Camus and Gandhi

*Essays on Political Philosophy in Hammarskjöld’s Times*

*Lou Marin*

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Preface

This issue of *Critical Currents* is the result of the author’s three-month stay at the Dag Hammarskjöld Centre in Uppsala between July and September 2007. As a scholar in residence, he used the creative period to complete the fundamental introductory chapter to his German translation of a groundbreaking work by Ashis Nandy and furthermore drafted the three essays presented in this volume.

These highlight in different ways aspects of a political philosophy that remains a meaningful discourse today. At the same time, the contemporary thinking of both Mahatma Gandhi and Albert Camus as presented in these essays – while inspired by different points of departure and political practices – relates to some of the more substantive political-philosophical elements guiding Dag Hammarskjöld’s perspectives and commitments, even though the parallels might not be immediately visible. There are no direct (in the sense of explicit) links that can be identified between the articulated views of Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), Albert Camus (1913–1960) and Dag Hammarskjöld (1905–1961). But when one takes note of their postulates with regard to a true humanism, they are at times surprisingly close to each other.

Hammarskjöld had a very different social background and never presented himself as a person guided by political convictions. Instead he cherished the concept of a meticulous international civil servant abstaining from daily party politics. His fundamental values and principles, however, which provided him with guidance throughout his life, were anything but remote from those of Gandhi and Camus. Although he almost certainly disagreed fundamentally with the latter’s existentialism, which was devoid of any religious spirituality, he shared Camus’ strong moral integrity and uncompromising loyalty to fundamentally humanist principles.

It is striking that Hammarskjöld – who was extraordinarily conversant with philosophy and the arts, in particular creative writing – hardly ever acknowledged the work of Camus. The reason for this might lie not only in the fundamental differences over religion, but also in Hammarskjöld’s relentless campaigning for the French diplomat Alexis Leger (who published his poetry as St. John Perse) as a Nobel Prize Laureate for literature. This ultimate honour was bestowed upon Albert Camus before Hammarsköld’s declared favourite, which was certainly not a decision that Hammarskjöld himself – as a member of the Swedish Academy – would have opted for. On the other hand, as strikingly, Gandhi’s visions did not seem to play any prominent role in Hammarskjöld’s views either, even though he had a great interest in India’s cultures and religions.

Before Dag Hammarskjöld became the United Nations’ second Secretary-General,

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2 As a banality, one only needs to ‘google’ the three names together. The result is an astonishingly wide panorama of collected words of wisdom, which all offer quotes from the three men (and especially from Camus and Hammarskjöld) on related issues.

*Gandhi after landing at Folkestone (UK), 12 September 1931.*
Camus had already been publicly critical of the shortcomings of the United Nations System, which he had welcomed when it was established among the ruins of war-bombed Europe. As a follower of cosmopolitan ideas he was a supporter of the World Citizen Movement and observed with reservations the all too obvious limitations of the state-centred new world body and emerging global order. Sensitised among other things by the violence of the Spanish civil war, he refused in 1952 to remain personally affiliated to UNESCO after it accepted Franco’s Spain as a member state.

Gandhi and Camus both occupied positions as practical as well as theoretical proponents of a new historical phase after World War II and before the international revolutionary spirit of the students’ movement that emerged some two decades later, culminating in the revolts of 1968. The impact both Gandhi and Camus had on the struggles for social emancipation was not confined to their lifetime; the inspiration their ideas and thoughts had offered since the mid-20th century also had a significant impact on the new social movements emerging after their deaths.

Both were at times grossly misinterpreted, and perceptions of their posthumous relevance changed with the different readings of their positions. The essays in this volume bring this forcefully to the fore, particularly so in the case of Albert Camus. Criticised, ridiculed and denounced as a petty bourgeois liberal humanist since the mid-1950s, Camus would not be fully recognised for his radically anti-violent and truly humanist stance without the careful exploratory work of the likes of Lou Marin.

After World War II the shocking truth about the forms of mass violence and the devastating impact it had – also on its survivors – gradually emerged. It showed what human beings and organised violence on the part of states can do to other human beings both in the Holocaust and the Gulag, but also elsewhere and under other circumstances. Gandhi and Camus personified in their particular, individual ways the alternatives to the deadly and devastating logic of violence and counter-violence, which destroys and dehumanises. They resisted the pragmatism of a ruthless utopian notion that those who want to change the world for the better have to accept that this necessarily entails sacrificing and compromising certain principles that are central to the humanist notion. Both refused to accept this kind of pseudo-revolutionary dictum, which in their view was an excuse for not taking up the true challenge: that of humanising the world without abandoning or betraying fundamental love for people and respect for human dignity – in oneself and others. They both in their different ways, during different times and in different social and historical contexts showed that living according to these convictions can have a real impact, and need not involve personal or political compromise.

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3 It was in the main hall of Uppsala University (where the annual Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture is delivered these days) that in early December 1957 Camus – after having received the Nobel Prize for Literature – came under heavy attack by the students in the audience for his views on the anti-colonial war in Algeria and his efforts to seek a solution beyond the destructive forms of mass violence.

Mahatma Gandhi shaped a particular empathy related to the processes of decolonisation early in the second half of the last century. Albert Camus contributed with his notion of revolt as a permanent human condition and act, creating a different form of emancipation from that offered by various totalitarian regimes, which ultimately brought about further repression and alienation rather than liberation.

Ashis Nandy, in his sensitive response to Mahatma Gandhi's thinking, which is the main focus of the third essay, draws much attention to the related aspect of internal colonisation. This is an integral part of the processes of domination and subjugation in the 'domestication of the savages', perceived from the Eurocentric-imperialist perspective as a 'civilising mission'. The emphasis on this aspect is reminiscent of the work of B. Traven. As an anti-militarist anarchist he fled after a narrow escape from execution in post–World War I Germany to spend most of his creative life in Mexico, where he published several widely read novels dealing with this phenomenon of an inner colonisation. This focus on structural and mental aspects of subjugation reminds us of the fact that violence always has a dimension beyond the visible physical impact, which is at times at least as devastating. While external wounds might heal, internal wounds can continue to fester for the rest of a lifetime and destroy the individual's original identity.

In the meantime the views of both Gandhi and Camus have become less en vogue although anything but irrelevant. In the light of the new wars, which have had such an impact on the early years of the 21st century, it is more than an obscure historical-philosophical interest to revisit the relevance of their thinking. Being so different at first sight, they have more in common than one might originally assume. The essays in this volume will certainly illustrate this point. By doing so, they touch at the same time on issues that relate to relevant aspects of Dag Hammarskjöld's life and legacy. Camus and Gandhi shared a strictly anti-violent and anti-authoritarian approach to the execution of political power and the resistance to oppressive socio-political structures. They had much in common in their uncompromising, life-long humanist commitment. This resonated with the convictions of Hammarskjöld. It is a sad if not tragic irony that the lives of all three protagonists came to an end through violent death.

Henning Melber
The Unknown Camus

Albert Camus and the Impact of his Contributions as a Journalist to the Pacifist, Anarchist and Syndicalist Press

Generally, debates around the French writer, Resistance activist and philosopher of revolt, Albert Camus (1913–1960), are restricted to literary, philosophical or theatrical aspects of his work. A focus on his work as a journalist reveals another side of Camus, especially when his contributions to the pacifist, anarchist and syndicalist press in France and Algeria during the 1940s and the 1950s are included. This focus helps us discover the wide field of friendly personal relations Camus had with French anarchists and non-conformist syndicalists during this time. Camus not only contributed to anarchist journals; he also defended anarchists who had been taken to court, for example Maurice Laisant, then editor of the weekly *Le Monde libertaire*, who was accused of organising a public protest campaign against the French military during the French colonial war in Indochina in 1954.¹

A formative role in introducing Camus to the French anarchist movement in the wake of World War II was played by Rirette Maîtrejean (1887–1968), the former co-editor of the pre-World War I journal *L’Anarchie*,


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He is a regular contributor to the nonviolent-anarchist monthly *Graswurzelrevolution*, and since 1984 has been a member of its editorial board collective. As a member of the editorial collective of the same publishing house he has been an editor, translator and author of several of its books, i.a. on Albert Camus and anarchism (1998), another India (2000), the new wars since 9/11 (2002), Afro-American resistance in the 1960s (2004), Simone Weil and anarchism (2006) and Ashis Nandy’s The Intimate Enemy (2008).

Since 2001 he has lived in Marseille, France, where he works as a journalist, author, translator and publisher. He is an administrative member of CIRA (Centre International de Recherches sur l’Anarchisme), an anarchist library and documentation centre.

Albert Camus in 1957
who later contributed to the antimilitarist-anarchist cultural review, Témoins. Moreover, Camus was in contact with Maurice Joyeux and Maurice Laisant of Le Monde libertaire, with Jean-Paul Samson and Robert Proix of Témoins, with Pierre Monatte and André Rosmer of the proletarian, syndicalist, non-orthodox Marxist review, La Révolution prolétarienne, with Louis Lecoin, Gaston Leval and George Fontenis of Le Libertaire, Liberté and Défense de l’Homme, as well as with Giovanna Berneri of the Italian journal Volontà and with José Ester Borràs of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist journal Solidaridad Obrera. Also, Camus became friendly with the editors of the Swedish anarcho-syndicalist review Arbetaren, who organised a meeting with him before a student audience in 1957 at the University of Uppsala, when he was in Stockholm to receive the Nobel Prize. His articles were translated and published in Latin America, especially by the Argentine review Reconstruir, and by the former secretary of the International Workers Association, the German syndicalist Helmut Rüdiger, in the only anarchist journal of West Germany in the 1950s, Die freie Gesellschaft. Sometimes these contacts proved very decisive for Camus, for example when the Russian anarcho-syndicalists Nicolas Lazarevitch and Ida Mett furnished him with information about the Russian anarchist and social revolutionary movements in pre-Bolshevik Russia and during the Russian revolution. Camus used this information in his work L’Homme Révolté (The Rebel) and in his play Les Justes (The Just).²


Le Soir Républicain and Témoins

Camus received some early hints about anarchist literature from his Uncle Acault and his teacher at the University of Algiers, Jean Grenier. But it was definitely a number of more practical experiences that pushed Camus in the Algiers of the 1930s in that direction. In 1937 he was dismissed from the French-Algerian Communist Party after only two years of membership. He had followed the events of the Spanish revolution since the miners’ uprising in Asturias in 1934 and he encountered a milieu of Spanish origin in Algeria when he spent some time in Oran, where his second wife, Francine Faure, grew up. Camus’ reports on the living conditions of the indigenous Kabyle population, close to famine, were published in an Algiers daily, Alger Républicain. Furthermore, he experienced censorship of the follow-up journal, Le Soir Républicain, which he edited together with Pascal Pia (1903-1979) at the beginning of World War II. These experiences added to a kind of anarchopacifist position which Camus held as co-editor of Le Soir Républicain in 1939 and 1940, until the journal was forced to close down. The most important articles showing this tendency were ‘Manifeste du conformisme intégral’ (Total conformism: a manifesto), where Camus and Pia joked about conformism and censorship; ‘Profession de foi’ (Profession of faith), where they described themselves as pacifists and criticised the ‘notorious nationalism’ of France; ‘Notre position’ (Our position), where they defended the individual right to conscientious objection even for World War II but were also critical of the Munich treaty of 1938, which made their position distinct from French governmental appeasement
politics of the period. In ‘Comment aller vers un ordre nouveau’ (Towards a new order) Camus warned of the dynamics of brutalisation in wartime and called for a truce that did not sacrifice Poland and Czechoslovakia. Here Camus is already promoting his idea of a League of Nations no longer subjected to the dictates of nation states – an idea he took up again immediately after the war in a series of articles, ‘Ni victimes, ni bourreaux’ (Neither victims nor executioners), where he proposed the idea of a world parliament directly elected by individuals, of instead of a United Nations dominated by representatives of nation states.

Camus wrote under pseudonyms in *Le Soir Républicain* or co-authored articles with Pia. Their articles weren’t explicitly anarchist – and the daily, published in the evening, didn’t officially call itself anarchist – but their political analysis of the structure of contemporary French society was perfectly in tune with contemporary anarchist analysis. This is evident, for example, in ‘Les fondements juridiques de la liberté’ (The juridical foundations of liberty), where Camus and Pia analyse the internal development of France as being a kind of proto-fascism. They deplore the fact that even societies with a democratic-capitalist structure apparently aren’t able to generate internal resistance to the current fascist dictatorships. On the contrary, these societies themselves generate a tendency towards dictatorship, as seen in the French government’s practice of using undemocratic decrees – similar to those of the German presidential governments of Papen and Schleicher – or, as Algeria was showing, open forms of military dictatorship. Camus and Pia saw bourgeois-capitalist democracies not as real and effective alternatives to fascism, but as its predecessors – a typical anarchist assessment at this period, backed by experiences of Italian fascism and German national socialism. Thus, even if the journal *Le Soir Républicain* wasn’t explicitly anarchist, an analysis of Camus’ and Pia’s articles justifies the assertion of Camus’ biographer Herbert R. Lottman, that the paper was like an ‘anarchist organ’.

A similar assessment soon came from the two financiers of the journal, Messieurs Faure and Rouillard, who were more and more shocked by the ‘anarchistic direction’ the journal was taking and wanted to stop funding it, especially as the censorship board of the military regime had banned the paper anyway. The political position Camus took during this period at *Le Soir Républicain* was a new development, triggered by the political situation of the era itself. And it made Camus open to quickly finding conscious forms of contact with the anarchist movement in France when he settled there after 1940. The first anarchist he met, as early as 1940 in Paris, was Rirette Maitrejean, who like Camus was working as proofreader for the daily, *Paris Soir*. The proofreaders of the period were for the most part traditionally anarchosyndicalist.

Whereas his association with *Le Soir Républicain* was in his early years of political journalism, Camus made contact with the French-language, Swiss-based, antimilitarist and cultural-libertarian review *Témoins* during the last decade of his life, after 1954. *Témoins* was edited by Jean-Paul Samson (1894–1964) who had been a French conscientious objector in World War I, for

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which he had received a 10-year prison sentence. He fled to Switzerland and published Témoins in Zurich. The distribution of the review in France – it was issued three or four times a year – was organised by Robert Proix. Camus attended editorial meetings of the review in Paris, where he met again with Rirette Maitrejean, among others.5

The collaboration with Témoins led Camus to recognise the importance of conscientious objection within the contemporary setting of the Algerian war and encouraged his more concrete participation in Louis Lecoin’s campaign of support for conscientious objectors in his weekly, Liberté, which Lecoin started in 1958.

