m. and dispersed at 8:30 p.m. The participants in addition to Sahay were Muchan, an Indian living in Kobe, Rash Behari Bose, the Chief Priest of Gokurakuji, the Manager of the Kobe Meeting Hall of Youth and a Seiyukai Diet member from Otsu in Shiga Prefecture. This get together was supposed to organize an Indo-Japanese Association to promote Indian-Japanese Friendship.

As was his usual practice, Sahay continued to write letters to the English language press in Japan. July 6, 1933 the following letter appeared:[\[37\]](#)

To the Editor of the Chronicle:

SIR. — In to-day's editorial comments regarding my recent article in *The Osaka Mainichi* you have raised points most of which have been already covered by my previous arguments, and I need not take your space to repeat them here. If the question of low exchange is taken into consideration to show the advantageous position of Japan, we may not overlook the disadvantages of the latter in buying raw materials from outside at present rate.

You have asked me to imagine what would be my feelings in case my own province is treated by a foreign power in the way the Japanese troops treated Manchuria and Shanghai. I have never tried to admire the military operations in China. be the oppressors Japanese, British, or even Chinese themselves. All that I intended to show in my article was the mischievous propaganda now being carried on in India to misrepresent Japan there. However, let me assure you that an Indian need not use much of imagination to realize the horrors of bombing and shooting. Many provinces of India, including my own, had to experience

much worse atrocities than those experienced by the Chinese. Let us leave aside the old stories. The memory of the Panjab atrocities is still fresh in our mind and the burning of the villages in Chittagong and Dacca and other inhuman days of looting and shooting the unarmed and peaceful villages for the "crime" of their ignorance about certain absconders may not be surpassed by those happened in China.—Yours etc.

A.M. SAHAY

Kobe: June 23rd.

(On the other hand, they may.—Ed.)

The Japanese police seemed to have been especially concerned about Sahay's attendance in February, 1934 at a meeting in Kobe of the preparatory committee of the Asian People's Congress.[\[38\]](#) It was, according to the Japanese documentation, led by individuals who insisted on creating greater solidarity with other associations dealing with Asian problems, and it was Sahay who expressed a desire to visit Manchuria, at least to Changchun (Hsinking) and, if possible to Harbin. On February 8 Sahay set sail for Dairen on the Harbin Maru. Again, Japanese records report what Sahay said on board ship:[\[39\]](#)

The Preparatory Committee of the Asian People's Congress is scheduled to be held in Dairen. We will change the traditional, passive character of such meetings in the past, and we will pass a resolution to develop practical and cooperative relations among Japan, China and India in order to liberate Asians from the oppression of the white race. We will also determine concrete and feasible policies to stabilize Asia, to popularize Asian cultures, and to promote the welfare of the Asian people.

Though there are independent countries such as China and Thailand, they do not have enough power to resist the intrusion of Western countries. Only the Japanese Empire stands in opposition to them. My motherland, India, having 300 million people can not free itself from British rule.

The Indian independence movement led by Gandhi is important in the face of British oppression. It is a great regret for us as Indians. However, the new Manchukuo has achieved its independence with the support of all of Asia. Therefore, the dawning of the liberation of all Asian peoples has begun.

In 1936 Sahay again sought a passport to visit French Indo-China, Thailand, the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies in order supposedly to further his commercial interests. Although the Government of India was apparently agreeable to this request, the British Consulate of Kobe vehemently objected on the ground that "it was considered highly probable that Sahay was running a contra-espionage organization among Indians on behalf of the Japanese authorities."^[40] It was also in 1936 that Sahay arranged a successful boycott by Indians of King George VI's coronation celebrations in Kobe.^[41] Thus, in the view of the British in Japan, Sahay took "a very lenient view of Japan's aggressive foreign policy."^[42] The same British source contended that Sahay's actions displeased "the leaders of the Indian National Congress, to whom Japan's treatment of China and her avowedly imperialistic ambitions are most repellent."

