Press, Protest and Freedom Movements in British and French India 1928-48 - do subalterns speak?
"Women, Press & Protest in British & French India 1928-48"

Professor Jane Chapman, Principal Investigator
Female led

- Rent strikes
- Boycotts and pickets of merchants selling British cloth and liquor
- Non payment of fines
- Leadership of politics/Congress party whilst men in jail
- In jail themselves
Pondicherry became a thriving free trade port with full French colonial infrastructure.
Research Questions

• What was the effect (as opposed to simply the existence) of female direct action as communicated in print publications, and female influence on newspapers themselves?

• How far did women use the press as an empowering voice during the twilight years of the Raj?
United Provinces - the case of Mrs Sophrania – charged and convicted for advocating non-payment of rent
Hypotheses:

• the correlation between coverage of boycotts and decline in advertising revenue, to quantify impact of female organisational power.

• Role of women in French Pondicherry was recognised in Tamil communications
FRENCH INDIA
(175,000 pop., independence 1962)

- Picketing during 6 violent textile strikes (12 dead) over 2 years

- Resistance to roaming armed gangs of thugs, hired by authorities

- Contribution through direct action to achievement of labour code and nationalist movement
Subbiah: ‘Women workers were posted from the mill gates extending to the working class villages. When the blacklegs were taken to the mills, women volunteers approached them and persuaded them not to betray and disrupt the strike. Some of the women volunteers were armed with broom sticks, raised up as a symbol of their protest…’
1906 CHAMBER DEBATE

- 14 hour day with female wages of 25 centimes a day

- Children aged 8 working 11 hours for 5 centimes a day

- No health and safety regulations, working temperatures of 47C and dust
Textile conflicts

- 1908 - first illegal textile strike - increase of half an anna per day

- 1920 - strike failed

- 1924 - lock-out and sackings, supported by colonial administration and corrupt Gaebele ruling party and dynasty

- 1935 - workers still doing a 12 hour day (10 hours and higher wages in Madras)

1935 - mill managers earning 20 to 40,000 francs a month, workers 20 to 60 francs a week
Women preparing for a protest in United Provinces
Pondicherry – women lead boycott
RUMANIAN PREMIER ASSASSINATED
ATTACK BY ARMED STUDENT AT RAILWAY STATION
TWO OTHER OUTRAGES ON SAME DAY

KING CAROL'S COACH WRECKED BY BOMB

H. Duce, Prime Minister of Romania, was shot dead at Sinaia railway station on Friday for a student armed with a revolver.

The alleged assassin, Constantinian, a 19-year-old pupil of the Bucharest Commercial Academy, was shot shortly after the outrage.

Duce, who was a candidate for the Bucharest editorial board, the "Iron Guard" of the recent elections, stated that he shot M. Duce because the latter, as a Freemason, was not a good person.

Two other outrages occurred at Sinaia the same day. A bomb believed to have been delivered by the assassin in a car attacked in a park resulting in injury to a child, while another bullet is reported to have invaded the coach used by King Carol at holiday activities.

Following these outrages, over 500 arrests were made in Bucharest during the recent months of members of the "Iron Guard". A law, stated to be an act of Constantinian, was also arrested at Bucharest ahead the trials last Bucharest.

100 ARRESTS AT BUCHAREST

Bucharest, December 26.

The railway station at Blida, a town of Constantine, was hit today by a bomb which exploded at the exit of the station, killing one man and wounding seven others. The bombing was carried out by the "Iron Guard".

The Prime Minister, a candidate for the Bucharest editorial board, was attacked by the "Iron Guard".

THE IRON GUARD

The "Iron Guard" organization was founded in 1918 by the late General Antonescu. The group is known for its ultra-nationalist and anti-Semitic beliefs.

THE QUESTION OF SURCHARGES

The question of surcharges was discussed in the Bucharest Commercial Academy, where the Prime Minister, a candidate for the Bucharest editorial board, was attacked by the "Iron Guard".

