Travellers in archives, or the possibilities of a post-post-archival historiography

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For some time now, archives have been viewed as a conspiracy of state-power with which the historian must not collude. It is possible now to discern a slow process of recovery from this post- or anti-archival condition. As historians learn to operate with a more active conception of an archive, 'the' archive is revealed to be a rhetorical move rather than a place where documents are deposited, and 'archives' become the body of material we draw upon, or can plausibly draw upon, to answer our research questions. This essay offers a reading of two peculiar archives whose own histories need to be written into the historiography that draws upon them. Discernible in the move from a passive to a power-knowledge view of archives is the acknowledgement of the possibility that archives have an intellectual history. But you cannot control the meanings of the archives you create: your own emplotment is undermined by what you have invented as an archive, in your own ordering and of course in others' reordering. The singular control over history and memory attributed to 'the' archive has never existed. We invent an archive every time we have a question to answer; and then someone reinvents the archive in the service of a new question.

Viajantes em arquivos, ou as possibilidades de uma historiografia pós-pós-arquivística

De há algum tempo para cá, os arquivos têm sido vistos como conspirações do poder estatal com as quais o historiador não deve pactuar. É agora possível discernir um lento processo de recuperação desta condição pós- ou anti-colonial. À medida que os historiadores aprendem a operar com uma concepção mais activa de arquivo, 'o' arquivo revela-se enquanto movimento retórico mais do que um lugar onde documentos são depositados., e 'arquivos' tornam-se no corpo de material onde vamos buscar, ou onde podemos plausivelmente ir buscar, respostas para as perguntas da nossa pesquisa. Este texto oferece uma leitura de dois arquivos peculiares cujas histórias precisam de ser inscritas na historiografia que deles bebe. Discernível no movimento de uma perspectiva passiva do arquivo para outra centrada em poder-conhecimento é o reconhecimento de que também os arquivos possuem uma História intelectual. No entanto, não se pode controlar os significados dos arquivos que criamos: os nossos próprios enredos são enfraquecidos por aquilo que inventamos enquanto arquivo, no nosso ordenamento e, claro, no re-ordenamento de outros. O controlo singular sobre a história e sobre a memória atribuido a 'o' arquivo nunca existiu. Nós inventamos um arquivo a cada vez que temos uma pergunta a que responder; e, nesse momento, outra pessoa re-inventa o arquivo ao serviço de uma nova questão.

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Benjamin Zachariah*

Over the years, the idea of an archive has undergone a number of changes, and we seem to be coming out of a tunnel towards the light of a sudden blinding insight, or at least we ought to be: we need not think of an archive merely as a grand building storing a static state-created collection of self-serving and self-legitimating documents that reiterates and reifies elite and statist perspectives. Perhaps this should be obvious; but the peaceful co-existence of different kinds of history, with widely divergent views of what a source is, archival or otherwise, and the relationship of that source to what we write, is indication enough that a few clarifications might be in order. My perspective in this short essay is that of a historian who started off, in area studies terms, as a 'South Asianist', a label imposed rather than earned or claimed, and is now apparently a practitioner of 'global history' or 'transnational history', new labels that I have likewise not been born to or achieved, but have instead had thrust upon me. The advantage of the disciplinary, area studies and specialisation perspectives pulling in different directions, however, have made it possible to map certain trends and disadvantages better.

At least a generation of historians trained in 'postcolonial' forms of history-writing had more or less abandoned archives to the more 'traditional' historians, with archives being viewed more or less as a conspiracy of (especially colonial) state-power with which the historian

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must not collude. 'The colonial archive' was the repository of prejudice against the 'native', who was only visible when he (usually he) was a problem: as insurgent, criminal or savage; and a malaise was diagnosed among historians (especially of South Asia) where they were deemed to be reproducing the assumptions of the archive and/or the authors of its documents. A suggestion that the historian 'read against the grain' of the archive required, of course, an attention to that grain, and therefore some acquaintance with that archive,[1] but very soon The Archive, along with 'Eurocentric models' were seen as causes of the oppressive nature of History itself,[2] and by then there was nothing outside the text, [3] and certainly nothing much of value deemed to be in the archive.