When Camus began his collaboration with Témoins – an anarchist review in which he was even mentioned explicitly as an editorial collaborator – he had just endured the debate and subsequent split with Sartre over L’Homme Révolté (The Rebel), but had probably not yet quite digested it psychologically. In Témoins he undoubtedly had a feeling of being at home and of not being isolated and lonely in his political position.

The articles Camus wrote for Témoins start with ‘Calendrier de la liberté’ (Freedom calendar) in No. 5/spring 1954, where he focuses on two dates in the history of freedom movements that aren’t usually linked: 16 July 1936, the day the Spanish Revolution began; and 17 June 1953, the day of the workers’ revolt in East Germany.

Camus’ next intervention was published in No. 7/1954 of Témoins and was again connected with the Spanish Revolution. He proposed to the editor, Jean-Paul Samson, the publication of a historical document: a letter by the anarhosophical activist and philosopher Simone Weil (1909–1943) to the Catholic writer Georges Bernanos (1888–1948), written in 1938. Weil had participated as a militia soldier in the Spanish Revolution in autumn 1936 and reported two years later to Bernanos the atrocities she had witnessed within her own anarchist ranks during the civil war. The publication of this letter triggered a passionate discussion among anarchist readers of the review in Témoins No. 8/spring 1955 – and thus reveals an impressive capacity on the part of the anarchist movement to practise voluntary self-criticism, especially during the 1950s, an era when dogmatic communist/leftist intellectuals in France still publicly denied or defended the Gulag, the Soviet prison camp system.

In Témoins No. 8/spring 1955, there is a reproduction of Camus’ préface ‘Le refus de la haine’ (Rejecting hatred), written for Konrad Bieber’s book L’Allemagne vue par les écrivains de la résistance française (Germany seen by writers of the French Resistance). Therein, Camus draws a surprising contemporary parallel with a core motive of the Resistance: just as the Resistance refused to accept the bourgeois-pacifist peace bargains of its period, so today, Camus argues, the tactical communist peace bargain involving acceptance of the authoritarian status quo in Eastern Europe should be rejected – which was a clear and direct response to a series of articles, ‘Les Communistes et la Paix’, just published by Sartre. In the follow-up issue of Témoins, No. 9/summer 1955, the editor of the leftist Cath-

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5 See Marin, Lou, Ursprung der Revolte, pp. 101-104.
olic review, *Esprit*, Jean-Marie Domenach, protested against Camus’ drawing a parallel between the two peace-keeping strategies. Jean-Paul Samson described Domenach in the same issue of *Témoins* as ‘neo-Stalinist’. Camus, for his part, answered directly to Domenach in the same issue of *Témoins*, and defended his comparison with the current situation. This debate between Camus and Domenach also demonstrates how intensely the controversy between Camus and Sartre was covered in anarchist journals of the time, and that anarchist sympathies were undoubtedly with Camus.

In 1956, *Témoins* published a double issue, No. 12/13, on the 20th anniversary of the Spanish Revolution, with a preface by Camus. He declares his solidarity with recent protests by Spanish students and workers and is critical that neither Moscow nor Washington nor the dogmatic Marxist left in France have shown any interest in a victory by the Spanish oppositional movement.

From No.14/autumn 1956 onwards, *Témoins* published several contributions by Camus that were directed against the suppression of the Hungarian uprising by the Soviet military, among others – in *Témoins*, No. 17/1957 – a reprint of Camus’ passionate speech at the Paris Salle Wagram, given on 15 March 1957. Furthermore, Camus discussed the Hungarian crisis in *Témoins* with the Hungarian writer Miklos Molnar (1918-2003). The latter still believed in the possibility of internal reform of the state socialist systems of Eastern Europe, whereas Camus did not (No. 18/19/autumn-winter 1957/58).

In this double issue of *Témoins* (No. 18/19), there is an additional literary article by Camus, ‘Pour Dostoïevski’ (For Dostoevsky). Here the agnostic Camus even shows an understanding of Dostoevsky’s retreat into the religious: in this, according to Camus, Dostoevsky was only seeking a recognition of ahistorical moral values, which were equally important to Camus. But Camus would not go back to religion when seeking to incorporate moral values within political philosophy.

In a supplement to *Témoins*, No. 20/December 1958, Camus expresses his indignation at the execution of former reformist-socialist president Imre Nagy (1896–1958) in state-socialist Hungary. And an appeal by Camus for the support of the newly created ‘Committee for the Protection of Spanish Refugees’ was published in the same issue of *Témoins*, and was to be his last direct contribution to the review.

Jean-Paul Samson showed his admiration for Camus by editing a special issue of *Témoins* (No. 23/May 1960) after Camus’ tragic death in a car accident. It starts with a discussion between printers, typesetters and proofreaders who collaborated with Camus during his lifetime and who were organised within anarchosyndicalist structures. Among these, again, is Rirette Maîtrejean who talks about Camus’ admiration for Victor Serge (1890–1947), the Belgian revolutionary persecuted in Soviet Russia by Stalin. Robert Proix recounts that Camus, who supported the election campaign of Pierre Mendès-France (1907–1982) in 1956, later described this political engagement, to his friends on the editorial board of *Témoins*, as a failure. By then Camus was
more attached and committed to anarchist goals than he had been before. Out of these conversations with close friends of Camus, Robert Proix later edited a book, *A Albert Camus, ses amis du livre* (To Albert Camus, his friends of the book).7

At the end of the 1950s, Camus probably felt most at home in the milieu of *Témoins*’ editorial board members or contributors. The review had a print run of just under a thousand copies. Nevertheless, even after receiving the Nobel Prize, Camus participated in six or seven meetings of the editorial board in Paris, mostly in the private apartment of Robert Proix or at a meeting room near the River Seine.8

**La Révolution prolétarienne and its milieu**

Albert Camus’ collaboration with *La Révolution prolétarienne* (Proletarian Revolution) started earlier than the one with *Témoins* and was a little less intense as far as the numbers of articles as well as the forms of participation were concerned: Camus basically remained in the position of an author.

In 1948 Camus set up an organisation to help political prisoners in Franco’s Spain, the Soviet Union and other authoritarian regimes, the *Groupes de liaison international* (GLI) (International Liaison Groups). Through this engagement Camus made contact with the French revolutionary syndicalists around Pierre Monatte (1881–1960). In the years of controversy between Camus and Sartre, Monatte called Sartre and his followers ‘butterflies, attracted by the Russian lamp’9 and showed his solidarity with Camus. The proletarian activists and the intellectuals collaborating within the GLI were positioned somewhere in between Trotskyite and anarchist milieus, but were working together in this campaign. The German anarchosyndicalist Helmut Rüdiger, former secretary of the International Workers Association (IWA) and living in Sweden after World War II, was constantly in touch with the editorial board of *La Révolution prolétarienne* and described the milieu as consisting of ‘partly Marxists or former Marxists, partly old anarchosyndicalists, who were part of the Communist International during the 1920s in contrast to the bulk of the international syndicalist movement, but who have since broken with Moscow and engaged themselves in a free, constructive syndicalist movement and a sort of synthesis of anarchist and Marxist ideas’.10

Before World War I, Pierre Monatte had edited – in collaboration with Robert Louzon and Alfred Rosmer, later a friend of the whole Camus family – the journal *La Vie Ouvrière* (Working-class Life). After the war came Monattes’ communist period, which ended in 1924 with his dismissal from the party’s ranks for refusing to accept the change of party structures along Bolshevik lines. In 1925, Monatte launched *La Révolution prolétarienne*, which until 1930 bore the subtitle *Revue syndicaliste communiste*, then changed to *Revue syndicaliste revolutionnaire*.

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8 See Marin, Lou, *Ursprung der Revolte*, p. 103.
This monthly warned of the growing danger of a new world war in the Cold War era of the 1950s and worked for a concept of peace based on anti-Stalinist premises.\(^{11}\) At the beginning of the 1950s, when Camus wrote for *La Révolution prolétarienne*, the review had about 1,400 subscribers.\(^{12}\)

Camus’ first contribution was published in *La Révolution prolétarienne*, No. 351/May 1951, entitled ‘L’Europe de la fidélité’ (The Europe that remains faithful to its own roots). The USA had just established official diplomatic relations with Franco’s Spain and Camus was outraged by this instrumentalist kind of politics in the context of the Cold War. For Camus, the West’s reasoning – that because Franco’s army was decidedly strong it should have been integrated into the Western front against the Soviet Union – was a monstrous example of Realpolitik, implemented at the expense of the tortured victims among the ranks of the anarchosyndicalist Spanish workers union, the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT), and other Spanish republican groups. Camus rejected this Europe of betrayal, deceit and pure power politics as a Europe of chaos and instability. He called for a Europe of order, instead, which – contrary to public opinion – the anarchosyndicalist CNT stood for. Camus envisaged a Europe of culture, whereas Franco stood for the destruction of any kind of culture.\(^{13}\)

In the July 1952 issue of *La Révolution prolétarienne*, Camus again attacks the integrative politics towards fascist Spain pursued by the West. The review publishes an open letter by Camus, in which he withdraws his collaboration with the United Nations educational organisation, UNESCO. UNESCO had just invited Camus to participate in a commission on culture and education, and Camus had accepted the offer. But now, Camus refused to follow up this invitation because of UNESCO’s decision to grant membership to Franco’s Spain.\(^{14}\)

In *La Révolution prolétarienne*, No. 9/1953, ‘Restaurer la valeur de la Liberté’ (Restoring the value of freedom) is published. This was a speech delivered by Camus at the local *bourse du travail* (labour exchange) in St Etienne in May 1953 in front of an audience of mainly anarchosyndicalist workers. The speech is certainly one of the most beautiful texts Camus ever wrote for the anarchist movement. He attacks the usual contrasting of materialistic justifications of social justice with idealistic justifications of freedom. Freedom, according to Camus, has always been a demand of the suppressed and that is why they have fought for it. If freedom had been donated by governments, it would still be in her children’s shoes: ‘The society of capitalism and exploitation has never been made responsible, as far as I know, for ensuring that freedom and justice prevail. Police states have never been suspected of providing law seminars in the basements where they interrogate their inmates. So, when they oppress and exploit, they are just doing their job, and anyone who grants

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\(^{12}\) See editorial notes in the review, seen by the author at the Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, June 1999.


them an unlimited right to dispose of freedom shouldn’t be at all surprised to see freedom immediately dishonoured.”

Camus then attacks Marx for his fundamental error – that of sacrificing, along with the bourgeois myth of freedom, the very notion of freedom: ‘On the contrary, one had to say that bourgeois freedom is a see-saw, not complete freedom. One had to say, too, that bourgeois freedom isn’t freedom at all or at best not yet freedom, but that there are more forms of freedom to conquer and to secure for all time to come. (...) Through a healthy distrust of the prostitution inflicted on freedom by this bourgeois society, one has come to distrust freedom itself. At best, it has been sent to the end of time and the world has asked not to speak of it any longer. (...) At the same time, bourgeois freedom can continue with all its dupery.”

Camus furthermore criticises the cynical dialectics of the Cold War: ‘If someone draws attention to colonial slaves and calls for justice, he will be confronted with the inmates of the Russian concentration camps and vice versa.’ But Camus refuses to make a choice between justice and real freedom: ‘The oppressed not only want to be free of hunger, but also free of their masters. They know they can only effectively get rid of hunger when they can keep their masters, all their masters, in check.”

For Camus, the separation of freedom from justice corresponds to the separation of labour from culture. But real labour, according to Camus, is as creative as the work of an artist.

As the democratic freedoms of today haven’t been donated by the governments, but have been achieved through the struggles of social movements, especially the workers’ movement, likewise the few freedoms that remain have to be defended and expanded anew by the subjugated against the will of governments. Thus, the freedoms obtained are not pure illusion, according to Camus, but a result of the relative strength of social struggles.

In La Révolution prolétarienne, No. 424/January 1958 appears Camus’ ‘Hommage à un journaliste exilé’ (Homage to an exiled journalist), dedicated to the freedom of press and illustrated by the example of former Colombian president Eduardo Santos (1888-1974). After his presidency (1938-1942), Santos could have led an easy life serving as Colombian ambassador in Paris for a new military regime that had been installed after his presidency. But Santos refused to go to Paris and edited the daily oppositional journal El Tiempo in Columbia instead. Camus focuses on Santos’ commitment to a free press and his criticism of the military regime. After undergoing several assassination attempts, Santos was expatriated by the regime in August 1955, and his journal was banned.

In between these two texts the editors of La Révolution prolétarienne printed a part of Albert Camus’ preface to the book by former Trotskyite Alfred Rosmer, Moscou sous Lénine, in which Rosmer for the most part defends Lenin against Stalin. Camus shows that he doesn’t completely agree with Rosmer here. In particular, he criticises Rosmer’s acceptance of the repression that

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16 Ibid., pp. 242-243.
17 Ibid., p. 243.
18 Ibid.
the anarchist Kronstadt marines suffered after their uprising in 1921. Furthermore, in Camus’ view, the problematic of the closing of the Russian parliament by the Bolsheviks was underestimated by Rosmer. According to Camus, this measure was meant to be directed against the former oppressor, but in reality turned out to be directed against the non-Bolshevik revolutionaries themselves.²⁰

Issue No. 424/January 1958, of *La Révolution prolétarienne*, which publishes Camus’ homage to Santos, contains an additional appeal by Camus, dated October 1957, in which he condemns the assassinations of the armed Algerian Liberation Front, *Front de Libération nationale* (FLN), and the murderous campaign it was waging against the syndicalists of the Algerian independence movement under Messali Hadj (1898–1974). In this appeal, Camus poses crucial questions. For example: do these assassination tactics against fellow nationalist-syndicalists suggest a totalitarian character on the part of the FLN? Every syndicalist killed, Camus argues, reduces the legitimacy of the FLN a little further. He considers it a duty for anarchists to speak out publicly against the ‘good conscience’ of an anti-colonialist left that justifies everything, and against political murder within their own ranks in the first place.²¹

Camus’ last contribution to *La Révolution prolétarienne* was published after his fatal accident, in No. 447/February 1960, following a sympathetic obituary by Roger Guilloré.