After the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in July, 1937, it seems that the Japanese heightened their surveillance of Sahay. Sahay had continued to identify himself as head of the Japan Branch of the Indian National Congress although it was not entirely clear whether he had, in fact, been appointed to that position by the Congress in India or whether he had somehow anointed himself to that eminence. In any event, the Japanese, seemingly without Sahay's knowledge, were opening and reading his mail. They took special note of two letters he wrote on September 24, 1937 to the headquarters of the Indian National Congress and to Gandhi himself.^[43] Sahay wrote that while some in India were advocating a boycott of Japanese goods, this only gave comfort to Britain. He further wrote that Indians should recognize that it was Englishmen who were instigating Chinese hostility to Japan. Then, in an extremely convoluted argument Sahay tried to explain Japan's policy in China as being that of a rejected suitor who would like to give her chastity to her sweetheart. Jealousy, he suggested, was endemic in China's view of Japan and, urged on by missionaries, contributed to the tension between the two countries. Further, Sahay worried that Indian sympathy for the cause of China could only redound to Britain's advantage. He, therefore, urged Gandhi and his followers to adopt a policy of strict neutrality in the Sino-Japanese War.

Then, according to the Japanese archives, on October 30, 1937, Sahay published an article in the Japanese press entitled "The cunning Britain agitating India for anti-Japanese movement," and on November 5 he published a further piece entitled "The conflict for the Indians living in Japan relating to a boycott of Japanese goods."^[44] An immediate result of the appearance of these articles was that Sahay was accused of being a British agent. Sahay vehemently denied the charge by describing himself as a member of the Indian National Congress and a

resident of Japan for 15 years. He contended that the charge against him had two rationales: first, the accuser was unfamiliar with Sahay's public record of anti-British activities and second, that the charge against Sahay was intended to degrade him, especially in the eyes of the Japanese.

Sahay also expressed his view that Britain was the principal instigator of Sino-Japanese enmity and that Britain sought to impede Japan-India trade by creation of an anti-Japanese tariff rate. Sahay depicted himself as a committed promoter of Indo-Japanese cultural and political friendship although his detractors said that he was a tool of wealthy Japanese capitalists.

On October 28, 1937 Sahay sent Jawaharlal Nehru the following telegram:

Though sympathizing with the Chinese, I wish from the bottom of my heart that the Indian National Congress would adhere to neutrality in this situation. To boycott Japanese goods not only worsens matters but will not help China.[\[45\]](#)

Sahay also sought to counter the accusations that he was a British intelligence agent. He did this by writing letters which were published in both English (e.g. *Osaka Mainichi*) and Japanese (e.g. *Nippon Shimbun*). Nevertheless, the Japanese authorities were sufficiently unsure of Sahay's true political affiliations that they continued their close surveillance of him.

By August of 1938 Sahay had decided to make a trip to Manchukuo and China to investigate for himself conditions in areas under Japanese occupation. He also hoped to inform his fellow Indians on the true state of things in China, intending, of course, to rectify what he saw as the imbalance in the Indian perception of Japan. Interviewed on his departure from Kobe on August 9, Sahay bemoaned Japanese-Soviet enmity contending that such antagonism only benefited the British whose imperialism was boundless.

Traveling mostly by train but also once by air and finally by ship, Sahay visited Dairen, Hsinking, Harbin, Mukden, Peiping (Beijing), Tientsin, Tsinan, Tsingtao, Shanghai and Nanking, returning to Nagasaki on September 22.[\[46\]](#) The Japanese archives reveal that Sahay's trip was supported by the Information Department of the Army Ministry and the Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Foreign Ministry. To those sources Sahay gave his usual anti-British diatribe and assured them that his trip was intended to collect materials to better inform the Indian populace about the Japanese efforts in Manchuria and North China.[\[47\]](#)

In early 1939 Sahay wrote an anti-British tract published by Modern Nippon Sha in both English and Japanese and entitled simply *India*. Designed to win Japanese sympathy for Indian independence, the book focused on the travails of India in the immediate past. The British Embassy in Tokyo sent copies to the Foreign Office in London and to the Government of India. The accompanying note described the tone of Sahay's writing as an attack that "partly takes the form of atrocity stories, partly of a denunciation of Britain as a world tyrant and partly of a general exhortation to the coloured races to rise against the white races under the leadership of Japan."[\[48\]](#) Indeed, an appeal to Japan to lead the colored races of the world against white imperialism opens and closes Sahay's book.