NEW YEAR'S HONOURS LIST

Special Edition of "The Pioneer" - A special edition of "The Pioneer" was published to celebrate the New Year's Honours List.

WILL CUTS BE RESTORED?

M. Duce's decision sets a problem.

A debate on the question of surcharges was held in the Bucharest Commercial Academy, where the Prime Minister, a candidate for the Bucharest editorial board, was attacked by the "Iron Guard".

MAN AND WOMAN MURDERED

WOMAN'S BODY FOUND IN DRAIN

LAW AND ORDER DISORDER

THE POLICE'S Gör MEDITATION

A ZEMINDAR MURDERED

WOMAN'S BODY FOUND IN DRAIN

YOUNG CRIME DISORDER

THE POLICE'S Gör MEDITATION

IN MALAYA

EMERGENCY COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS QUESTION

From the New Correspondent, New York, December 26.

A special meeting of the Malaya Emergency Committee was held today to discuss the question of surcharges.

CARavans INTO THE SEA

SEVEN PERSONS INJURED AT MONDAY

A car crash occurred with the car and two passengers injured.

CHAMBER OF TRADE BUILDINGS CALIFORNIA

OIL SILVERTOWN'S FARMERS

Lubricants

Value

Rust Inhibitor

Outstanding

Wear Tests

OILS

OFFICIALS

NEGLIGENCE

Chapter of Bankruptcy.
TAUX DIVERS.
Jeudi, 30 Janvier 1930.
ROUPIE ANGLAISE
Taux officiel — 9FrSt0
Achat — 9FrSt38
Vente — 9FrSt10

PIASTRE INDOCHINOISE
Taux commercial — 10FrS
Achat 100 piastres — 10FrS
Vente — Do — 10FrS

BELLE POITRINE
en deux mois par les PILULES ORIENTALES
les seules qui développent, raffermissent, prennent le tonus, allongent les caisses, épaisses, et donnent au buste un grain de sable.
Bienfaits et bienfaits pour la santé.
Approuvés en 1869 par la Société Médicale de
A Pondichéry, 20, Rue de la Bourgogne, et toutes bonnes pharmacies.

En vente partout.

CHAMPAGNE
Mercier
Longeur des caves : 21 Kilomètres.
Constructions : 16 Millions de Bouteilles.
Vente : 15 millions cinq cent mille bouteilles.
The Challenge to Post Colonial Theory

- Study of press problematises post colonial theory, but supports post-Gramsci’ist concept of counter hegemony – e.g.
  2. for minority communications (Downing 1984, 2001; Murdock, 2000; Cottle, 2000; Chapman, 2007)
Table 1. *Pioneer* - summary of totals of letters and pictures
January 1928 – October 1929

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LETTERS</th>
<th>PICS</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European</td>
<td>Indian</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-14 January</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>1928</td>
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<td>1-14 October</td>
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<td>1928</td>
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<td>1-14 April</td>
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<td>1929</td>
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<td>2-15 October</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>1929</td>
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Table 2. *Pioneer’s* coverage of women’s protest 1928-1930

![Graph showing the number of articles on democratic conference and direct action from January 1928 to January 1930.](image-url)
Women’s gradual empowerment

• 1929 General election in Britain - 3 times as many women as men voted

• *The Pioneer* increased coverage of women:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Framed</th>
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<td>1928</td>
<td>67</td>
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<td>Jan 1930</td>
<td>83</td>
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Wilson and *The Pioneer*

- *Wilson boosted ads by 8%*

- *as strikes escalated, he promoted need for ads*

- *Nov 1928 Wilson reduced sale price to 1 Anna to widen readership and launched advertising drive, generating 14% increase*

- *Boycotted cotton and alcohol businesses started to increase their advertising*
Findings

• Traditional western ‘bad news’ values ensured coverage of female direct action - riots, boycotts, cloth burning and strikes

• This helped to promote the freedom movement.

• This also demonstrated Congress Party’s organisational capabilities as a ruling party when men were in jail.