In this last article, Camus explains his views on proletarian literature. He doesn’t believe in a specific proletarian literature. Contrasting André Gide (1869–1951) with Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), Camus describes Gide as an elitist of bourgeois origin and admires Tolstoy for his capacity to write in a simple but beautiful way, not confined by class limitations and thus able to reach the hearts of all. This capacity, according to Camus, is also evident in the works of Gorki, Istrati and others. The goal of the dominant elites in tyrannies as well as in monetary democracies is, according to Camus, to separate culture from labour. The literary work of one such as Tolstoy has succeeded in overcoming and transgressing this separation.²²

An overview of Camus’ involvement with *La Révolution prolétarienne* would be incomplete without a look at the libertarian milieu, the setting, in which Camus’ articles were published. For a start, Monattes’s review was the same one in which activist-philosopher Simone Weil (1909–1943) had published her most important political articles nearly two decades before.²³ In the period when Camus was writing for *La Révolution prolétarienne*, he was simultaneously editing the political writings of Simone Weil for Gallimard publishing house. Likewise, in the 1950s *La Révolution prolétarienne* was, for its part, publishing articles, retrospectives and debates on Simone Weil, and even discussing the works of Simone Weil edited by Camus, for example

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**L’Enracinement** (The Need for Roots).²⁴ So this was clearly a milieu where Camus felt at home politically. Moreover, the reviews and debates on Camus’ books in the journal were for the most part very sympathetic, for example a review by Jacques Muglioni of *L’Homme Révolté* (The Rebel)²⁵ and a report on a speech by Camus to print workers, typesetters and proofreaders shortly after receiving the Nobel Prize (1957). This speech was arranged by the Russian anarchist Nicolas Lazarevitch (1895-1975). During the meeting, Camus again explained his point of view, opposing the separation of art and labour, pleaded for a creative concept of labour and again emphasised what he saw as the difference between Gide and Tolstoy. Camus wanted a literature that reached every human being, beyond class boundaries. As far as he himself was concerned, Camus rejected the notion of any working class leader whatsoever.²⁶

Another, more surprising aspect of that milieu can be discovered by giving an overview of the issues of *La Révolution prolétarienne* during the 1950s. In December 1951 Pierre Monatte had started a *Cercle Zimmerwald* (Zimmerwald Circle) in Paris – the name hinting at the Zimmerwald conference held by socialists and pacifists during World War I in an effort to stop the war. The aim this time was that a possible World War III should be prevented in good time through a new internationalism. The *Cercles* were therefore to remain independent of party dominance to prevent Leninisation, as had happened within the original Zimmerwald circles during World War I. And interestingly, the founder and the president of the first Zimmerwald circle outside of Paris, in the provincial town of Niort, was none other than Messali Hadj, Camus’ old friend and combatant from the pre-war Algiers period. Messali Hadj had been exiled, and lived in Niort under colonial confinement and conditions of restricted mobility. Thus we discover that the Algerian socialist and syndicalist organiser Messali Hadj had not only been in direct contact with the anarchist and non-orthodox left in France but had played an active part in it. His syndicalist friends in the Zimmerwald circles always called him ‘comrade’.

Hadj sent a moving message to the plenary meeting of the Paris Zimmerwald circle in 1954, affirming his determination to seek future collaboration between the Algerian nationalist movement and the French working class, despite ‘the immense difficulties and sometimes incomprehension on the part of the French population’²⁷ in relation to the demands of the Algeria’s independence movement. Messali Hadj was seeking collaboration with the libertarian wing of the French workers’ movement so as to create an alliance between Algerian immigrant workers in France – who after all numbered half a million, and of whom 150,000 were in Paris, mostly members of Hadj’s organisation *Mouvement National*

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²⁴ See the article by Sousbie, A., *La Révolution prolétarienne*, No. 335, January 1950, pp. 24-25.
Algérien (MNA) – with the French syndicalist movement in order to defeat the colonial power’s attempts to divide the workers’ movement, an anti-colonial strategy which was completely different from the FLN’s practice. Furthermore, Messali Hadj was not a moderate and did not represent the Algerian bourgeoisie as Ferhat Abbas (1899-1985) had done. Hadj was a proletarian and socialist rival to the FLN, who could count on more supporters than the FLN in the wake of the war of Algerian independence and was, moreover, much less influenced by Nasser in Cairo, and thus less dependent on arms support and political advisers from the Soviet Union.  

Even though some members of the editorial board of La Révolution prolétarienne, such as Roger Hagnauer, remained critical of Hadj’s Algerian nationalism, Hadj himself adhered to his internationalism and his perspective on an alliance with French syndicalist workers on anti-colonialism. The subsequent fratricidal war between the FLN and the MNA during the Algerian liberation war from 1954 to 1962 resulted in 4,000 victims in France alone, and 15,000 in France and Algeria all together. In Algeria, the FLN even gave orders to massacre unarmed Messalists or Messalist sympathisers, as in the case of the massacre in Mélouza in 1957, when 374 unarmed Messalist sympathisers were killed by FLN forces in a single day.  

The editorial board of La Révolution prolétarienne – and Camus – repeatedly supported campaigns against the constant persecution of Messali Hadj by the French authorities, including his expulsion from France in 1954, his confinement in Algeria, and his restricted mobility in Niort. Yves Dechezelles, lawyer to Messali Hadj during his stay in Niort, came from the milieu of La Révolution prolétarienne and wrote a review of the book L’Algérie hors la loi (Outlawed Algeria) by Francis and Colette Jeanson, two close collaborators of Jean-Paul Sartre, published in 1955. In fact it was Francis Jeanson (born 1922) who wrote the harsh critique of Camus’ L’Homme Révolté (The Rebel) in Sartre’s review Les Temps Modernes, which led to the break-up of Sartre and Camus in 1952. Yves Dechezelles’ review is written in the style of an open letter to the authors. He severely criticises the Jeansons for apparently deliberately setting out to attack Messali Hadj, whom they accuse of political irrelevance and even collaboration with the French colonial police or just plain Trotskyism. According to Dechezelles, the Jeansons – and with them Sartre, who backs them and their one-sided support of the FLN – are clearly moving in an orthodox Stalinist direction by making such defamatory remarks. Thus, Camus’ critique of the strategies and tactics of the

FLN, and his rejection of its claim to being the sole national liberation organisation of Algeria, become more understandable, as he was reacting on the basis of awareness of the internal strife within the Algerian anti-colonial movements. This explains why Camus preferred a Messali Hadj who maintained contacts with anarchist groups in France to the orthodox Marxist and mostly uncritical support for the FLN. Pierre Monatte, for example, discussed with Camus a possible incitement of solidarity strikes in support of Camus’ associate Jean de Maisonseul, who had been imprisoned by the colonial power in Algiers as a result of Camus’ appeal for a civilian truce between the FLN and colonial troops in early 1956. Camus was intending to start a campaign to support Maisonseul, and was conferring with Monatte, when Maisonseul was suddenly released, which rendered the campaign unnecessary.33

The background of this milieu shows that Camus’ political point of view during this period was a real alternative both to the capitalist West and to the state-socialist East.

This perspective, which goes beyond capitalism and Marxism, is the one that has always been held by anarchism. Camus demonstrates by these links with anarchist currents that he was not willing to compromise his own political position to a party or an ideology of power. Moreover, these links exemplify Camus’ commitment to a critique of ideologies, a critique of political violence and its strategies, a critique of a nationalism that precipitates central statist structures instead of federalism and minority rights. As far as the French colonial settlers, the pieds noirs, in Algeria are concerned, Camus proposed a classic socialist solution – that is, the collectivisation of land and other property owned by them. But that meant likewise, that non-capitalist and non-feudal citizens of the then third generation, who didn’t exploit the indigenous Algerians, should be allowed to stay and live freely in an independent Algeria.

Jörg Altwegg, the literary editor of the German daily, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, wrote a chapter on Camus in his book Die langen Schatten von Vichy (The long shadows of Vichy), published in 1998. He hailed the Camus renaissance in the France of the 1990s, but in a very special way that has been repeatedly put into the forefront since then: ‘The shock of the critique of totalitarianism caused by the New Philosophers released a real Camus renaissance and wave that didn’t slow down and peaked with the publication of Le Premier Homme (The First Man).’34 While we are happy about the Camus renaissance in France – after two decades of decided neglect by the pro-Sartre European left of the 1970s and 1980s – and while we welcome a rehabilitation of Camus’ critique of violent tactics and nationalism in the face of a civil war in Algeria, we nevertheless reject this kind of opportunistic appropriation of Camus by French New Philosophers such as André Glucksman and others, who are nowadays nothing more than cheap apologists for the rul-

33 See Marin, Lou, Ursprung der Revolte, pp. 139-140.
ing capitalist system and the French right. To present Camus as a right-wing critic of totalitarianism is to put him back in the bipolar context of the Cold War, where Sartre and Jeanson wanted to place him during the debates of the 1950s, and from which Camus always wanted to flee with the help of his anarchist friends and the relationship he maintained with anarchist, pacifist and syndicalist periodicals.
Gandhi – National Icon or Non-modern Radical?

On the Legacy of the Life and Writings of M. K. Gandhi in India and the World

On 15 August 1947, India formally became politically independent of the then colonial world power, Great Britain. Independence was the result of a mass movement which spanned almost three decades (1919–1947) and utilised predominantly non-violent methods of direct action.

On 30 January, 1948, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948), the person who shaped the independence movement of India, was shot dead by Hindu nationalist Nathuram Godse (1910–1949).

The independence of India was central to the restructuring of political power on a world scale after World War II. It led to the decline of the British Empire and consequently contributed in a larger sense to the decline of the other European colonial powers, such as France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Portugal. Hinting at the tremendous impact of the life and ideas of M. K. Gandhi, these two events – Indian independence and the death of Gandhi – triggered a huge amount of literature on, and interpretation of, his method of social change, as well as practical applications of his philosophy. The history of these influences and interpretations documents the vitality of Gandhi’s ideas and shows that his importance goes far beyond national iconography and his status as ‘Father of the Nation’. That legacy has served as a continuous source of inspiration for social, feminist, anti-nuclear and ecological movements fighting capitalist globalisation in India and the world, in contrast to Marxist-Leninist reformist parties in India and guerrilla warfare. In one of the two non-official gatherings of activists at the World Social Forum 2004 in Bombay, these movements came together as the ‘People’s Movement Encounter’, with the National Alliance of People’s Movements as the best-known organisation. Writer-activist Arundhati Roy gave these movements a strong and radical voice which was heard all over the world.¹

**Interpreting Gandhi: bans and restrictions, or free interpretation?**

Already during his lifetime, there were countless discussions and interpretations of Gandhi, in India and throughout the world, particularly coinciding with the mass actions of the independence movement during and after 1920-22, 1930-31 and 1942.

Less known is the fact that there were many anarchists who wrote on Gandhi and his mass campaigns, arguing that anarchist methods or tactics were on the move. They considered non-violent action on a mass scale to be a reservoir of experience and an immense learning field for the European workers' movement. The anarchist interpretations of Bart de Ligt (1883-1938), expressed in his book *The Conquest of Violence*, published in London in 1937, as well as the reports on the Indian mass movement by the Indian anarcho-syndicalist M. P. T. Acharya for the antimilitarist War Resisters International (WRI) and the anarcho-syndicalist German-language journal *Die Internationale* oscillated between criticism and approval. Gandhi’s fellow activists had contacts in the Bund Herrschaftloser Sozialisten (Federation of Libertarian Socialists) of Pierre Ramus (1882–1942) in Austria, which they used to help facilitate some lecture tours in Europe by Gandhian activists from India.

Besides these multi-faceted anarchist currents, there were Christian as well as socialist circles within the peace movement of the 1920s that responded to Gandhi’s ideas – as indeed did conservative currents and official publications of the establishment. The latter, of course, highlighted the nationalist character of the Indian movement, neglecting to note the differences between the moderate, federal nationalism of Gandhi and that of other, more central-state oriented nationalist leaders, and overlooking other facets of Gandhi’s thinking. In her book *Politik und Moral: Gandhis Herausforderung für die Weimarer Republik* Beate Jahn has summarised many of these interpretations and their impact on the public sphere in the German Weimar Republic of the 1920s.

In Europe and the United States possibly the most influential book on Gandhi after his death was the work of the eminent Jewish-American psychologist Erik H. Erikson (1902-1994), *Gandhi’s Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence*, which was published during the time of the student movements of 1968 and was rapidly translated into several European languages. Erikson separated non-violent direct action from some preconditions Gandhi insisted upon – a strict sexual morality that led back to an Indian ascetic tradition – and thus made the method more accessible to European and US activists.

But before reflecting on the different streams of Gandhi interpretation in a more chronological sequence we should discuss the fact that the possibility and the relevance of interpreting Gandhi within a universal context, or a context outside India, has been contested by some authors from the social science or political science fields. French Gandhi expert Claude Markovits, for example, declares in respect of Western interpretations of Gandhi that any such transference is a ‘decontextualisation’ of Gandhi.

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tearing him out of his historical and cultural coherency and thus falsifying him. It isn’t even sure, Markovits goes on, that – as he himself is obliged to acknowledge – ‘the relatively low level of violence within India’s struggle for independence could be explained predominantly by the influence of Gandhi’s ideas’. An assumption such as that would overlook the contradictory yet converging interests of the colonial power and Indian capitalists within the India of the 1920s and 1930s, who with various motives were eager to draw advantages out of a non-violent struggle. With this ban on interpretation Markovits has consequently to deny any influence of Gandhi on activists within successful non-violent mass movements on a world scale, any inspiration and creative implementation of the experiences of Gandhi in other movements: ‘No significant political change has ever been carried out on the sole basis of a recourse to methods of non-violent resistance.’ Markovits himself cites the examples of the overthrow of fascist dictator Marcos in the Philippines in 1986 and the downfall of statist-communist regimes in Eastern Europe in 1989, but he writes: ‘To concede to these different movements a “Gandhian” inspiration reveals in spite of everything a superficial analysis.’ We will see whether it isn’t Markovits’ analysis that might turn out to be superficial here.

