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As the largest and longest running covert operation of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), which lasted from 1950 until 1967, has attracted increasing attention from scholars because of the organization's driving role in the 'cultural Cold War.' The CCF established organizations throughout the non-Communist world in order to promote an international anti-Communist consciousness among intellectual liberals and non-communist Leftists. The CCF sponsored concerts, art exhibits, scholarly lectures, and, above all, cultural journals to stimulate anti-Communist activism among the world's non-Communist intellectuals and artists. Unfortunately for the CCF, scandal wrecked the organization's pretensions to independence and thoroughly destroyed its reputation. During 1966 and 1967, *Ramparts* (a New Left magazine, publishing between 1962 and 1975) and the *New York Times* publicly exposed the open secret that the CIA had been covertly funding the CCF since its establishment in 1950. Having presented itself as a bastion of independent expression that defended broad-minded thinkers from conformist assaults by Moscow and Beijing, the CCF found itself exposed as a state-sponsored shill. Unable to withstand the blow to its reputation in the wake of the scandal, the CCF ceased to function as an effective organization.

Scholars of the CCF initially argued over how to assess the CIA–CCF collaboration (i.e., did this collaboration deserve condemnation, celebration or something else?).[1] Gradually, they investigated the reasons why the CIA and the CCF chose to collaborate with one another.[2] Following these lines, scholars examined the extent to which the CIA determined or

[1] The most significant early works include Christopher Lasch, 'The Cultural Cold War: A Short History of the Congress for Cultural Freedom', in Barton J. Bernstein (ed.), *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History* (New York: Vintage Books: 1967), pp. 322–59; Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The New Press, 2000) [This book was originally published in the United Kingdom as *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta Books, 1999)]; and Peter Coleman, *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe* (New York: The Free Press, 1989).

[2] Meaningful works assessing the subtleties of collaboration include Giles Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA and Post-War American Hegemony* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002); Hugh Wilford, *The CIA, The British Left and the Cold War: Calling the Tune?* (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2003); Volker R. Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe: Shepard Stone between Philanthropy, Academy, and Diplomacy* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001); Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2008).

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manipulated the activities of the CCF's intellectuals. So far, much of the historiography on the CCF has concentrated on connections between Europe and the United States.[3]

Thomas William Shillam attempts to refocus the discussion, which has concentrated principally on Europe, by examining the CCF in terms of "intersections between the cultural Cold War and decolonization among non-state actors in the region [South Asia]" (1). Competently addressing the historiography, the article deliberately avoids engagement with the questions that have motivated controversy over the CCF. Given historians' growing familiarity with the CCF, this is not necessarily a fault. Shillam argues that his goal in treating the CCF is "to refresh Cold War studies where it intersects with decolonisation studies," and that "historians of CCF activities in the Global South need to develop a greater sensitivity to regional political and cultural contexts" (17). In essence, Shillam examines the CCF from the perspective of the global South looking North, rather than the West looking East.

Indeed, Shillam concentrates, not upon the anti-Communism of the South Asian members of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF), India's branch of the CCF, but upon the disagreement that ICCF's South Asian members had with the CCF's European and American members over issues such as decolonization, liberalism, capitalism, and the nature of social democracy. As such, the author firmly rejects the notion that membership in the ICCF "indicate[d] fealty to ideals set out at the Western centre" (4). On the contrary, Shillam contends that "there were actually significant discordances in political ideal and belief, not just different domestic challenges demanding different emphases…" (4). Moreover, Shillam hopes to provoke "a 'decolonising' turn within Cold War studies towards emphasising cultural, intellectual, and political genealogies which preceded Cold War ideological antagonism in the Global South and modulated its outcomes in different arenas" (4-5).

Shillam concentrates primarily upon the "Nasik Jail Group," members of the Congress Socialist Party imprisoned in the 1930s during the independence struggle, which included such figures as Minoo Masani (founder of the anti-Communist Democratic Research Service), Jayaprakash Narayan (the prominent activist, political leader, and critic of the Congress Party), Asoka Mehta (a Bombay Mayor and frequent anti-Congress member of the Lok Sabha). Shillam convincingly demonstrates that these and other Indian progressives developed their non-statist, egalitarian, and anti-colonial politics in the 1930s, well before the advent of the Cold War. Although the author might have mentioned that each of these figures was at one time or another in government, he does provide meaningful consideration of numerous other non-state actors. He ably describes their work on the ICCF's mainstay periodicals, *Freedom First* and *Quest*, and the activities of delegates to the CCF's Rangoon Conference in 1955 as attempts to redirect the conversation away from binary Cold War oppositions onto a broader discussion of how to create an authentic and participatory democracy in the post-colonial world.

In establishing the ICCF's attempts to transcend the narrow West-East thinking of the Cold War, the author certainly succeeds in his aims. One of the strengths of his article is that he provides numerous examples in which contributors simply ignored the priorities set by the CCF's Paris Secretariat. As such, Shillam's assertions appear to be at odds with Frances Stonor Saunders's argument that the CCF's international intellectuals viewed culture as a "Trojan horse," which "secretly carried [a] political agenda."[4] Shillam maintains contrarily, but not explicitly contradicting Saunders, that "the central CCF's brief–of propounding a liberal universalist cultural criticism in [South Asia]–was only sparingly served by local 'anti-communist entrepreneurs' who also brought their own agendas to bear on CCF discussion as well as the main cultural issues driving the Cold War" (3). This is eminently correct.