• The Pioneer itself became part of the economic and ideological maelstrom that it was reporting on.
Findings in both territories

• Communications by nationalist women represented a politicising move from private to public spheres

• Public communications helped to:
  - weaken the economic morale of business and administrative authority
  - increase solidarity for freedom movements
Subbiah: ‘Only Frenchmen and the privileged few had 50 per cent of our state and they dominated power in all these so-called democratic institutions. Therefore we demanded suffrage to all people over 21, including women’
SOUANDIRAM

Lettre du Maitre

Bourses et Subsidies

L’Administration a réussi dans ses efforts pour détruire la rébellion, mais l’effort a été trop tard. Les rebelles ont continué à combattre malgré les efforts de l’Administration.

Censure

Kanou Ilye de la guerre

Haiti a été victime d’une catastrophe naturelle, le séisme. Cependant, les efforts de l’Administration ont permis de limiter les dommages.

Censure

DESSOBAGARI.

Haiti est un pays pauvre, mais la population est courageuse. Les efforts de l’Administration ont permis de diminuer la pauvreté.

Censure

Allocations militaires

Les allocations militaires ont permis aux soldats de se nourrir et de se soigner. Cependant, il est nécessaire de garantir l’intégrité de ces allocations pour éviter les abus.

Censure

FORET - ECLAIR

Les forêts sont un patrimoine précieux. Il est nécessaire de les protéger pour assurer leur pérennité.

Censure

Les allocataires des allocations militaires ont besoin de services publics dignes de confiance. Il est nécessaire de garantir l’intégrité de ces services pour éviter les abus.

Censure
La vie économique et sociale

Tribune du parti

Contre le brigandage colonial

La voix du prolétariat international

J'assure peut-être d'avoir bien joué de maintenir l'imposabilité où les trouvent les gouvernements des États des colonies entier de porter leurs forces pour obtenir un autre gouvernement, qu'il renonce à sa propre entreprise de brigandage colonial.

Que voulez-vous que dire, M. Lar-Val au Drapeau? Que celui-ci ne gagne pas l'honneur du colonialisme français. Il est que parler de nous avons amené à leur domination, soit sous la forme brutale de conquête d'une colonie, soit sous la forme hypocrite d'établissement d'un protectorat, nous avons fait par la violence.

Nous avons fait par la violence; par notre armée, notre halle, notre domination, nous avons du métier. Le coup est tombé sous le coup Décret du 10 Avril 1935 STOP Vous prie en vertu de l'article 10 du Code d'Instruction Criminelle faire saisir à leur arrivée territoire totalité exemplaire numéro signalé STOP Attendez pour engager toutes poursuites instructions complémentaires du département.

ROLLI

Présenté par
Pr. le Conseiller d'État
Directeur des Affaires Politiques
p.c. le Sous-Directeur

VU et approuvé
LE MINISTRE.
Subbiah: ‘I was back again in Pondicherry. Such was the distinctive change that I beheld among the people who were standing in an organised manner like a huge disciplined army. As I advanced, I came across thousands of women workers standing in two parallel rows in an orderly manner. The more I advanced towards the town, I caught sight of milling crowds as if the whole of Pondicherry territory was mobilised. What did it show? …the unprecedented resurgence of the people...for national emancipation from the colonial yoke.’

Crowds support the V S Subbiah-led campaign for the introduction of civil and trade union rights.
SIGNIFICANCE:

• illuminates the relationship between press, economics and ideology in a colonial context

• importance of economic factors in rise of nationalist movements

• way press used is connected to basic civil, political and economic rights
Analysed in full in

• Jane Chapman (2011) ‘Counter-hegemony, newspapers and the origins of anti-colonialism in French India’, International Journal of Social Economics (Emerald), 38 (1/2) (Jan.)
• Jane Chapman and Kate Lacey (2012) Gender, Citizenship and the Media: Historical and Transnational Perspectives Palgrave Macmillan
Future Dissemination of Research

Subject to peer review:


• For more information visit: [www.readingcivilrightsandfreedom.com](http://www.readingcivilrightsandfreedom.com)