Summarising further currents of interpretation, Markovits points to the French Gandhi researcher Henri Stern who distinguishes between a ‘legitimate’ and an ‘illegitimate’ interpretation of Gandhi. Accordingly, the South African movement against apartheid during its early phase as shaped by Albert Luthulli (1898–1967) up until the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, and the African-American civil rights movement in the southern states of the US shaped by Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968) up until his death, would be movements that could claim a legitimate legacy of Gandhi’s ideas, whereas the anti-authoritarian movements after 1968 up until the international movement against nuclear power plants and weapons cannot correctly claim to be inspired by Gandhi’s ideas. The explanation runs like this: Gandhi was never anti-authoritarian; he had always respected the law and was only challenging unjust laws. If this perception of anarchism were true, there would have been many anarchists throughout history who defied, for example, just laws like equal rights for women and demanded their abolition just for the sake of defying the law. But there have been none.

It is especially due to a post-colonial Anglo-American current of interpretations of Gandhi that these restrictions and embargoes on interpretation have never prevailed and have always been counterpoised by creative, free-style and anarchist streams of posthumous interpretation of Gandhi. To begin with, there is the outstanding book by the US political scientist Joan V. Bondurant, The Conquest of Violence⁹ – apparently she had

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5 Arguments against this assumption are presented in Nanda, B. R., Gandhi and his critics, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1985, esp. pp. 136-141.
6 Markovits, see note 4. p. 252.
7 Ibid.
8 Stern, Henri, cited by Markovits, see note 4. p. 253. For France, Jean-Marie Muller can be cited as a further exponent of this thesis; in Germany it would be W. Sternstein and T. Ebert; in the US, G. Sharp.
no knowledge of Bart de Ligt’s book of the same title – which concentrates on Gandhi’s foundation of non-violent direct action as Satyagraha (literally: holding on to truth) and the consequences of his reversal of the phrase ‘God is Truth’ into ‘Truth is God’. Apart from conservative aspects in Gandhi’s thinking she deals as well with ‘anarchist’ aspects. Following this subtle hint of Bondurant’s, we must mention here the Indian historian Adi H. Doctor and especially the British and Canadian anarchist authors Geoffrey Ostergaard, Melville Curell, George Woodcock and Peter Marshall, who prepared the way for an anarchist stream of interpretation of Gandhi within the anglophone world. In his monumental book Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism Peter Marshall was the first historian of anarchism after World War II to include Gandhi in the list of anarchist classics.

Of course, there are authoritarian elements in the political behaviour and private family life of Gandhi that are undeniable. But at the same time libertarian and liberating tendencies, which very rarely receive attention, are to be found; among these is the fact that Gandhi was the sole leading personality within the liberation movements after World War II who never assumed office within the newly created national state and didn’t even aspire to that. Already in 1935 Gandhi had officially abandoned his membership of the Indian National Congress (INC), the organisation uniting all the different streams within the independence movement. Although he would henceforth ‘counsel’ the INC, intervening in decisive debates and leading further action-oriented mass campaigns, this step can’t be viewed as merely symbolic. Gandhi was manifesting here his turning-away from party politics and bureaucratic functions as well as his desire to give most of his attention to organising non-violent direct action groups within his so-called ashrams, commune-like settlements of activists. For me it is evident that this – otherwise hardly understandable – decision on Gandhi’s part went back to his discussions with the Dutch anarchist Bart de Ligt who, before and during Gandhi’s round Table Conference visit to London in 1931, criticised his double moral standards of promoting non-violence on the one hand and claiming as representative of a national liberation movement the right to have an army in independent India on the other.

Gandhi reacted to this criticism by affirming that up until then the INC had held a unanimous position only in respect of relying on non-violent means in the struggle for independence. He didn’t get his way on the question of shaping an independent India and the abandonment of the army though this was his ultimate desire. He hoped that being successful in a non-violent struggle for indepen-

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12 A new Indian movie by Feroz Abbas Khan, Gandhi, my Father, explores the difficult relationship between Gandhi and the oldest of his four sons, Harilal. Gandhi opposed a child marriage for Harilal within his ashram as he wanted to fight child marriage and couldn’t make exceptions within his own family. Because of these and other tensions Harilal eventually turned away from his father.
dence would convince his opponents within the movement that a national army for India would be unnecessary. Personally he held that he never promulgated violent means and would never so in the future. This point of view was confirmed by Gandhi in a public speech within the ambience of pacifists and members of the workers movement in Geneva, Switzerland, on 8 December 1931, after a personal encounter with Bart de Ligt on the same day. It was a kind of public response to Bart de Ligt’s critique. Emanating from this dilemma, Gandhi was looking for a means to solve it and to cope with the fact that he had never been able thoroughly to implement his views within the ranks of the INC over a longer period of time. In fact, within the independence movement – which was immensely democratic in character – Gandhi had never been an uncontested leader. With his abandonment of membership in 1935, he had seemingly found the means to solve his dilemma.

Much earlier still, on 6 February 1916, Gandhi made a famous and scandalous speech inaugurating the Hindu University of Benares in which he discussed the direct actions of the generation of young terrorists and revealed his own position thus: ‘I myself am an anarchist, but of another type.’

Going still further back in time, a well-remembered source of all radical and anarchist interpretations of Gandhi is his only systematic theoretical work, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, written in 1909 after a visit to London on his way back to South Africa by sea. This is a cardinal critique of Western industrial civilisation and culture. Here again a direct confrontation with contemporary advocates of violent actions against colonialism triggered the writing. Gandhi had been debating at a student meeting at India House in London with Shyamji Krishnavarma, a leader of a violent group from Maharashtra. Krishnavarma had been in close contact with V. D. Savarkar (1883–1966), then a student terrorist and later in the 1920s founder of the Hindu nationalist and militarist *Hindutva* ideology (which called for Indian society to be run according to Hindu rules, which were in fact the rules of the higher castes, especially the priest and the warrior castes).

Gandhi used the term ‘anarchy’ in different contexts and in three distinct ways. First

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in the positive, anarchist sense as a distant but decisive vision or goal of a free society. If the means of struggle, non-violent direct action, has such an importance for Gandhi, the social aim on which violent action relies has a similar significance, too: ‘Political power, in my opinion, cannot be our ultimate aim. (...) Representatives will become unnecessary if the national life becomes so perfect and self-controlled. It will then be a state of enlightened anarchy in which each person will become his own ruler.’\(^\text{17}\) Secondly, Gandhi used the term in a negative sense to denounce the situation that British colonialism had brought upon India in 1942 on the eve of the Quit-India Movement. A Japanese military attack on India from Burma was imminent and Gandhi initially couldn’t mobilise Indian masses in non-violent defence because the colonial power was promising nothing in return and had postponed any promise of independence. Gandhi called this situation ‘ordered anarchy’ – that is, institutionalised, organised chaos, but in tune with official law. To this state of things he preferred ‘real anarchy’, a kind of uncontrolled, unorganised chaos, which a non-violent revolt might lead to, but which also risks getting out of hand and, in parts, turning violent – a possibility Gandhi had to deal with in 1942, when he didn’t call off mass resistance after violent incidents, as he had done in previous campaigns.\(^\text{18}\)

The various ways in which Gandhi used the term ‘anarchy’ indicate that Gandhi’s writings as well as his practical actions and experiments do not support schematic restriction or banning of interpretation. Gandhi’s ideas and actions are complex, sometimes even contradictory, and thus too difficult to classify scientifically. Every kind of analysis is already interpretation and could be challenged by another interpretation, other sources or points of view. In fact, Gandhi can be ‘decontextualised’: every interpreter could and should use his legacy as a source of inspiration or a kind of construction site for historically and geographically different situations. Within this continuum, there is located an anarchist interpretation of Gandhi. This rejects all bans on interpretation as well as distinctions between so-called legitimate and illegitimate drawings on his legacy.

On a practical level such rigid differentiations between allegedly legitimate and illegitimate interpretations of Gandhi have sometimes even led to bizarre results. Activists following such regulations call themselves – more often than not – literally ‘Gandhians’, although Gandhi himself dismissed the term or any ‘ism’ under his name. Nonetheless, the interpretation that these activists implement isn’t regarded as a brick or building-block (some bricks of the construction site are used and implemented, others remain neglected), but as a 100-per-cent transfer of Gandhian method and culture into a completely different historical and cultural environment. An illustrative example might be Lanza del Vasto (1901-1981) and his foundation of ashrams as interreligious communes on a Christian basis in post-war France, beginning in 1948, under the name of L’Arche. He saw these as a practical implementation of his interpretation of Gandhi, which he developed after a personal encounter with


\(^{18}\) For quotations by Gandhi in Jhaeveri’s documentary (see note 13), see the section on the Quit-India Movement in 1942.
Gandhi in India in 1936. Del Vasto was creating a community on a Christian basis within the environment of a country whose culture had long since been greatly influenced by Enlightenment ideas and anti-religious currents of thinking. Within a very religious environment Gandhi welcomed and accepted non-believers as communards in his ashrams, along with activists from different religious backgrounds. He conceded that even ‘atheists and agnostics’ could practise *Satyagraha*, non-violent resistance. In that spirit, Goparaju Ramachandra Rao (Gora; 1902–1975) wrote a book called *An Atheist with Gandhi* and created together with his wife Saraswathi Gora (1912–2006) an ‘Atheist Centre’ in Vijayavada, drawing on Gandhi’s philosophy and on the discussions Gora had had with Gandhi during his time of supporting the latter’s struggle.

Already during his student days in London Gandhi had regularly encountered the famous 19th-century atheist Charles Bradlaugh (1833–1891), during speeches and discussions at Hyde Park Corner. Gandhi had great respect for serious searchers after truth and reckoned them as real searchers for God – as he called them – even if they were atheists. Eventually, on one occasion, he called out to him: ‘Mr. Bradlaugh, you are a Truth-fearing man and therefore a God-fearing man.’ Lanza del Vasto, on the contrary, accepted only religious activists within his *L’Arche* communes in France. Atheist applicants were explicitly rejected by del Vasto, on the grounds that they were not capable of practising *Satyagraha*. I do not want to underrate the merits of *L’Arche* and del Vasto – an example being their leading role in supporting conscientious objectors to the French colonial war in Algeria – but I have nevertheless to call this rigid rejection of atheist applicants a religious fundamentalisation of Gandhi’s legacy and a narrowing of his outlook. These restrictions of del Vasto certainly did not help Gandhi’s ideas to be better received in France and paved the way to a false identification of these ideas with those of the self-proclaimed ‘Gandhian’, del Vasto. In this sense they hindered a genuine dissemination of Gandhi’s ideas in French cultural and intellectual public spheres.

**Waves of posthumous interpretation of Gandhi in India and the world**

‘My language is aphoristic, it lacks precision. It is therefore open to several interpretations.’ This statement was to be verified very quickly after Gandhi’s death. At first, Gandhi’s long-time companion and spokesperson on the leftist, socialist wing of the INC, Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), who became independent India’s first prime minister, tried to impose an official state doctrine on Gandhi’s legacy. In

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19 Nanda, B. R., *Gandhi and his Critics*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 73 and 149.


22 So I was told by François Kaigre of the anarchist library, *Centre International de Recherches sur l’Anarchisme (CIRA)* in Marseille. As a young pacifist and anarchist as well as a non-believer, he wanted to participate in the campaigning work of the community, *L’Arche*. He was turned down by Lanza del Vasto because he was a non-believer.

the process, the cardinal strife between Gandhi and Nehru that led to their ideological break-up in October/November 1945 over differences concerning the industrialisation of a post-colonial India and Nehru’s explicit rejection of Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj*, was assiduously covered up.24 As head of state, Nehru exploited two lines of interpretation of Gandhi, which are known to be the guidelines of official Indian recognition of the legacy of Gandhi – although Gandhi never served as a state icon in the way that Mao, for example, did in China. As a result of the shock and the mourning within the population concerning the fact that Gandhi had been killed by a Hindu nationalist – which led to a hold-off of communalist pogroms until the beginning of the 1980s – Nehru could present Gandhi as a kind of founder and guarantor of secularism in India, although Gandhi himself rarely, if ever, used the term ‘secularism’. Secondly, Nehru established Gandhi as the founding personality of modern India, the so-called ‘Father of the Nation’ and thereby pushed a nationalist focus into the centre of his legacy. It was this official interpretation that has been seen as an appropriation and has triggered several radical counter-interpretations, including those of Ashis Nandy (born 1937) expressed in his articles and books. According to Markovits, Nandy ‘considered the identification of Gandhi with modern nationalism as an act of hegemonic appropriation, committed by the State of India looking for her legitimisation, and as a fundamental deterioration of Gandhi’s ideas’.25

Initially, soon after independence, it was the activists of the ashrams, the *Satyagrahis* – that is, those who wanted to pursue Gandhi’s campaigns to revolutionise post-colonial India – who rejected the official interpretation of Gandhi’s legacy as expressed by Nehru. Also, claiming to be more in line with Gandhi’s true legacy and in direct succession to him, there were the non-violent action groups at the grassroots level, which organised themselves as the so-called *Sarvodaya* (welfare for all) movement under the leadership of Vinoba Bhave (1895-1982). Bhave initiated a ‘land-gift movement’ which attempted to convince landowners to give up part of their land. The movement was a failure, because the component of non-violent resistance was less central to Bhave’s philosophy than it had been to Gandhi’s, and Bhave denounced acts of land seizure by tenants and peasants. By contrast one may cite Gandhi, who on various occasions during the Quit-India Campaign in 1942 explicitly pointed out that the land belongs to God and therefore to all. According to Gandhi in 1942, the peasants’ ‘next step will be to seize the land’ and the landowners ‘might cooperate by fleeing’.26

Furthermore, Bhave has been criticised by social activists of different origins for not fighting openly against the emergency regime of Indira Gandhi (1917-1984) from 1975 to 1977 because of his regard for the Nehru family to which he felt personally close (Indira Gandhi was Nehru’s daughter; she was not related to Gandhi). In fact, already during the 1950s Nehru had become close to Bhave, who, unlike another interpreter of Gandhi, Ram Manohar Lohia (1910-1967), did not bluntly and explicitly blame the Nehru government. Lohia had a different background from that of Bhave. Coming out of the socialist wing of the INC during the Quit-India Movement, Lohia made an impassioned appeal to all so-

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cialists in 1954 to abandon violent means of struggle and to support the Gandhian method of non-violent resistance from now on. In contrast to Bhave, however, Lohia adhered to party organising and politics and from 1955 to 1965 was a leading political functionary in the Socialist Party, which had split from the INC in 1948. During this time, he challenged the Nehru administration again and again. By approaching Bhave, however, Nehru succeeded in completely marginalising Lohia – the ‘rebellious Gandhian’, as he was called.  