If this seems like a caricatured view of the developments in historiography told here in a condensed narrative, I would argue that it is this condensed and caricatured view that was absorbed as received wisdom by much of the historical profession working in postcolonial mode, serving to remind us of the literary origins of postcolonial studies which in turn also gives us license for such a condensed narrative as we now seek to provide for what we now affectionately call PoCo (this sentence should be three or four sentences, but it would then lose its gravitas).[4]

Given that, at least in fields such as South Asian history, the narrow interpretations of transparency that has led to the flouting of the limited rules of archiving that the state has deemed fit to provide (in India, for instance there is in theory a 50-year rule for the depositing of official records in the National Archives of India), there is no such thing as a 'postcolonial archive' to speak of, there has therefore been less material to 'read against the grain' for the period after formal independence. And the discussions on the nature of historical narrativisation

1 The classic statement of this position can be found in Ranajit Guha, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency", in *Subaltern Studies II*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 45-88.

2 Dipesh Chakravarty, *Provincializing Europe*: *Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

3 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

4 See Benjamin Zachariah, "Postcolonial Theory and History," in *Sage Handbook of Historical Theory*, ed. Nancy Partner and Sarah Foot (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2013), 378-96.

suggesting that historians simply made up their stories like every other writer, backing them up with 'truth-claims' made from the 'archive', then directed attention to our strategies of representation rather than at our archives.[5] 'Archive fever' was described;[6] 'dust' celebrated;[7] still there was a touch of derision attached to those who actually believed that trying to find archival evidence for a claim was a worthwhile activity. 'The archive' became a monolith and a straw man, even as some historians refused to abandon and still others returned to them in self-effacing embarrassment.

It is possible now to discern a slow process of recovery from this post- or anti-archival condition. Perhaps this is an over-optimistic reading (and this is the place to confess that I think archives are a Good Thing); but I think that as historians learn to operate with a more active conception of an archive, 'the' archive is revealed to be a rhetorical move rather than a place where documents are deposited, and 'archives' become the body of material we draw upon, or can plausibly draw upon, to answer our research questions – which makes the unusualness of an archive proportionate to the unusualness of our research questions. This modest proposal can serve therefore as a hope and a conclusion. What, then, can you get out of a specific set of sources from particular archives? Before you read your sources, we might paraphrase EH Carr as potentially having said, read your archive[8] – or rather, we might add, describe it, and in describing it, invent it. I shall explore this question by providing an assessment of the readings I have made as a historian of the archives I have used over the years to answer specific research questions; but here I shall talk about the archives concerned rather than the research projects that led me to them. Two archives stand out as

5 Paul Ricoeur, "Narrative Time," *Critical Inquiry* 7.1 (Autumn 1980): 169-90; Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (3 vols, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984-1987); Hayden White, "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory," *History and Theory* 23.1 (February 1984): 1-33; Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

6 Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression", *Diacritics* 25.2 (Summer 1995): 9-63.

7 Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: the archive and cultural history* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

8 EH Carr, *What is History?* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990 [1961]).

peculiar archives whose own histories needs to be written into the historiography that draws upon them, or specifically two collections, put together by individuals: PC Joshi's collection at the core of the Archives for Contemporary History, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi; and the Horst Krüger Nachlass from the remains of the East German Academy of Sciences, at the Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin.

What follows is a brief set of notes in part based on observations in the archives, by which I mean an ethnographic account of academic and non-academic practices involved in the imagining and creating of an archive in addition to archival research, with the added caveat that the methodology of an anthropologist is mostly 'someone told me' added to 'I was there' – one day the archival evidence for some of this might be available, but then we ourselves will be citing our own writing from this period as *Zeitzeuge* and memoirists.

Archives: accessible and private

Given that 'archive' refers both to the space where records are stored and to the records themselves, a certain ambiguity can arise as to which is meant when 'the archive' appears as an entity in a set of writing; and indeed the metaphoric, metonymic or polemical value of the term 'the archive' relies on the awkward palimpsest of a large official-looking building that embodies the authority, power and (discursive) violence of the state and the documents it contains being inscribed upon and sharing the power of the building itself. The document or the building, or the document and building together, is a metonymy of the state and a metaphor of violence at the same time. While we can, and should, separate the uses and definitions that archivists habitually make about archives from this metonymic-discursive complex that 'the archive' has become in the usage of historians who don't use them, we should recognise that the power attributed to 'the archive' relies on the failure to make these distinctions – on which subject, more will be said below.

