



INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES KOLKATA

(A Centre of Excellence in Social Sciences funded by the Government of West Bengal)

SALT LAKE CAMPUS • DD 27/D, SECTOR 1, SALT LAKE, KOLKATA 700 064

Seminar Notice

Dr. Anindya Raychaudhuri

Lecturer in English, University of St Andrews, Scotland, UK

will present a paper on

Marxist Memories: British Communists, Colonial India and Reading Imperial History through Autobiography

Abstract:-

While the role of British Communists in pre-Independence India has been looked at by historians (Stephen Howe's book *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire 1918-1964* is but one good example), scholars have to date not looked at this history through the lens of the small but significant collection of memoirs left behind by these Communist activists. There were a number of influential Communists working in India from the 1920s through to independence. Philip Spratt, Lester Hutchinson and Bill Bradley were sent as Comintern agents in the 1920s, all of whom were arrested and tried in the Meerut Conspiracy Case. Later figures working in various capacities in India through the Second World War include Michael Carritt, John Saville and Dick Toms. Of these, everyone except Bill Bradley left formal published memoirs – a body of work which cumulatively represents an interesting but critically ignored resource for the understanding of British-Indian relations in the first half of the twentieth century. Additionally, Bradley has left autobiographical notes as part of his papers held within the Communist Party of Great Britain archive, while Toms was also interviewed as part of the British Library's National Life Story Collection oral history project. What do these memoirs have to say about the relationship between British Empire and British Communism? How do these mostly forgotten figures help to construct India through their memoirs, and how is this construction affected by their political views? How does the contradiction between individual memoirs and collective left-wing political activism play out in the ways in which these men remember their time in India? Through a study of these memoirs, I will argue that these men represent India using a careful dialectic of sameness and difference – alternately challenging and reinforcing the hierarchical relationship between the two countries. In the process, I hope to show how these men and their memoirs help us to think more critically about the relationship between autobiography and history.

Date: July 4, 2018 (Wednesday)

Time: 3:15 PM

**Venue: IDSK Seminar Room, 5th Floor
(IDSK Building, Salt Lake)**

All are Welcome

Subhanil Chowdhury
(Subhanil Chowdhury)

Convenor, Seminar Committee, IDSK

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