Nevertheless, both Bhave and Lohia contributed greatly to the universal diffusion of Gandhi’s ideas. Non-violent anarchists in France, like André and Anita Bernard, have been influenced personally by the philosophical anarchism of Bhave. Black civil rights activists like James Lawson (born 1928) and Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968) visited Bhave and the Sarvodaya ashrams in India during the 1950s. In response to an invitation from African-American civil rights activist Harris Wafford, in 1951 Lohia visited the black students’ Highlander Folk School, which was to become a centre for non-violent resistance by African-Americans in the US. There, Lohia held seminars on Gandhi’s ideas and on civil disobedience for black students. One of the students participating was Rosa Parks (1913–2005). She told Wafford later – after initiating the famous bus boycott of Montgomery in 1955 – that she had been influenced by Gandhi and had ‘discussed the idea of civil disobedience at an earlier seminar at the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee’.  

The civil rights movement in the US was strongly influenced by the ideas of Gandhi, and the history and creative development of that interpretation go beyond the scope of this summary. It should at least be mentioned here that the reception of Gandhi within the US began much earlier, during Gandhi’s lifetime, with the publication of a book by Richard Gregg in 1934: *The Power of Nonviolence*. The revised second edition of 1960 contained a preface by Martin Luther King. Moreover, attention should be drawn to the tremendous work of editing and publishing Gandhi’s writings in the US done by Gene Sharp (born 1928), notwithstanding his tendency to curb radical interpretations of Gandhi and to conduct them into a more institutionalised backwater of the legitimate-illegitimate sort, and his attempt to reconcile non-violence and US foreign policy interests.  

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28 André and Anita Bernard were, in their own words, influenced by Bhave during their early political engagement, when they were working in political campaigns to support French conscientious objectors within their organisation *Action Civique Non-Violeante*. Later, with other activists and non-violent anarchists, they founded the journal *Anarchisme and Nonviolence*, published from 1965 until 1973. See Fraters, Erica (ed.): *Réfractaires à la guerre d’Algérie avec l’action civique non violente 1959-1963*, Syllepse, Paris, 2005. For several years André Bernard was to edit the French anarchist weekly *Le Monde libertaire*.  
30 See Sharp, Gene, *From Dictatorship to Democracy. A conceptual framework for liberation*, Albert Einstein Institute, Boston, 1993, among many other publications on Gandhi and Gandhi’s writings. The cited book fitted perfectly with US foreign politics and financing of non-violent movements engaged in the topping of dictatorial governments in Eastern Europe, who at the same time opposed US political and economic interests, whereas non-violent opposition groups in other countries with dictatorships, such as Azerbaijan, who were already on the side of the US, were not financed.
Meanwhile in India, the non-violent direct-action groups of the Sarvodaya movement regained force in the early 1970s and launched mass actions against the government of Indira Gandhi. The so-called Bihar movement in 1975 – especially in the federal states of Bihar and Gujarat, backed by a new generation of student activists – turned into an uprising as mass blockades of state assembly buildings by the movement, who accused the political elite of endemic corruption, were followed by strikes on the part of railway workers. The movement was shaped by Jaya Prakash Narayan (1902–1979) who came out of Lohia’s Socialist Party. But Narayan left party politics and turned to the grassroots democratic Sarvodaya movement to give the concept of non-violent resistance of Gandhi a more offensive character.

During the campaign of the Bihar movement, Narayan propagated a concept of ‘partyless democracy’, set against the corrupt nature of the party-based regime. In the face of this movement, Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency which lasted from 1975 to 1977. When at very short notice Indira called a general election which she was sure to win easily, it was again Narayan who – in a sudden reversal of his abandonment of party politics – forged an all-party-coalition against Indira and her Congress-I party. As a result Indira Gandhi lost the election. With these events, Narayan and the Sarvodaya movement could be accorded the achievement of having safeguarded India against military coups and the tendency to dictatorship at least for some decades. On the other hand, this was gained at the price of an all-party-coalition that included even the Hindu-nationalist religious party Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People’s Party, BJP), which for the first time was given a kind of validity on the political scene in India.

Although there have been large numbers of publications in India on Gandhi, there are certain waves and emphases to be highlighted. At the beginning of the 1980s the reception of Gandhi’s ideas changed considerably. On the one hand there was a crisis within the Sarvodaya movement after the death of Jaya Prakash Narayan in 1979. It turned out to be fatal to the movement that – although there were sufficient democratic decision-making structures at the grassroots – the movement was still relying too much on charismatic leading. The Sarvodaya movement now lost its formerly considerable influence on the shaping of social movements in India. At the same time, these social movements were recovering, with the emergence of the women’s movement against deforestation in the Himalayas, known as the Chipko movement (chipko means ‘embracing the trees’); the grassroots health movement, after the murderous chemical disaster of Bhopal in 1984; and the ecological movements, especially against big dam projects like the Narmada dams.

The new ecologist social movements engaged in a predominantly non-violent struggle, but mainly because non-violent methods were rooted in Indian tradition and utilisable for the struggle, not because the activists considered themselves to be in a direct line from Gandhi’s legacy. However, some of the activists emanated from the organisational framework of Sarvodaya and its still-existing ashrams or other forms of direct inheritance from Gandhi; and some,
too, were supporters or even founders (as in the case of Mehda Patkar, Sunderlal Bahuguna, Uma Gadekar, Vandana Shiva and others) of other social movements. Within this situation the forms of interpretation of Gandhi were becoming more diverse and more creative.

In parallel with these shifts in the activist sphere, there was a wave of publications and interpretations on Gandhi from intellectuals and academics and, for the first time in India, Gandhi was to be taken seriously as a philosopher and political thinker. This resulted in new lines of communication and discussion networks between these intellectuals and activists in the social movements – for example, the Lokayan (dialogue among the people) network founded in 1980 by Rajni Kothari (born 1928), which succeeded in incorporating activists and intellectuals for a fruitful exchange of ideas and the creation of new communication structures.

This wave of interpretations of Gandhi was shaped by intellectuals and journalists like Claude Alvarez and Ashis Nandy, who tried to launch a grassroots-oriented, radical interpretation of Gandhi that was directed against the pillars of Western capitalist industrial civilisation and based on a critical re-acquirement of indigenous traditions, but which didn’t mean separatism, identity politics or nationalism. Instead, they sought ways to unite with the so-called ‘other West’, the emerging ecologist, feminist, anti-nuclear and anti-war movements, in order to create a new, alternative universalism. And they found common ground with radical currents within these movements that rejected the dominant, institutionalised solutions and criticised the concept of growth and ever-accelerating productivity – or the growing military-industrial combine. In the field of development policy the term ‘development’ was wholly rejected and the financing of development projects by Western donor agencies fundamentally questioned. Claude Markovits, in his history of post-colonial interpretations of Gandhi in India, calls this wave of movement-oriented intellectuals ‘Indigenists’, as they rely on thorough research into and re-evaluation of the domestic – for the most part popular Hindu – traditions that Gandhi used as his source of inspiration. Markovits cites Ashis Nandy’s The Intimate Enemy. Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism as the formative and trendsetting work of that current.31

Almost at the same time, within the Marxist camp in India a new, creative analysis emerged that distanced itself from the traditional Marxist outlook according to which Gandhi was denounced as a subjectively unconscious, but objectively guilty agent of the implementation of a bourgeois and capitalist society in independent India.32 Various regional and local studies on the mass movements and the campaigns of the independence movement have concluded that it was not Gandhi but Nehru who was ultimately responsible for the bourgeois character of independent India. These regional studies have been published by Ranajit Guha (born 1922)

31 Oxford University Press, Oxford/Calcutta/Madras, 1983. The history of interpretations of Gandhi is best summarised by Markovits, Claude, Gandhi, see note 3; for the ‘indigenists’ see p. 114f., notwithstanding the fact that I do not share some of his conclusions.
32 See the classic work on this tendency by the foremost theoretician of the largest Indian communist party, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI/M): Namboodiripad, E. M. S., The Mahatma and the Ism, People’s Publishing House, New Delhi, 1958.
in a series called Subaltern Studies, which also furnished the name of that current of interpretations of Gandhi. Partha Chatterjee, a founding member of the Subaltern Studies editorial collective, in his texts within the series and in his most important book on the matter, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse, pointed to the radical critique of industrial civilisation in Gandhi’s Hind Swaraj. Up until then Marxist analysts tended – if they had, exceptionally, any sympathetic view of Gandhi – to point to an evolution of Gandhi’s thought: he was accorded a more progressive, socialist attitude, the more ‘mature’ his thinking became – which was quite in tune with some remarks of Gandhi’s that his experiments in truth would lead to more and more valid results in time. This benevolent estimation by some orthodox Marxists had been based on an institutionalised understanding of socialism and on several scattered statements of Gandhi’s shortly before independence, when he was no longer excluding the nationalisation of some key industries. In contrast, there has been no similar recognition by Indian Marxists of the socialist tendencies within Gandhi’s thinking illustrated by his vision of self-governing villages with commonly owned land, a topic which Gandhi continuously emphasised – just as he always abided by the key theses of Hind Swaraj, even though this was written as early as 1909. The Subaltern Studies are the only Marxist interpretations of Gandhi that indicate the continuous, radical, anti-statist, anti-institutional and anti-progress tendency in Gandhi’s thinking.

Ashis Nandy’s The Intimate Enemy and Partha Chatterjee’s Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World can both be considered early milestones in the emerging, worldwide field of post-colonial studies. In spite of partly converging views there are essential differences in the interpretations of Gandhi between Nandy and the ‘Indigenists’, and Chatterjee and the proponents of ‘Subaltern Studies’, which are not only due to the use or non-use of Marxist terms. Nandy, in particular, looks at the radical momentum and indigenist sources of the concept of non-violence that Gandhi uses and ends up with an anti-colonial social psychologist’s legitimation of non-violent resistance, which he considers to be essential for the overcoming of the intimate enemy – that is, the colonised consciousness prevailing in post-colonial societies.

By contrast, Chatterjee and Guha see in Gandhi’s non-violence – arguing here in a more traditional Marxist way – an obstacle to the development of an anti- or post-colonial consciousness of liberation. This follows from their analysis, that the subaltern masses of the independence movement in India were indeed following the calls for action issued by Gandhi, but that they were filling the local implementation of the campaigns with their own meanings, often violent,

35 See Bhattacharyya, Buddhadeva, Evolution of the Political Philosophy of Gandhi, Calcutta, 1969.
36 In its introduction to Ashis Nandy, Wikipedia cites journalist Phillip Darby as follows: ‘[He] is best known for his writing on colonialism but in recent years he has come to be acknowledged as one of the founding figures of postcolonial studies.’
even if Gandhi was calling for non-violent action. This interpretation draws upon the old Marxist perception of non-violent direct action as the petty bourgeois ideology of the middle classes, which is imposed upon the subaltern, peasant-proletarian classes – in this case as Gandhi’s ideology. But the subaltern classes, this thesis concludes, are capable of self-determination and view this imposition from above as being against their nature. Ashis Nandy, in contrast, treats Gandhi’s non-violence as an authentic form of resistance, corresponding to indigenous traditions, especially of androgyny, within the hybrid and tolerant currents of popular Hinduism in rural India, which could be grasped, understood and implemented by the subaltern masses in a self-evident, often unconscious way – and for which Gandhi was only an inspiration and strategist.

Drawing on Nandy’s essays in the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century plenty of new and unorthodox interpretations of Gandhi have been published around the world as part of the post-colonial studies, focusing on particular topics Gandhi raised, such as sex, age, diet and body symbolism, addressed in Joseph Alter’s book *Gandhi’s Body*.37 These studies do not necessarily stress Gandhi’s indigenist basis, but converge in a post-modern interpretation of Gandhi. A kind of programmatic manifesto of this youngest current of interpretation of Gandhi was published by the Gandhi experts Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, teaching in Chicago: *Postmodern Gandhi and Other Essays*.38 Lloyd I. Rudolph’s own manifesto-like essay starts with the proclamation that Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj* of 1909 should be considered a classical work of post-modern theory in general. ‘When, in 1909, he wrote *Hind Swaraj*, he helped to inaugurate the postmodern era by critiquing and rejecting “modern civilisation” and by articulating a civilisational alternative to it.’39 Then Rudolph elaborates his view that Gandhi’s reversal of the classical Hindu phrase ‘God is Truth’ into ‘Truth is God’ supports a relativist and subjective conception of truth – the term *satya*, truth, is central to *Satyagraha*, Gandhi’s conception of non-violent resistance – instead of an objectivist, scientifically discoverable, absolute truth. In an earnest search for truth an individual is able, according to Rudolph’s interpretation, to come close to absolute truth – which is visualised according to Gandhi in an impersonal way as *brahman* (the all-soul) – but he is never able to fully discover absolute truth. The discovery of absolute truth remains denied to the mortal individual. Rudolph points out that Gandhi has compared absolute truth to a diamond, which cannot be seen in its entirety but has many visible facets (thus corresponding to relative truth). This concept of relative truth according to Gandhi is connected in a next step by Rudolph with the relativism that is typical of


post-modern theory. Ashis Nandy, on the contrary, is not looking for relativism, but for an alternative kind of universalism.

In his chapter on *Hind Swaraj*, Rudolph criticises bourgeois, modernising researchers on Gandhi such as the German, Dietmar Rothermund, who regards *Hind Swaraj* as a ‘contemporary’ script, oriented only towards the Indian nationalism of his time. According to Rudolph, Rothermund thus declares Gandhi’s classic book next to irrelevant and significantly reduces its impact. For Rudolph Gandhi’s only programmatic account of his philosophy neither relied on a specific historical context nor was a document for the Indian nationalist movement alone, but was a general, timeless valid critique of civilisation, influenced by most of the main Western critiques of modern civilisation (Emerson, Ruskin, Thoreau, Tolstoy etc.).

This book remained, according to Rudolph, even in October and November 1945 the valid ideological basis for Gandhi’s break-up with Nehru on the question of industrialisation of an independent India.

Rudolph again criticises Nehru for neglecting Gandhi’s vision of communal self-governance of the Indian villages relying on a renewed traditional body, the *panchayet* (council of five), based on consensual decision-making at the grassroots level, as Indira Rothermund shows in her case study of Aundh, where Gandhian principles were incorporated in a draft constitution of 1939 in a former princely state.