Making such abstract distinctions, however, are seen by many researchers who never abandoned their archives as self-indulgent luxu-

ries. In a world that South Asianists in particular (though not exclusively South Asianists) will be familiar with, where so many archives are treated by archivists as their private domain where the researcher is an intruder into their uninterrupted contemplative hours, and where anything sensitive or liable to generate uncomfortable narratives for states or other vested interests disappear into archives' most inaccessible corners, it becomes important to identify ways to make an archive speak to you, and through you, to your (often imagined) readership. By now historians are acutely aware that all archives are actually engaged in hiding things: sometimes very cleverly, in plain sight, sometimes by making certain things overly accessible to divert your attention from what they do not wish you to see. Many historians, like magpies, can be persuaded to gravitate towards the shiny objects put before them.

All states have had a long history of the 'secret state', whose existence and records were for the longest time not fully acknowledged to exist, but also whose records in their own times were hidden from the non-secret state's operatives, and not just from a larger public. The necessary illusions of democratic transparency by which many of us choose to live give us a sense of archiving practices that are illusory (one needs only to wait for the requisite number of years to elapse, and the state will 'come clean' by placing its documents recording its dastardly deeds as well as its benevolent ones on the table before us). Recent times have provided plenty of such examples, where colonial atrocities' records have mysteriously been relocated to spaces whence they do not emerge at the appointed time of thirty years.[9] But democratic states, and still more so democratic archival practices, should not be assumed by historians to exist; and the 'secret state' is an integral feature of stateness, which makes the 'democratic' part more of a vocabulary of legitimation than a substantive set of transparent or enforceable rights and duties. Translated into historiographical and methodological terms, what this means is the old axiom that what gets to be archived is far from 'complete', whatever one's view of completeness might be,

9 See, for instance www.africareview.com/analysis/mau-mau-file/979190-1146520-cgfx4wz/index.html, last accessed January 27, 2017.

is still relevant; and there are dangers of assuming that the 'logic' of archival practices, proclaimed or implicit, are consistently observed, observable, or readable.

To provide a quick example: the Indian Political Intelligence (IPI) files were not known to exist until their release in 1995; IPI was considered a predecessor of MI5 and MI6,[10] and its information on Indian political activities at home and in the wider world, based on testimony gathered by blackmail, the use of secret informants, interceptions of mail, and occasionally by torture, was seldom admissible in a court of law. Magistrates were known to refuse to convict on the basis of secret evidence, and a plea was often made by the government prosecutor that to make the evidence public would be to compromise the source; whereupon the magistrate could simply dismiss the case. Meanwhile, colonial policemen had occasionally to make the trip to London to consult the IPI records, from which they made notes – and even though the IPI records were in part drawn from the police records themselves, it was the collation of police records with various kinds of information the police did not have that made the IPI files worth consulting.[11] The conspiracy of the state archives thus cannot be a conspiracy, and if you are reading 'against the grain' or 'with the grain' part of the excitement of the archive is to learn how to read an archive's grain.

These files have now become central to those who are interested in South Asians abroad in the first half of the twentieth century – and can be delved in by non-South Asianists, in particular those without knowledge of a South Asian language, who want some 'transnational' window-dressing. But there were archival resources for this set of themes before. When Mushirul Hasan was the Director of the National Archives of India, he found a cache of files on the travails and movements of Indians abroad in the early part of the twentieth century in his office – and he asked S Irfan Habib whether he was interested in

10 See for instance Richard Thurlow, *The Secret State: British Internal Security in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

11 'Notes made by Mr Kidd in "London regarding Bolshevism and Indian agitation abroad", West Bengal State Archives (WBSA), Calcutta, IB Sl No 124/1921, File No 83/21.