Above all, Shillam correctly observes that the ICCF, at least in the pages of *Freedom First* and *Quest*, cannot be reduced to being merely a group of South Asian "Cold War liberals" (5). Narayan, he argues, "was criticising the centralisation of

[3] For a recent exception to this generalization, see Patrick Iber, *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

[4] Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War,* 415.

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power per se, rather than trying to present the Cold War as a Manichaean struggle between good and evil in which capitalist state forms were preferable" (11). Similarly, he contends that Masani scorned "the concept that 'cultural freedom'–when taken as a synonym for democratic capitalism–might comprise 'a specific solution for the complex problems of humanity'" (14). The non-state actors, who formed the ICCF, proved to be an "innovative" and "independent" lot. They routinely rejected Western notions of social organization, whether liberal or Marxist, in favor of local experimentation. They also criticized fellow South Asians who employed Western methods before trying local ones, as did literary critic Sadhan Kumar Ghosh, whom Shillam describes as criticizing "the tendency of the new Nehruvian 'ruling class' to import ideas about social reorganisation from elsewhere as 'a situation reminiscent of the looking-glass world' in the second edition of *Quest*" (14). Shillam is particularly persuasive with this argument, particularly given that many in the ICCF resented the dominance of the Congress Party and the relative popularity of Marxists in post-independence India.

My criticisms of Shillam's article relate mainly to disagreement over interpreting source material and, thus, are offered more in a spirit of discussion than as an attempt to undermine the author's thesis. After all, the issues I raise are matters upon which reasonable people may disagree.

Shillam dismisses the idea that Masani and Narayan (and, by implication, others in the ICCF) "repurposed central CCF ideals for national ends," holding that such a view "simplifies a wide range of ideas" (4). Simple or not, I argue that repurposing the CCF for domestic Indian ends is exactly what they did. Several of the figures discussed by Shillam regarded the ICCF as an organization that could foster domestic political opposition to the government of Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.[5] Shillam rightly observes that numerous factors influenced the thinking of these figures, but dismissing the domestic political motives as "instrumentalist" appears as a form of simplification in itself (4).

This reviewer remains unconvinced by the article's arguments about the attitudes of the CCF and the ICCF to the Bhoodan Movement (a land redistribution movement based on voluntary gifts). Shillam leaves the impression that, while Westerners looked down on Bhoodan, South Asians regarded the movement as a "deeply participatory solution to social inequity…" (12). Such a characterization does not fully credit the complexity of opinion found among either Western or Indian critics. For example, Shillam describes an article by Hallam Tennyson in the British CCF journal, *Encounter*, as "casting India as a land of superstition" (11). However, my reading of that article is that Tennyson wrote flatteringly but unsentimentally about Vinoba Bhave, leader of the Bhoodan Movement. Shillam would have been perhaps more persuasive if he had cited the example of Herbert Passin, who wrote a negative and arguably orientalizing article in *Encounter*. More critical of Bhoodan than either of these Westerners was M.G. Bailur, whose *Quest* article, lambasted the Bhoodan movement. Shillam downplays the negative criticism of Bailur, who argued that the "efficacy of [the Bhoodan Movement] is rendered doubtful for two reasons: first, it is capricious….Secondly, it is impossible to determine how much of the success gained, is due to genuine moral conversion…and how much to herd pressure or the fear of popular obloquy."[6] Unfortunately, Shillam minimizes Bailur's negative comments and instead lumps them into what he argues is a generally positive Indian view of Bhoodan. My view is that such a conflation distorts the multifaceted thought of the ICCF.

Despite these criticisms, Shillam has written a superb and genuinely engaging article. Indeed, they do not invalidate the author's efforts to broaden our understanding of what motivated these non-state actors. Rather, if my criticisms have merit, they should be included into an overall approach that makes the actors discussed by Shillam even more complex. Future work on the topic should go further in demonstrating that the thinking of the ICCF was more diverse and more complex

[5] Eric Pullin, "Money Does Not Make Any Difference to the Opinions That We Hold: India, the CIA, and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1951–58," *Intelligence and National Security* 26:2-3 (2011): 379.

[6] Hallam Tennyson, "Land through Love: A Dynasty of Saints," *Encounter*, (December 1954), 3-8; Herbert Passin, "Communication: Journey among Saints," *Encounter* (February 1955), 74-77; M.G. Bailur, "Bhoodan and Sarvodaya," *Quest* 1:1 (August 1955): 5-10.

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than previous commentators, including me, have already shown.[7] Shillam ably demonstrates how the non-state actors of the ICCF broadened discussions of what freedom meant in the Cold War by thoughtfully considering decolonization and participatory democracy outside of a Western discourse. Shillam's article is a welcome contribution to discussions of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, international relations, the intersection between the Cold War and de-colonization, and understanding India's domestic culture and politics after independence.

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[7] Pullin, "Money Does Not Make Any Difference to the Opinions That We Hold: India, the CIA, and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, 1951–58," *Intelligence and National Security* 26:2-3 (2011): 377-398.

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