Nehru, by contrast, preferred a town-centred development strategy. Only after this had demonstrably failed were parts of Gandhi’s vision remembered, in the 1990s, brought up to date and improved in some respects – a third of all seats were fixed for women – and institutionalised, with mixed success.

Rudolph’s interpretation differs from that of Ashis Nandy in that Nandy prefers to speak of an un-modern or non-colonised consciousness or ‘innocence’ in relation to Gandhi and the rural people he relied upon. In this sense Nandy draws upon mainly popular Hindu traditions of the rural majority culture, which weren’t touched at all by modern colonial structures of consciousness and were touched only superficially by modern ideologies such as secularism and nationalism (that is why Nandy calls them ‘non-modern’ or ‘un-modern’, but not ‘anti-modern’ or ‘post-modern’ which implies acquaintance of modern structures and consciousness). It was these non-modern masses that Gandhi relied on during his anti-colonial campaigns and whom he succeeded in mobilising.

Finally, and to round up this tour of the history of interpretations of Gandhi, mention should be made of comparative, cross-cultural readings of Gandhi, which are used to solve problems or impasses in one culture by applying concepts or adaptations of concepts from another culture. Concerning

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40 Ibid., pp. 6–7.
41 Ibid., p. 17.
the German-speaking culture, the specialist in public law, Dieter Conrad (1932-2001), compared in a juridical study – regretably unfinished owing to his death – the Western concept of the state with Gandhi’s state-critical political concept. Conrad arrived at surprising conclusions, especially that ‘discussion of Satyagraha shouldn’t take place within the specialism of the history of Indian decolonisation, but in relation to the notion of a virtual challenge to the state by the laws of nature’. Gandhi’s critique of state and violence could serve to relativise ‘the state of the occidental type’ and its privileged monopoly of violence: ‘With his principal critique of the violent form and the one-sidedness of domination, [Gandhi] introduced a challenging element into the system and questioned the concept of state as such.’

In the face of current world problems like ‘cross-border ecological tasks’, in the face of ‘worldwide mobility and communication’ among ‘world citizens’, Conrad pointed out that we have to ask, with Gandhi, ‘if the complete juridical surrender of the individual to his or her respective territorial legal order is still sustainable.’

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45 Ibid., p. 175.
Challenging the Warrior Culture

Ashis Nandy’s *The Intimate Enemy* as a Classic Post-Colonial Study of M. K. Gandhi’s Non-Violent and Androgynous Anti-Colonialism

Some of the biggest problems Dag Hammarskjöld (1905–1961) had to face during his era as Secretary-General of the United Nations arose from the incomplete – and purely political – decolonisation that reshaped the post-war world and was still at its very beginning in Africa in the 1950s and early 1960s. In particular, the Congo crisis – and the fact that Hammarskjöld could not solve it with all the United Nations resources, international peace enforcement troops and diplomatic experience he had at his disposal – show that on economic grounds forms of neo-colonialism prevailed to a greater or lesser extent even after formal independence, and were already evident immediately after independence.

The Indian sociologist and social psychologist Ashis Nandy (born 1937), one of the founders of the now worldwide discipline of post-colonial studies, argues that this economic neo-colonialism was accompanied by a prevailing colonial consciousness and culture within the minds of the ex-colonised as well as their governments’ policies in post-colonial societies. According to the now almost classical interpretation of M. K. Gandhi’s (1869–1948) anti-colonialism in his book *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*, published in 1983, Ashis Nandy argues that the old colonial ‘empires’ had fallen, but colonial ideological thought and culture had prevailed and is today even enjoying a renaissance.

*The kshatriya (warrior) dominates minds – and governments!*

Nandy establishes in his book that the armed ‘counter-players’ of colonialism – as he calls them – were never really outside the framework of consciousness that colonialism produced; instead, they had remained completely inside the imperialist, modern and industrial-civilisational framework. The counter-players had practised a form of anti-colonialism that adopted the main institutions, thoughts and habits of behaviour of colonial culture and pursued them on their own behalf. For Nandy, central here is the culture of violence, arising from the adoption by post-colonial countries of the patriarchal, warrior-like characteristics and institutions of the former colonial rulers. M. K. Gandhi had denounced this ten-

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dency of armed anti-colonialism in his only programmatic, theoretical work, the radical *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, which was banned in India immediately after its publication in 1909. Therein, Gandhi had criticised the advocates of armed resistance for wanting ‘English rule without the Englishman; the tiger’s nature, but not the tiger’.2

Nowadays, European and US media and politicians are quick to shake their heads in dismay at the problems of former colonies in Africa and to behave as if the military dictatorships in these countries had nothing to do with them. For a short time only, from 1947 to approximately 1960, Africa looked as if it was heading towards a truly decolonised future. This era is remembered nowadays by Africans in a misty-eyed way, accompanied by nostalgia in the face of the cruel realities of today’s Africa – witness, for example, the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of independence in Ghana, the first African country to be decolonised, in 1957.3 During this period, African anti-colonialism was still marked by Gandhi’s ideas:

Gandhi’s ideas and methods were a strong formative influence in the history of African nationalism and Black militancy. The West African Congress was established in 1920; its founders were inspired by the example of the Indian National Congress. In the 1930s the course of the Indian nationalist struggle under Gandhi’s leadership was being closely followed in other parts of the British empire. In the 1940s Kwame Nkrumah of the Gold Coast (later Ghana) was ‘toying with Gandhi’s ideas on non-violent campaigns and dreaming about translating them into action’. In 1958, when the All-Africa People’s Conference met in the newly independent state of Ghana, the Gandhian ideas were still relatively so popular in Africa that the Algerian National Liberation Front (Front de Libération Nationale, represented by Frantz Fanon [1925-1961]), engaged in a revolt against the French, had much difficulty in securing for their armed struggle legitimacy and support.4

Another anti-colonial leader who adopted the ideas of Gandhi was Kenneth Kaunda (born 1924) of Zambia. As late as 1961 he ran a civil disobedience campaign, which marked the path to Zambia’s independence in 1964.

But from the beginning of the 1960s, Gandhi’s impact diminished for several reasons. Firstly, leaders who had previously drawn on Gandhi’s legacy were rapidly degenerating into dictators after seizing state power, relying on a personality cult and causing economic crisis. Nkrumah established one-party rule in 1964, Kaunda in 1968.

Secondly, the impact of Gandhi’s ideas withered away in the face of armed liberation wars such as those in Algeria, Guinea-Bissau and Angola. After 1960, the number of casualties rose considerably as the level of violence and counter-violence within the struggles increased. This tendency will be illustrated here through a comparison of

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two massacres. The first is the massacre carried out by British colonial troops in Amritsar on April 6th, 1919. Official figures estimate today that the soldiers serving under Brigadier-General Dyer killed 379 unarmed persons and left 1,200 wounded (the Indian National Congress (INC) enquiry held immediately after the massacre reported 1,200 killed and 3,600 wounded). There were immediate investigations, enquiry commissions, publications, and international debate. The Amritsar massacre triggered the first non-cooperation movement (1920-22) against British colonial rule in India and is still remembered in India today, along with demands for official apologies by the British.\(^5\) It was the only massacre on such a scale by colonial troops during the era of the independence movement (1918-1947), although repression immediately after Amritsar was fierce and, furthermore, it could easily be argued that Britain as the colonial power was responsible, for example, for the estimated 1.5 to 3 million deaths during the Bengal famine of 1943, quite apart from the death toll arising from the Partition of India and Pakistan. On the Indian side – evidently, one should say – there was nothing comparable in the way of physical attacks on British citizens.

At the end of the 1950s, however, the ongoing Algerian war considerably raised the level of cruelty and increased the number of casualties within anti-colonial movements. French colonial troops were responsible for various massacres of the Amritsar type. But already at this stage the Algerian ‘counter-players’ were also very much involved in crimes normally supposed to be the province of colonial warfare and the forces of repression. Already on April 13th, 1956, there had been the Tifraten massacre, nowadays known as ‘Red Night’, when ‘several hundred’ (other sources cite 490) anti-colonial Messalists – militants and supporters of Messali Hadj (1898–1974) – were killed by the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) in its fratricidal war to get rid of the rival opposition and present itself as Algeria’s sole liberation force.\(^5\)

Less than a year later, on May 28th, 1957, the Melouza massacre occurred, resulting in 379 casualties (other sources say 303), likewise inflicted by the FLN on unarmed Messalist sympathisers.\(^7\) This took place in the hamlet of Mecht a-Kasba near the village of Beni Ilmane, some distance from Melouza. Young Frantz Fanon had become the press spokesman for the FLN just a few days before. His first public act was to blame the French colonial troops for the massacre and describe the FLN forces as victims, although he was fully aware that the reverse was the case: ‘The foul machinations over Melouza (...) show the extent of the French authorities’ cynicism and monstrous perfidy. The description of the Melouza massacre suggests that it was carefully stage-managed (...), there is an obvious wish to blame the FLN for an absurd and horrible massacre.’\(^8\) The world generally, and the international soli-

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\(^5\) Ibid., pp. 34-41.


\(^7\) Ibid.

darity movement and French anti-colonial leftist intellectuals in particular, remained silent for a long time, the only people to protest and demand an investigation being Messali Hadj and Albert Camus.

It took Algerian historians 26 years – from independence to the beginning of the period of democratic opening-up (1988–1992) – even to speak of Messali Hadj and to concede who actually had committed the massacre. Fanon biographer David Macey writes: ‘Shortly after these events, wilaya III’s Colonel Mohammed Saïd was quietly recalled in Tunis. In October 1988, Saïd admitted in an interview on Algerian television that he had ordered the Melouza massacre. The Melouza incident caused a degree of soul-searching on the part of the French left, with some asking the FLN to supply proof that it was not responsible and others trying hard to convince themselves that the killings were “individual acts” born of despair and fanaticism or acts of cruelty on the part of individuals driven mad by rage at the atrocities that had been inflicted on them in the course of the war. The FLN remained silent.’9 During the fratricidal war between the anti-colonial Messalists and the anti-colonial FLN, 12,000 people were killed.10

Furthermore, Fanon, for his part, was involved in the killing of the most famous leader of the FLN, Abane Ramdane (1920–1957). Ramdane had at first been one of the most determined militants in the war against the Messalists, but in August 1957 in Cairo, at a meeting with adversaries including Boussouf and Belkacem Krim, he insisted on the primacy of the political over the military within the FLN. He lost his case and was killed for opposing military primacy. Abane Ramdane was strangled to death at the end of 1957 in Morocco ‘having been lured to Morocco on the pretext that there was important business to be settled there. His assassins were two of “Boussouf’s boys” (...)’, Macey relates. The FLN, trying to cover up the internal killing, created in their journal *El Moudjahid* a huge mythical framework in which Abane Ramdane died a martyr’s death in a battle against the French. Fanon, Macey asserts, ‘was close enough to the “information services” to know the truth about Abane’s death’. Later, talking to Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986), Fanon ‘clearly felt some responsibility for the fate of Abane. This implies that he thought that he could have prevented him from going to Morocco, and that in turn implies that he knew or strongly suspected what was going to happen there. Beauvoir certainly gained the impression that he knew far more than he would or could say about the grimmer secrets of the Algerian Revolution. (...) As late as the beginning of the 1990s, schoolchildren in Algeria were still being taught that Abane Ramdane was one of the Revolution’s martyrs.’11

All this – consciously defending massacres and political murder on one’s own side – Fanon had already as part of his baggage and on his mind when he represented the FLN in 1958 at the All-Africa People’s Conference in Ghana, trying to convince fellow anti-colonialist representatives of the ideo-

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9 Macey, David, see note 8, p. 354.
11 Macey, David, see note 8, pp. 356–357.
logical, ethical and practical weaknesses of Gandhi’s method of combating colonialism, and encouraging them to take up armed struggle as the radical anti-colonial alternative, as he saw it.

Within the Indian National Congress (INC), during 30 years of sometimes fierce debates and quarrels between the different anti-colonial factions, sometimes resulting in exclusions from the membership, not one militant – whether high- or low-ranking – was killed in internal political or tactical strife. This is historically so self-evident that nobody even talks about it in India. Yet, it is a unique achievement within national liberation movements all over the world and, obviously, due to the nonviolent culture of the anti-colonial movement in India. In contrast, the conduct of Fanon and the armed ‘counter-players’, from the outset, could rival the worst atrocities committed by the British colonial power in India. Their mode of resistance inaugurated decades of civil war in many African countries, continuing in some of them to this day.

There is a third reason for the decline of Gandhi’s impact in Africa: the intensification of the Cold War at the beginning of the 1960s, and the pathological suspicion on the part of the US administration of any independent tendency by an African country to become another Cuba and thereby strengthen the Soviet Union. In 1961, Patrice Lumumba (1925–1961), the young elected prime minister of Congo and one of the leading lights of young Africa in the decolonising period, was killed. Already in this incident, Colonel Mobutu (1930–1997) had had a hand. Mobutu took power through a military coup in 1965. He then ruled in ‘Congo-Kinshasa/ Zaire’ for long decades, until 1997. Under Mobutu, Zaire became a kind of self-service store for this dictator, whose assets were estimated as close to 5,000 million dollars. Zaire likewise became a frontline state of the CIA in the Cold War. After Mobutu’s decline and death, the country was afflicted by years of catastrophic civil war.

The personality cult of Mobutu ran like this: according to self-made propaganda he should have been regarded as the ‘almighty warrior, who strings together conquest after conquest by his persistence’ and his byname had the meaning of ‘the strong cockerel who never leaves a hen unmounted’.12

Here we obviously recognise two elements that Ashis Nandy in The Intimate Enemy focuses on as shaping elements of colonial consciousness: a heroic warrior culture or elements of sheer warlordism; and a pathological, patriarchal-masculinist concept of self.

But governmental think-tanks and the official media of former colonisers or the US are now separating their history from their own implication in the degeneration of Africa under dictatorial regimes. Maybe, this will be next to impossible in the case of Mobutu’s Zaire. But in other countries of Africa, oppositional ‘counter-players’ are very much welcome for the role they play in legitimising that separation. So everyone in the West points to Robert Mugabe – former freedom fighter, now longtime dictator of devastated Zimbabwe, preserving his dictatorship in opposition to the West. Ashis Nandy shows in The Intimate Enemy how

such ‘counter-players’ are entirely part of the ideological culture of the old colonial powers and post-colonial thought. Today, this is shown again and again by the ease with which certain dictators or formerly anti-colonial militarist regimes are able to cross the so-called abyss between the status of anti-colonial opponent and that of ally of the West. Gaddafi’s new pro-Western direction or the ideological turnaround of the military leaders in Algeria, rewarded in arms support by former colonial power France, are telling examples of the warrior-like affinity that is a central clue in Ashis Nandy’s interpretation of Gandhi as being fundamentally opposed to colonial as well as ‘counter-player’ warrior culture.