working on them. (The latter suggested that since this was not his current work, the files simply be replaced on the shelves.)[12] But this cache explains why ever since Tilak Raj Sareen, still active and travelling among his old contacts from the GDR days, had been Director of the NAI and had written several slight books on Indians abroad,[13] these files had vanished from the collection at the NAI, and why so many of us had the experience of ordering files that he and others had once cited and the requisition slip came back with 'NT' on them – the joke was that 'NT' stood for 'not transferred' (the official explanation), or 'no time'. Coincidentally, a small group of people working on aspects of this phenomenon of political exile had been active in the few years prior to this discovery, and we have collected our slips; should Mushirul Hasan's cache have been listed or catalogued in some way, we'd like to do a comparison of our 'NT' slips with those 'discovered' by Mushirul Hasan. But the route to some, if not all those files, was not altogether closed: they would often surface either at PC Joshi's collection at JNU, or at the Horst Krüger collection at the ZMO, Berlin.

Joshi, Krüger and the Communist History Plot that Failed

Puran Chand Joshi (1907-1980) was General Secretary of the Communist Party of India from 1935, when the CPI was still illegal, to 1947. He was therefore General Secretary for the difficult years of the Second World War, and before that during the Popular Front years – the Indian interpretation of the Dimitrov Line is usually attributed to him. It would seem that Joshi was eased onto the back-burners of the by-then slow-burning communist movement after Indian independence and the partition of India – expelled in 1949, and reinstated two years later, Joshi began to take refuge in history. He set himself the task of collecting and collating documents relating to the foundational years of the communist movement and the part played by the Communist Party of

12 Conversation with S. Irfan Habib, Berlin, summer 2010, reconfirmed in subsequent conversation January 2017.

13 The least unsound of these is Tilak Raj Sareen, *Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad (1905–1920)* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1979).

India and its fellow travellers and exiles across the world. In doing so, he gathered extensive material from archives mainly in India and Germany on the great movements of the first half of the twentieth century: socialism, of course, with all its contradictory strands; fascism, in its occasional meanderings in and out of socialist thematics and rhetoric; and many entangled strands in between, caught in the cross-currents of the century's opening decades. This is a collection that is self-consciously pioneering of a more international history of Indian movements abroad[14] – Joshi collected a large amount of information on Indian activities in Germany, the USA, Japan, and elsewhere – activities of both left-and right-wing political engagements, plus an engaging social history of varieties of anti-imperial networks. The histories that he might have written from these strands were never written, although from December 1970 the documents found a home at the newly-founded (in 1969) Jawaharlal Nehru University, becoming the core of its Archives for Contemporary History. Joshi himself lived in semi-retirement from political life in JNU for the last ten years of his life.[15] Had he written his histories of the early years of the CPI under his own name from the documents he gathered, he almost certainly would not have been able to keep his party membership.

Horst Krüger (1920-1989) can be said to have been the senior historian of South Asia in the German Democratic Republic; trained in history and *Germanistik*, among his first published work was a monograph on Prussian manufacturing in the eighteenth century.[16] After a period from 1957 to 1959 as 'Kulturberater an der Handelsvertretung der DDR in Indien' (Cultural Advisor to the GDR Trade Representation in India'), he

14 See Ali Raza, Franziska Roy and Benjamin Zachariah, ed., *The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds and World Views, 1917-1939* (New Delhi: Sage, 2015), for a sense of these engagements.

15 "Archives for Contemporary History (ACH)," Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), last accessed August 29, 2016, http://www.jnu.ac.in/SSS/Archive/about-joshi.html; Bipan Chandra, "P.C. Joshi: A Political Journey," *Mainstream* XLVI.1 (2007), last accessed August 29, 2016, http://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article503.html. Bipan Chandra's history of the CPI in this article is deeply flawed, and no endorsement of those details should be implied by my citing the article here.