September 1939 found Sahay once again on a visit to Shanghai "undertaken at the instance of the Japanese authorities, who, it is reported invited him to proceed to Shanghai at their expense."[\[49\]](#) During his stay in Shanghai, Sahay made a broadcast directed at the Chinese people. It was from the Japanese radio station in Shanghai.

The full text of Sahay's words is found in the archives of the Public and Judicial Department.[\[50\]](#) Entitled "India Appeals to China" Sahay's address was another attempt to inform Chinese who were resisting Japan that they were doing the work of British imperialism. He contended further that any British aid to the Chinese was intended "to destroy the growing strength of the Chinese Republic." Sahay appealed for peace between China and Japan stating that India's only hope for independence was a cessation of hostilities between the two great Asian nations whose support for a free India was essential. "As an Indian," he said, "I make an earnest appeal to you to give up fighting with the help of western powers."[\[51\]](#) Finally, Sahay asked his Chinese listeners to "accept the leadership of your great benefactor Mr. Wang Ching Wei."[\[52\]](#) In short, Sahay's broadcast was unadulterated Japanese propaganda.

In January 1940 Sahay was once again in Shanghai where he encountered a penniless Sikh, Hind Sabak, who had once worked in the British-operated Shanghai municipal jail. Sahay arranged for Hind Sabak to meet a certain Col. Oka of the Japanese Army stationed in Canton. Col. Oka provided some ready cash to Hind Sabak and, in turn, introduced him to one Harbajan Singh, a Sikh deserter from the Hong Kong police force who was working in the pay of the Japanese. Then, as Indian agents of the Japanese in April 1940 the two men were sent to Hong Kong in the guise of eye specialists. However, their masquerade failed as they were arrested by the Chinese who discovered that the pair had in

their possession anti-British Urdu and Gurmukhi leaflets sent to them in Canton from Japan by Sahay.[\[53\]](#)

In the fall of 1940 Sahay requested a visa from the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo to visit the USA. Immediately on getting word of this effort by Sahay, the British sought to persuade the Americans to refuse to issue Sahay a visa. They informed the US authorities that Sahay was "nothing more nor less than a Japanese agent."[\[54\]](#) While insisting that the issuance of a visa was entirely an American decision, the British indicated their intention to inform the Department of Justice in Washington, DC exactly what kind of record Sahay had.[\[55\]](#)

Sahay never went to the United States. His involvements in Indian affairs in Japan preoccupied him increasingly. In 1936, at the direction of the Indian National Congress meeting in Bombay, the Indian National Congress Committee headed by Sahay was renamed the Indian National Committee of Japan. Meanwhile, as early as 1924, Rash Behari Bose (1885-1945), another Indian revolutionary living in Japan, had formed an Indian Independence League ostensibly to support an armed uprising in India. And, when in September, 1939 war broke out in Europe, a broader council of the Indian Independence League with Rash Behari Bose at its head was generated, and Sahay became a leading member of it.[\[56\]](#)

When the Pacific War began in December, 1941, the Indian Independence League formed a Service Corps of Indian young men to accompany Japanese troops to Southeast Asia in order to protect Indian properties and Indian nationals, especially Indian women. However, the tension between Sahay and Rash Behari Bose, which for many years had been just below the surface, was exposed when the Japanese clearly wanted Rash Behari Bose to be the leader of all pro-Japanese Indians. Rash Behari Bose had lived in Japan since 1915, was a naturalized Japanese citizen, had a Japanese wife and had long standing personal ties with Japanese extremists like Toyama Mitsuru and Okawa Shumei. Sahay's doubts about the choice of R.B. Bose were clear:

Rash Behari was a revolutionary of old days when our activities consisted of secret sabotage and sporadic attack on British and pro-British Indian officials. With all his zeal to serve the cause of freedom he could not have been expected to lead a mass struggle during a war in 1942. Much less control or command a regular army. Our armed forces of ex-British Indian Army were well-trained and well-disciplined hardened soldiers and they would not have liked to fight under a virtual Japanese command. Japanese Army Officers, generally speaking, were

of medieval mentality. They were brave fighters and commanders but they had very little knowledge of the training and habits of our soldiers of British Army. They were devoted to their Emperor and were ready to die for him because he was the symbol of their country and God. Japanese Naval officers were somewhat different in the scheme of War except where Naval warfare was concerned. Japan High Command, i.e. the Japanese Army wanted to control and guide our freedom's fight. Naturally, they welcomed Rash Behari Bose with open arms.[\[57\]](#)

Nevertheless, at Prime Minister Tojo Hideki's behest, two conferences of Indian expatriates from throughout Asia were called in Tokyo in March, 1942 and in Bangkok June 22, 1942. 1942, and in both instances Rash Behari Bose presided. Tojo wanted the Indians to organize both an army and a government of some kind to join Japan's war effort. The Indians who participated in these meetings believed that the Japanese could facilitate the expulsion of the British from India, and they did not hesitate to give their enthusiastic support to Japan.

Of course, when Subhas Chandra Bose reached Tokyo in June, 1943 by submarine from Germany, Rash Behari Bose was immediately replaced by the charismatic and energetic Subhas Chandra Bose. In October, 1943 in Singapore Subhas Chandra Bose formed the Provisional Government of Free India (Arzi Hakumate Azad Hind) and Sahay, who claimed to have maintained his ties throughout his years in Japan with Subhas Chandra Bose, was named Secretary with Ministerial rank in the new government. Subsequently what specific functions in the Azad Hind government Sahay fulfilled are not documented. Primarily, of course, Sahay and his fellow ministers were to serve as adjuncts to Netaji (Leader) as Subhas Chandra Bose became known.

As the Japanese war effort began to lose steam, and the possibility of Japan's defeat loomed large, Subhas Chandra Bose was becoming desperate to find an alternative to Japanese support for his government and his army. In October, 1944 he met Sahay in Shanghai and asked Sahay to go to Tokyo to contact the Soviet Ambassador to Japan Jacob Malik. Sahay did go to Tokyo but, after consultation with important personalities including Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru, he decided that it would be useless to contact Malik. Sahay then returned to Singapore and briefed Subhas Chandra Bose on the results of his trip.

On the eve of the Japanese surrender, Sahay, along with other members of the Azad Hind government were put on planes headed for Japan. However, in

Sahay's case he only made it as far as Hanoi where he was arrested and returned to Singapore where he was incarcerated by the British in Pearl Hill prison.

According to Sahay's own account of his activities in 1945, after the failure to contact the Soviets, Subhas Chandra Bose, desperate to sustain his cause, sent Sahay to Vietnam to "contact and negotiate with the Chinese Communist leaders" to seek their assistance.^[58] Since the war suddenly ended, Sahay and several other members of the Azad Hind regime found themselves in Hanoi which was occupied by the Chinese. Sahay offered to be arrested, but the Chinese general refused. The conversation, Sahay wrote, was as follows:^[59]

Chinese general: What have you done to be arrested?

Sahay: We fought against the British.

Gen: Did you fight against the Chinese?

Sahay: Netaji asked us not to do so.

Gen.: But, you collaborated with our enemies, no?

Sahay: Yes, that was the tragedy. We collaborated with your enemies and you collaborated with ours. But neither of us fought for them, did we?

The general laughed after a brief silence and said, "You may go and live as a free man or go away wherever you want. No Britisher can touch you within my territory unless my government asks to hand you over to them."^[60]

Finally on Dec. 22, 1945 a British colonel escorted Sahay by air to Singapore where, as stated above, he was jailed until his unconditional release on Mar. 30, 1946, eleven days after Jawaharlal Nehru himself had come to the prison to visit Sahay. After India gained its independence, Sahay served the Indian government as a diplomat in such positions as High Commissioner to Mauritius.

* * *

Sahay's story is an amazing saga of adventure and opportunity. His commitment to the cause of India's freedom never wavered. And, although he was clearly outside the mainstream of India's struggle, his contribution should not be overlooked.