The fiction of ideological separation is useful to the West and permits Western powerholders the possibility of assuming a certain innocence – essentially ‘inauthentic’, as Ashis Nandy would say – and thereby even posing as generous protectors of elections via UN interventionism, as in the Democratic Republic of Congo recently. At the same time, the causes of, and blame for, African misery are laid entirely at Africa’s door. The end of that logic is already to be seen in the think-tanks of the United States, where a team of political scientists – offspring of Samuel P. Huntington and his thesis of a ‘clash of civilisations’ – under the guidance of Stephen Krasner is planning to ‘recolonise nations in misery’. Krasner calls this mission ‘post-modern imperialism’. The White House has a framework with action plans for the renovation of about 25 crisis-ridden or ‘failed’ states. To that end, the United Nations is supposed to take over the sovereignty of these states – as it did in East Timor and Kosovo, cited as archetypal examples of UN intervention, which in principal could also occur in all African states. Whether these archetypes were really functioning or not is of minor importance; in Kosovo, for example, nothing has been solved, and an independent Kosovo might trigger a new crisis or even civil war. Worse, the plan gambles with the United Nation’s Blue Helmets as mere replacement troops for NATO – or proposes deployment of US troops, in a further phase of ‘post-modern imperialism’ – as was already the case in the Yugoslav civil war in the 1990s.\(^\text{13}\)

Thus functions the Intimate Enemy – colonial consciousness, the post-colonial consciousness of the ‘counter-players’ and the neo-colonial consciousness of the West today – all of which Ashis Nandy calls pathological, because it shapes the thought structures of citizens in Western states as well as post-colonial societies and damages them at the same time. Here, Nandy returns to a necessity Gandhi formulated: that not only the colonised but also the colonisers have to be freed from colonial thinking and its pathologies. Even in post-colonial societies, there is practically no awareness of the Intimate Enemy, as shown in a survey carried out by the magazine New African, whose African readers selected Robert Mugabe as the third most meaningful African of all times, after Mandela and Nkrumah.\(^\text{14}\)

If Ashis Nandy speaks in his preface to The Intimate Enemy of 1983 of the ‘modern technological marvels’, which could be renamed World War II or Vietnam, we can nowadays continue the line of argument and talk...
of the modern technological marvels of the war in Iraq or the war in Afghanistan. The undampened, omnipotent consciousness and patriarchal, warrior-culture arrogance of Western capitalist industrial nations on the one side corresponds on the other side with the recent news that British schools no longer teach students about Gandhi – because of his supposed irrelevance.\textsuperscript{15}

In post-colonial India the situation cannot be judged to be any better. The government of Prime Minister Vajpayee, which was led by the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People’s Party; BJP) and was in power from 1998 to 2004, carried out nuclear tests in a nuclear arms race with Pakistan, thereby upgrading India to the status of a nuclear power at the level of the United States. This government has to be held responsible for the Gujarat pogroms in 2002 against the Indian Muslim minority, the worst orgy of communal violence and state-induced terrorism since the destruction of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya in December 1992, which was likewise triggered by the BJP’s militaristic policies.

The BJP’s cultural politics when they were in government rehabilitated the Hindu nationalist murderer of Gandhi, Nathuram Godse (1910–1949), who argued in his defence speech before the court for a strong, central Hindu-led nation-state and accused Gandhi of having a backward, non-rational outlook. Godse was a member of the paramilitarist and fundamentalist Hindu Mahasabha and of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Association of Volunteers; RSS), which still exists today. In \textit{The Intimate Enemy}, as in more recent political articles and comments, Ashis Nandy draws attention to the paramilitarist recruiting policies of the RSS among the youth and to the fact that the governmental policies of the BJP were by no means protectionist-conservative or culturally traditional – as might have been expected – but offensively neoliberal and aggressively modernist, like those of no previous government. Young IT experts, a privileged, ascending minority group, was attracted by BJP’s political slogan of a ‘Shining India’ – a model that has, argues Nandy, nothing to do with the lived realities of the masses of the Indian people, 60 to 70 per cent of whom still live in the countryside – and who consequently voted the BJP out of government in 2004.

In an article written in 1991, Ashis Nandy contrasted the ideology of Hindu nationalism, or Hindu fundamentalism, called Hindutva (living according to Hindu rules and regulations, set by the higher – priest and warrior – castes), with the reality of a hybrid, multi-faceted popular Hinduism and predicted a ‘struggle for life or death’ between the two. The ideologists of Hindutva, Nandy argues, have always been jealous of the practical way in which Hinduism is actually lived by the simple Hindu. Hindutva, in contrast, is not a lifestyle, but is based on the reformed Hinduism of the 19th century – that is, it is a ‘counter-player’ reaction to colonialism. This so-called ‘reformed’ Hinduism has invented a mythical golden age in the past, several hundred or even a thousand years ago, where the warrior caste, the kshatriya, ruled and their values were culturally dominant. From the viewpoint of their ideologues, contemporary colonial India

\textsuperscript{15} Information received from Ashok Swain, end of July 2007, Dept. of Peace and Conflict Research, University of Uppsala, Sweden.
was populated by weak, degenerate, ‘effeminate’ Hindus and therefore an easy prey for the British colonisers. Hinduism during the period of reform, just like Hindutva today, demands a tightly contained, monolithic, almost monotheistic and centrally organised religion obedient to masculine values – only such a religion is supposed to be capable of coping with Western monotheisms:

Hindutva at this plane is Western imperialism’s last frenzied kick at Hinduism. (...) Speaking optimistically Hindutva has its geographical limits. It cannot spread easily beyond the boundaries of urban, semi-westernized India. It cannot penetrate southern India where Hinduism is more resilient, where it is more difficult to project on to the Muslim the feared and unacceptable parts of one’s own self. Hindutva cannot survive for long even in rural north India where Hinduism is more self-confident and the citizens have not been fully brainwashed by the media to speak only the language of the state. (...) That is why the RSS considers its first task to be moral and physical “improvement” of the Hindus. It does not much like the so-called fallen, compromised Hindus presently available in the back-waters of Mother India. It loves only the Hindus who have been dead for at least one thousand years. If the RSS has its way, it will make every peasant in India wear khaki shorts [paramilitary clothing worn by the RSS]. For its ideal Indian is the brown-skinned version of the colonial police sergeant, reading the Gita instead of the Bible. That is why Nathuram Godse did not kill the modernist and “pseudo-secular” Jawaharlal Nehru but the “arch-reactionary”, “anti-national” sanatani [traditionalist] – Mohandas Karmachand Gandhi. After the murder, Nehru could only say that the killer was insane. The modernist Prime Minister found it too painful to confront the truth that Godse was sane, that he knew who was the real enemy of Hindutva.16

Again, in a more recent article, Nandy points to the fact that religious fundamentalist Godse, after his assassination of Gandhi, argued his case within a modernist framework in his defence plea before the court. Therein, Godse ‘repeatedly accuses Gandhi of flouting the canons of secular statecraft.’17 In the view of the Hindu nationalist assassination group to which Godse belonged, their agitation against partition into India and Pakistan had always been associated with their call for a strong unitary central state under their leadership, whereas Gandhi rejected partition, too, but – even in opposition to Nehru – advocated a more federal structure, with minority rights for Muslims.18

India’s ancient warrior tradition fits neatly with the modern concept of the national interest. The masculinist warrior acts in accordance with the national interest. When Ashis Nandy describes the prevailing colonial consciousness in post-colonial societies as relating to notions of the warrior caste,

the *kshatriya*, we likewise think of the sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920), who identified the *Arthashastra* (a treatise on statesmanship) of Kautilya from 300 BC as ‘naked Machiavellism’.¹⁹ According to Weber, ‘war per se’ has to be the systematic political task of a *kshatriya*. Thus, the *kshatriya* Nathuram Godse declared in his defence plea: ‘I never understood why violent resistance against aggression should be unjust. I believe it to be a religious duty to confront a violent enemy with violence and, if possible, beat him.’²⁰

It is the lost golden age that the anti-colonial warrior wanted to reawaken from the reservoir of indigenous myth. He wanted to modernise it in order finally to be able to cope with the Western warrior – for example, his superior arms technology, the discipline and organisational framework of the British nation-state (nowadays the United States) – as an equal. Today, India’s status as a nuclear state restores within the BJP and RSS warrior mind the patriarchal honour that it seemingly missed for so long – and the warrior will never know how trapped he remains thereby within colonial consciousness.

Gandhi, in contrast, activated – according to Nandy’s interpretation – something different in Indian tradition: an effeminate, androgynous tradition, especially for men; the tradition of *ahimsa*, non-violence or nonviolent resistance; and the religious tradition of tolerance that Gandhi extended even to atheists. All of these were combined with

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cal of industrial society, state politics and modernisation, never remained within the frameworks of provincial identity politics or post-modern relativism.

Ashrams as a basis of androgynous anti-colonialism

Those who compare photographs, documentaries and other films about Gandhi’s gatherings and speeches with those showing any other influential personality in anti-colonial movements will be immediately struck by a phenomenon that separates Gandhi from his kshatriya counter-players. Gandhi does not inspect the troops, presenting salutations, and no parades are going past. Gandhi did not wear a uniform but a loin-cloth. Usually, his assemblies were prayer meetings, which took place not in Hindu temples but under the open sky. Passages were read from Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Zoroastrian and Buddhist texts; only after that did he make a speech on political issues. Habitually, on these occasions, Gandhi sat on the floor or a slightly raised platform, and other participants and people listening also sat rather than stood. Most striking in all pictures of these gatherings is the huge numbers of women who are participating, either surrounding Gandhi directly or forming the majority of the listeners. Such a gathering has been depicted especially sensitively by lesbian Indian filmmaker Deepa Mehta in the final sequences of her film Water (2005). The film deals with child marriage and widow discrimination within the setting of the historical widow communes in Benares in the 1930s. Only the crucial part of Gandhi’s speech is shown in the film: his reversal of the phrase ‘God is Truth’ into ‘Truth is God’. With this reversal, the widow protagonists in the film are given a legitimisation for breaking free of their destiny and having the courage to remarry despite the prohibitions of religious orthodoxy.

The symbolism of a cotton loincloth has many facets pointing to the reasons why Gandhi could establish such a direct, charismatic relationship with vast sections of India’s population, which has never been rivalled by any person or political movement before or after him. This relationship prepared the ground for the big mass movements of 1920-22, 1930 and 1942, taking shape within a broad majority in all parts of the country, whereas the history of post-colonial social movements in India has always remained a history of regional, even regionalist movements.

The clothing symbolism of Gandhi refers to his programme of boycotting imported foreign cloth and of the people producing clothing on their own instead, from the growing of the raw material, cotton, to the production of the final product. Given the massive under-employment and the lack of handicraft in the countryside – people had literally nothing to do for approximately six months of the year – Gandhi wanted to motivate the rural population to re-establish their subsistence capabilities by learning to spin on the spinning wheel. Despite considerable efforts, the home-spun cloth-

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23 See Nanda, B. R., Gandhi and his Critics, see note 4, pp. 74-75.
ing - khadi - that wasn’t immediately used for subsistence in the villages, and was put on the market, was never able to compete with imported products and remained too expensive for poor Indians without spinning skills. Instead of wearing the less expensive imported cloth, Gandhi, through the symbolism of his loincloth appealed to the masses to go on wearing only home-spun cloth. The message was: even though home-spun cloth is too expensive at the moment, or even when the poor cannot yet produce their own khadi, people should wear the piece of home-spun cloth they can afford with dignity.

But that is only one aspect of the clothing symbolism. Through his clothing phenomenology, Gandhi was perceived by ordinary people within the majority Hindu population as living the life of an ancient sannyasi - a saint or searcher after God - which was deeply rooted in religious tradition. Traditionally, a Hindu saint could lead a life of ascetic renunciation through yoga and meditation in the last of the four phases of his life. For him to be respected as a role model, Gandhi’s vow to lead a life of chastity, brahmacharya, was crucial. Although he drew a surprisingly large number of his ideas about self-restraint and chastity from European traditions of vegetarianism, public health, naturopathy and hydrotherapy - quoting, for example, the French proponent of chastity, Paul Bureau (1865-1923), or the naturopath, Adolf Just (1859-1936) -

the concept of brahmacharya is deeply rooted in Indian ascetic tradition. That is why simple rural people perceived Gandhi to be a brahmachari in a broader sense, in that he renounced every personal benefit deriving from his actions or movements. If Gandhi was perceived to be worthy of respect as an ascetic, the Indian masses could believe him that he was concerned only with their welfare and not pursuing some hidden, personal objective or agenda. But Gandhi remained, in contrast to the ancient Indian tradition, a politically active ascetic, a karayaraga, a practitioner of the yoga of action instead of meditation, in spite of meditative elements incorporated in his prayer meetings and ashram life.