16 Horst Krüger, *Zur Geschichte der Manufakturen und der Manufakturarbeiter in Preußen* (Potsdam: Rütten & Loening, 1958).

was assigned, from 1960, to be a historian of contemporary India, at the AdW (Akademie der Wissenschaften) and at the Institut für Orientforschung (Institute for Oriental Research).[17] (His West German colleague and younger contemporary Dietmar Rothermund (1933-) completed a PhD on the American colonial period in 1959, and only later, in 1968, a *Habilitation* on India: careers in South Asian history in both Germanies were made by Cold War imperatives).[18] When Krüger died in March 1989, his collection of books and papers became a part of the collection of AdW, and thereafter of the Zentrum Moderner Orient, an institution created from the debris of the East German Academy of Sciences. At a time when the GDR's academic landscape was being remodelled in Cold War revenge format, bits were cut out of the East German Academy of Sciences that were deemed usable in the new dispensation. The ZMO was the site where those deemed useful for the project of 'modern Oriental Studies', whatever that might have meant in a post-Saidian-critique world (Said's book appeared in 1978; the 'Forschungsschwerpunkt Moderner Orient' was founded in 1992, becoming the 'Zentrum Moderner Orient' in 1996.[19] Krüger's career as a historian of India was not a *Beruf*, a 'vocation', in the sense that it was connected with historical privilege among the *Bildungbürgertum*; in addition to his days as cultural attaché to a trading delegation, he had earlier been a motorcycle courier for the Nazis during the Second World War (as his interlocutor in India Majid Siddiqui, who shared his joy of motorcycles, remembers).[20]

If Joshi did not to a large extent write what he set out to write, neither, for that matter, did Horst Krüger, though in comparison he was by far the more productive of the two on the subject of contemporary India and the world. The ideological imperatives of writing in East Germany were often no more than an obligatory set of formulae

17 https://www.zmo.de/biblio/sammlung_krueger.html, last accessed August 29, 2016.

18 Dietmar Rothermund, *The Layman's Progress: Religious and Political Experience in Colonial Pennsylvania, 1740-1770* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961); Dietmar Rothermund, *Die Politische Willensbildung im Indien 1900-1960* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965).

19 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

20 Conversation with Majid Siddiqui, New Delhi, December 2009.

in the introductory remarks, but writing on India had often to be more clearly delineating of the onward march of India towards a progressive and potentially socialist political order that justified the GDR's special relationship with a non-socialist state – the politics of Cold War friendships were often pre-emptive government-to-government contacts to prevent the other side from cashing in on the need for alliances. As historian of India, Krüger's contribution to the telos of socialist emancipation was a planned four-volume history of modern India, *Die internationale Arbeiterbewegung und die indische nationale Befreiungsbewegung*, of which two volumes saw the light of day: *Indische Nationalisten und Weltproletariat* (1984), and *Anfänge sozialistischen Denkens in Indien* (1985).[21] Krüger was, however, as a practicing historian and quasi-diplomat, a prolific presenter of papers, some of which were published, and some of which appear in PC Joshi's archive, in some cases at second remove, having been presented first at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library; and there is a good deal of material that he published in various fora that bears the heavy burden of his official hat. For his 'beginnings of socialist thought in India', there were many questionable figures he claimed for the socialist cause – he even argued that the Bengali writer and anti-Muslim ideologue Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894) had been a socialist in his early thinking, before moving to less progressive themes.[22] For this latter claim he had the support of no less a person than the philosopher and Marxist Debiprosad Chattopadhyay, with whom he shared a correspondence; it seems that Debi*da* allowed Krüger to make this claim by providing him with the requisite hints as to a selective reading of sources.[23]

The two collections are to a large extent a set of archivings from other archives, with an added insight available in the collections them-

21 Horst Krüger, *Indische Nationalisten und Weltproletariat: der nationale Befreiungskampf in Indien und die internationale Arbeiterbewegung vor 1914* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1984); Horst Krüger, *Anfänge sozialistischen Denkens in Indien: der Beginn der Rezeption sozialistischer Ideen in Indien vor 1914* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985).

22 Krüger, *Anfänge.*

23 Debiprosad Chattopadhyay, letter to Horst Krüger, including typed extracts of the book by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, "Samya", dated Calcutta, June 24, 1974, in Krüger Nachlass Box 48 No. 352.1.