Notes

1. OSS, "Indian Minorities in South and East Asia," Sept. 8, 1944, 40.

2. Op. cit., 47.

3. Nagasaki Yoko, "Indo Kokumingun Kaigiha no Katsudō to Nihon (Japan and the Activities of the Indian National Congress)," Rekishi to Bunka, vol. XVII, 1980, 1-44.

- [4](#). Note on Anand Mohan of Japan, Indian Political Intelligence Files, L/P&J/12/502, 1938, Confidential.
- [5](#). British Embassy, Tokyo, Nov. 8, 1934, No. 581 (46/02/84) Confidential.
- [6](#). *Ibid.*
- [7](#). Memorandum, British Consulate, Kobe, October 10, 1934.
- [8](#). *Ibid.*
- [9](#). *Ibid.*
- [10](#). Note on Anand Mohan Sahay of Japan, *op. cit.*
- [11](#). *Ibid.*
- [12](#). *Ibid.*
- [13](#). Note on Anand Mohan Sahay of India, *op. cit.*
- [14](#). Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter JMFA) I.4.5.2.2-1, May 26, 1934. Secret.
- [15](#). British Consulate, Kobe, October 10, 1934. Confidential.
- [16](#). *Ibid.*
- [17](#). *Ibid.*
- [18](#). *Ibid.*
- [19](#). *Ibid.*
- [20](#). *Ibid.*
- [21](#). *Ibid.*
- [22](#). *Ibid.*
- [23](#). *Ibid.*
- [24](#). JMFA A.6.0.1-1-2-1, 1927-1931, Classified No. 2545.
- [25](#). *Ibid.*
- [26](#). JMFA 4.5.2.2-1, October 15, 1930, Hyogai hatsu No. 2613.
- [27](#). JMFA 1927-1931 A.6.6.0.1-1-2-1, Classified No. 1124, April 22, 1931.
- [28](#). Voice of India, Dec. 15, 1932.
- [29](#). *Ibid.*
- [30](#). *Ibid.*
- [31](#). British Consulate, Kobe, April 8, 1935, No. 24.
- [32](#). JMFA I.4.5.2.2-1, Mar. 31, 1931.
- [33](#). *Ibid.*, April 13, 1931. Secret.
- [34](#). *Ibid.*, May 16, 1931. Secret.
- [35](#). *Ibid.*, May 26, 1931. Secret.
- [36](#). *Ibid.*, May 26, 1931. Secret.
- [37](#). *The Japan Weekly Chronicle*, July 6, 1933.
- [38](#). JMFA I.4.5.2.2-1, Feb. 7, 1934. Secret.
- [39](#). *Ibid.*
- [40](#). ANAND MOHAN SAHAY (or SAHAI), P&J(5) 1991, 20.9.40.
- [41](#). *Ibid.*
- [42](#). *Ibid.*
- [43](#). Full contents in JMFA, K. 3.6.1.1-3, Sept. 24, 1937. Top Secret.
- [44](#). JMFA K.3.6.1.1-3, Nov. 10, 1937. Top secret.
- [45](#). *Ibid.*
- [46](#). JMFA K.3.6.1.1-3, Aug. 9, 1938. Top secret.
- [47](#). *Op. cit.*, September 6, 1938. Very secret.
- [48](#). Indian Political Intelligence (IPI) Files, 1912-1950, P&J 436/39, 5.1.39.
- [49](#). *Op. cit.*, P&J 863/36, 18.12.39.
- [50](#). *Op. cit.*, P&J 1754, 1939. Secret.
- [51](#). *Ibid.*
- [52](#). *Ibid.*
- [53](#). L/P&J/12/641, File 2213/1940.
- [54](#). P&J (S) 1991, 20.9.1940. Secret.
- [55](#). *Ibid.*
- [56](#). See "Bose, Rash Behari," by G. K. Goodman in *Encyclopedia of Japan* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983), Vol. 1, p. 164.
- [57](#). T. R. Sareen, editor, *Indian National Army A Documentary Study* (In 5 Volumes), Volume V (1944-1945) (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House) Appendix I, p. 365.
- [58](#). Sareen, *op. cit.*, p. 383.
- [59](#). *Ibid.*
- [60](#). Sareen, *op. cit.*, p. 384.

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