For Gandhi, the transmission of cultural symbolism by clothing was crucial, because it helped him to carry out or at least initiate internal reforms within Indian family life (abolition of child marriage, recognition of the human dignity of widows) and caste structure (abolition of untouchability). The sannyasi is not bound, according to tradition, to the duties of family or caste life; he transcends them and is even able and legitimised to inject a new meaning into them. As a widely respected sannyasi, Gandhi could challenge caste structure on a basis that enabled him to keep contact with caste society. For a long time, Gandhi’s idea was therefore to change the four main castes (priest, warrior, merchant, handicraft worker) from a vertical hierarchical ranking order into a horizontal egalitarian order of equally valued professional groups. From his point of view, this was the original sense of the caste system within Hinduism. Later on, the historical development of Hinduism took, according to Gandhi’s understanding, a different turn,
leading to a degeneration and hierarchisation of the caste system. From 1935 on, however, Gandhi changed his mind and assumed that the degeneration of the caste system was too far advanced to be still capable of reform or recovery. From then on, he appealed to all Hindus that they should voluntarily declare and consider themselves to be *shudras*, the lowest caste of craftsmen and workers, or likewise to become *harijans* in order to eradicate untouchability.²⁶

In his book *The Intimate Enemy*, Ashis Nandy differentiates between the mentality of the *satyagrahi* – the nonviolent resister with his new, effeminate courage – and the kind of disguised and muddling-through mentality of the popular masses within existential situations of crisis in their lives. The latter, Nandy perceives to be a strategy of survival embedded in Hindu culture (he contrasts this mentality with the tradition of pride in suicide found in the ancient Aztec priestly culture in Latin America). This separation of roles and the different, yet converging mentalities Nandy mentions correspond to the separation of the *satyagrahis* living in Gandhi’s communes, the ashrams, and the popular masses participating in mass campaigns. The militants of direct nonviolent action within the ashrams have to face the risk of death as a possible consequence of their direct action, where they are exposed to the forces of repression of the colonial adversary. In contrast, the masses, however indispensable for effective economic campaigning like the Salt March and the cloth boycott, were participating in mass movements that involved only minor risks for the individual. It was the creative tension of both components that gave the anti-colonial resistance its unique economic, political and cultural effectiveness.

The tasks Gandhi wanted to address within the communal life of his ashrams were immense. The ashrams were meant to be a small but living example of the visionary values that the independence movement should disperse all over India. Concerning the reform of the caste system, for example, this meant that all ashram inmates were to shed their inherited prejudices, transferred from generation to generation, including sophisticated nuances of discrimination among different castes. This programme of inner reform was – incidentally – carried out in a way that showed Gandhi’s complete independence from bourgeois financial backing. Already, ‘in South Africa, Gandhi’s associates belonged to all classes and communities. To the first ashram at Ahmedabad, which he founded after his return to India in 1915, he welcomed an untouchable family; this action outraged the rich merchants of Ahmedabad, who were contributing to the upkeep of the ashram. Several associates deserted him in protest. Starved of funds, and with the few inmates at the ashram who still stood by him, Gandhi thought of moving into the slums of Ahmedabad. An anonymous donor, however, rendered this course unnecessary.’²⁷

Although there were structures for gatherings, collective decision-making and dis-

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²⁷ See Nanda, B. R., *Gandhi and his Critics*, see note 4, p. 19. The saviour turned out to be Ambalal Sarabhai, a rich textile trader from Ahmedabad. Some time later, however, he decided otherwise and stopped his financial support of the ashrams; see Rudolph, Lloyd I. and Hoeber Rudolph, Susanne, *Postmodern Gandhi*, see note 18, pp. 169–70.
cussions within the ashrams, Gandhi was in fact something like an informal leader who determined the direction of internal reform or which long-established customs needed to be opposed. His practice, sometimes disciplinary, but always based on his own standards of morality – for example accompanied by short periods of fasting, in order to urge other associates to rethink their behaviour, thus avoiding physical punishment regimes within the ashram – took into account that the inmates, especially early on, were often illiterate. The ideal vision of life aspired to in the ashrams was far away from the known living realities of the inmates, who were usually attracted only by one aspect of Gandhi’s programme. That is why the communards saw themselves first and foremost as learners. To illustrate this: at Tolstoy Farm, Gandhi’s second ashram in South Africa, founded in 1910, the inmates were to some extent composed of non-believers as well as believers from all faiths. There were associates from Jewish28, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, non-conformist Protestant and Zoroastrian (Parsi) backgrounds. With the exception of some intellectuals from different countries, the Hindus of the Indian communities in South Africa came from either an illiterate milieu or traditional caste families. They brought with them into the ashram their habitual practices, according to which, for example, higher castes didn’t need to wash their own dishes, or some castes couldn’t dine with some other castes, for reasons of purity. Gandhi overcame these numerous problems as follows: ‘There was to be one single kitchen, and all were to dine in a single row. Everyone was to see to the cleaning of his own dish (...). The common pots were to be cleaned by different parties in turn.’29

Thus, the ashrams became a vast field of experiment of inner reform of life and outer nonviolent resistance. It was a widened basic-democratic public sphere. The ashrams were ‘a human laboratory to which Gandhi admitted scholars, social workers, budding politicians, young radicals, and some cranks. Sometimes he took in even atheists, bigots, former political terrorists, and men and women who did not seem quite sane. Questioned why he wasted his time on these people, Gandhi replied, “Mine is a mad house, and I am the maddest of the lot. But those that cannot see the good in these mad people should have their eyes examined.”’30

Out of these ashrams came what later would be recognised as the first Indian women’s movement, in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. The surprisingly large participation of women within the nonviolent mass actions of the independence movement, which could even be considered as a decisive factor for the movement, was the reason that Ashis Nandy

28 At the time, there were about 40,000 people of Jewish origin living in South Africa. The influence of Jewish intellectuals on Gandhi in the early phase of the ashrams was enormous. Henry Polak, who came from England, recommended and passed on to Gandhi *Unto This Last* by John Ruskins (1819-1900), (published 1860), which led Gandhi to found the first ashram in Phoenix. Herman Kallenbach, a Jew of German origin, bought the land for Gandhi’s second ashram, Tolstoy Farm; see Hoeber Rudolph, Susanne and Rudolph, Lloyd I., ‘The Coffee House and the Ashram revisited: How Gandhi Demo- cratized Habermas’ Public Sphere’, in Rudolph, Lloyd I. and Hoeber Rudolph, Susanne, *Postmodern Gandhi*, see note 18, pp. 141, 164.

29 Ibid., p. 155.
30 See Nanda, B. R., *Gandhi and his Critics*, see note 4, p.149.
spoke in *The Intimate Enemy* of an ‘effeminate’ anti-colonialism and an androgynous formation of their means of struggle.

Already the first big campaign of *satyagraha* that Gandhi led in 1913 in South Africa, after his radicalisation of Tolstoy’s concept of ‘passive resistance’ into the more active concept of ‘adhering to truth’ – drawing more on direct action – was implemented with an extraordinarily high participation of women activists for that period. Eleven women from Tolstoy Farm and 16 activists from the older Phoenix ashram including four women – Gandhi’s wife Kasturba among them – took part. They were protesting against the so-called ‘Black Act’ and other laws designed to stop migration from India, against the ban on Indians crossing the provincial borders of Natal and Transvaal, and against a kind of poll tax imposed on the ‘liberated’ contract workers who wanted to settle in South Africa after fulfilling their five-year bonded-labour contract. But mainly, they were protesting against discriminatory marriage laws, which sanctioned marriages among Christian Indians but declared illegal, in retrospect, marriages among Muslim, Zoroastrian and Hindu Indians. The 16 activists from Phoenix were illegally crossing the border between Natal and Transvaal and were sentenced to three months’ forced labour. Some *satyagrahis* died due to the inhuman conditions in that forced-labour prison. The women of Tolstoy Farm, who were mainly wives of former contract workers, took over leading positions during the Newcastle March, a march that Gandhi conducted together with 5,000 striking coal miners and their families from Natal to Transvaal. In spite of numerous arrests, among them Gandhi, the march couldn’t be stopped. Leading positions were quickly passed over to other *satyagrahi* ashramites after the seizure of supposed leaders. The march was supported in December 1913 in a strike of 50,000 miners that led to a closing-down of the mines. Thus, the Newcastle March for Gandhi became a model for the legendary Salt March in 1930. The opera *Satyagraha* of Philip Glass, for example, traces back the significance of the Newcastle March in this sense.\(^{31}\)

Ashis Nandy shows in *The Intimate Enemy* how Gandhi revalorised an alleged deficiency – the effeminateness and sensibility of Indians under colonial rule, in opposition to which Gandhi’s anti-colonial predecessors had wanted to reinstitute the patriarchal *kshatriya* values of heroic courage, discipline, strength and rigour – and transformed it through the massive participation of women in nonviolent mass campaigns into a new force. ‘When Gandhi fasted or his followers allowed themselves to be beaten, he and they demonstrated the courage required for self-control rather than self-assertion. For those who described such behaviour as “unmanly”, Gandhi reformulated the imputation. Such non-violence expressed not the impotence of man but the potency of woman: “Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage?”’\(^{32}\)

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Ashis Nandy doesn’t ascribe that to a kind of universal biological capacity of suffering in women – a biological attribute – but to specific indigenist cultural traditions in India, which have been ousted by kshatriya culture and were now revitalised by Gandhi. According to Nandy, Gandhi actualised those streams in Hindu tradition where women were to be seen as carriers of a fundamental and activating living energy (shakti), often described as divine, and thus were very respected persons within some Hinduistic minority groups, such as the va-machari sect. This living energy bestowed, according to traditional concepts, a special kind of perseverance, endurance, and alternative form of courage. Nandy concludes that this feminine courage has become part of the traditional concept of androgyyny in India as opposed to the masculine warrior-courage – the equivalent of masculine failure, then, isn’t cowardice, and certainly not female cowardice.

If Gandhi sometimes talks about the capacity of women to bear more self-sacrifice or suffering than men, the reader should be cautious about looking directly to Western interpretations of these notions. Gandhi doesn’t draw on Western cultural traditions, according to Nandy, but on Indian tradition based on this fundamental living energy. The term ‘suffering’, here, is devoid of the Christian notion of culpability and sin – associated with women – and describes a Hindu concept of suffering without guilt and corresponding feelings.

Ashis Nandy wrote *The Intimate Enemy* in 1983, which was long before Judith Butlers’ (born 1956) post-feminist theories of the ‘deconstruction’ of biological sex into social gender and alleged ‘female’ values as mere cultural attributions and results of iterative performances were beginning to dominate discussions. In his book, Nandy alternates the English terms femininity, womanhood, womanliness or masculinity, manhood, manliness – maybe to avoid fixed definitions of these terms. I don’t know how Nandy would use these terms today. However, what seems certain to me is that his concept of androgyyny, drawn from Indian traditions, would remain intact as the crucial basis of the first, anti-colonial women’s movement in India, from the 1920s to the 1940s. Furthermore, his main concern isn’t a special perception of women, but a reintroduction of androgyynous values and behaviour patterns in men, especially within their psychological and cultural settings. This seems to be of universal importance nowadays, in a world where masculine habits correspond to external politics in a warrior culture of new imperial war missions like those in Afghanistan or Iraq. After all, Nandy aims with his androgynous anti-colonialism at nothing less than a universal rehabilitation of the ‘softer side of human nature’ in the public sphere.

Among contemporary European and US-American feminist activists and thought there is a temptation to criticise this effeminate and androgynous anti-colonialism from the later viewpoint of post-1968 feminism. Here, cultural androgyyny is reduced to a biologist pattern of androgynous values, and androgyyny as a whole is perceived to be the opposite of feminist autonomy. Such a critique I would consider not only counter-productive and non-contemporaneous, but also arrogant – at the least – if not in it-
self bound up with the colonial framework of consciousness. Moreover, this critique tends to diminish the possible insights into the causes of mass participation by women within Gandhi’s campaigns for Indian independence. The successes and achievements of this first Indian women’s movement shaping the cultural habits of the independence movement, as well as the soft-aggressive behaviour of male activists and nonviolent revolutionaries within their ranks, would be turned into a cultural view of a movement with a lack of deconstructivist capacity and women’s autonomy. The specific anti-colonial strength of the movement would turn out to be a blemish.

European feminist critiques are sometimes inappropriately harsh as they are influenced by European standards and often made in ignorance of specific Indian conditions. Gandhi’s avowal, that ‘he belonged to all and to no one in particular, like a mother in a joint family’, is in fact related to the cultural background of the Indian joint family, where a household could easily exceed 20 individuals, and where a mother has a different role and function from that of the mother in a conventional European nuclear family. Gandhi’s assertion, that he sees himself to be ‘half man and half woman’ corresponds with Nandy’s interpretation of Gandhi and, for example, contrasts with the patriarchal, militaristic and purely masculine behaviour of Subhas Chandra Bose (1897-1945), his Bengal rival on the strategy of resistance at the end of the 1930s. Bose was one of the exemplary ‘counter-players’ in Nandy’s sense, who advocated counter-violence and wasn’t even aware, when he collaborated with the kshatriya culture of the German Nazis or Japan during World War II, how deeply affected he remained by colonial consciousness.

In the same sense, European feminist criticism of Gandhi’s moral urge to restrict sexual intercourse within his ashrams to married couples tends to overlook the fact that these ashrams in South Africa as well as in India were established within an existing Hindu culture of child marriage, which prevailed during the whole of the 19th and into the early 20th century. The children, who were all girls, were married as early as the age of six or seven years, and certainly by 14 or 15 – and that was the norm, with very few exceptions. When the husband died, the young widows were discriminated against or even forced to climb the funeral pyre of their dead husbands. Chastity – brahmacharya – within Gandhi’s ashrams had the liberating practical effect on young female inmates of enabling them to grow up without these patriarchal cultural patterns, to develop their individual interests and live self-determined lives, without being long married by the age of 18 and already responsible for at least four or five children. Those who want to comprehend Gandhi and Ashis Nandy’s interpretation of Gandhi’s anti-colonialism need to know something of the indigenous background of Indian culture in history, as is shown very sensitively, for example, in Deepa Mehta’s film Water.

33 Gandhi, M. K., cited by Nanda, B.R., Gandhi and his Critics, see note 4, p. 150.
34 Gandhi, M. K., cited by Nanda, B.R., Gandhi and his Critics, see note 4, p. 16.

35 This film (2005) by the lesbian feminist Indian film-maker is a comprehensive treatment of the topics of child marriage and discrimination against women.
The three essays in this volume draw attention to political-philosophical views of a libertarian form of humanism, which have not lost their relevance in our world of today. The impact both Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) and Albert Camus (1913–1960) had on the struggles for social emancipation was not confined to their lifetimes nor to their societies. They inspired new social movements and challenged pseudo-radical notions advocating emancipation based on violence and coercion. Their views remain as valid as ever before. These essays illustrate the point. By doing so, they also touch on issues that relate to substantial parts of the moral and ethical context of the life and legacy of Dag Hammarskjöld (1905–1961), though there were no visible links between the three protagonists and not only similarities but also differences in their views. Gandhi and Camus shared a strictly non-violent and anti-authoritarian approach. Their uncompromising notion of integrity, and of adherence to fundamental ethical values and norms in pursuance of true humanism, resonates with the convictions of Hammarskjöld. Their political philosophy also merits being both remembered and consciously practised in today’s world.