selves into the politics of access to such other archives, the politics of (non-)writing of the expected research papers or monographs that could have been written from the new collections, and a hint of the nature and demands of self-censorship. There are also some interesting overlaps and intersections between the two archives, which indicate the continued cooperation of communists beyond the government-to--government layer that settled into the convenient Cold War lies of the Congress Party in India as a progressive government and therefore a partner-state of the GDR. Some of Joshi's material comes from the Potsdam archives of the GDR, especially on the activities of Indians in Germany; his research assistant Helga Meier was provided by the East German Academy of Sciences.[24] Meanwhile, Krüger, with semi-diplomatic status in India, had access to materials that ordinary mortals like us still do not: the Bombay Police records, which were sent to him as photocopies by order of the Maharashtra Government, for instance.[25] A complicated politics of the interaction of movements can be seen here: Krüger represented a state that was seeking to appropriate the histories of an anti-statist internationalism from the interwar years; but Joshi represented a movement that in India was not anywhere near state power. As the interwar anti-statist internationalism became the statist internationalism of the Cold War years, the movement-that-became-the-state, Krüger's GDR, dealt with the state-that-excluded-the-movement, India-without-Joshi. Joshi's archiving-the-movement project could be assisted by Krüger's statist patronage.[26]

Both archival projects sought to cover the period of the formative years of the twentieth century's greatest movement, the communist movement. The emplotment sought, to borrow from the textualists' dictionary, to narrate the history of the attempted creation of a more

24 Conversation with Helga Maier-Singh, Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, May 2012; file references from PC Joshi's papers: see for example PC Joshi Papers on the League Against Imperialism: File 76: LAI, IML, ZPA, Berlin, 'Support the Indian revolution. Appeal to LAI', *Rote Fahne* 104, May 6, 1930. Notes by P. C. Joshi, dictated by Dr Helga Meier, Berlin, 1967.

25 See for instance Bombay Police Commissioner's Office File No. 3120/H in Krüger Nachlass, Box 85 No. 624.

26 See Raza, Roy and Zachariah, "Introduction: The Internationalism of the Moment", *The Internationalist Moment,* for the difference between statist and non-statist internationalism.

progressive world. But both archival projects ran into the difficulty that in creating their archives, they were undermining their own narrative, and opening up other narratives that they had perhaps not expected to find: Indian collaboration with and enthusiasm for Fascism and Nazism, Soviet Union-returned pan-Islamists-turned-Nazis, communists-turned-police-informers, and the like.[27]

How to Do Things with Archives

Could you and I with fate conspire to grasp the sorry scheme of things entire, we might return to the discovery that there are an infinity of possible narratives in any archive, even those that someone self-consciously invents in the concrete or abstract sense; to which the correct response would be, and yet there are less than infinite numbers of *plausible* narratives – and we are no further than before. However, before a longing like despair sends us yearning for the unity of knowledge or any other larger-than-life framework, let us linger on the notion of the frame, and use it as a visual metaphor. Presuming that we use pre-existing archives but frame our questions and reframe those archives as we frame our questions, the two being mutually dependent, we might suggest that the frame (and the lens that frames) are active parts of a visual field. Pushing any analogy too far or attempting too detailed an explication of a metaphor destroys its efficacy, of course, but nevertheless, it is these reframings that are the everyday, even subconscious, acts of historians; and the predilections of historians are the lenses. The archive is approached with these framing devices, and the more peculiar the framing (the more peculiar the photographer or painter and the lenses or points of view s/he chooses) the more peculiar the outcome. For 'peculiar' read 'unsettling', and for 'settled' read 'historiographical consensus', and I think a reader will get the picture, or at least the metaphor.

27 Benjamin Zachariah, "Indian Political Activities in Germany, 1914-1945," in *Transcultural Encounters Between Germany and India: Kindred Spirits in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed Joanne Miyang Cho, Eric Kurlander and Douglas T McGetchin (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 141-54, summarises some of these trends.

In the two instances selected here, various 'official' archives were trawled by two pioneers of research who did not do much of the writing they planned to do, but in not doing so nevertheless created (or invented) an archive. We have here a sense of how political activists or party functionaries (applied variously in ungenerous or generous manner to the two central characters behind the collections) turned historians turned accidental archivists; their archives then became the basis for archival collections that formed the core of future archives: the Archives for Contemporary History at JNU, or the ZMO, Berlin. It is of course bad practice simply to use someone else's primary sources to write histories they left unwritten: we don't quite know their framing practices or the focal lengths of their lenses in order to do this safely. But we are also able to reframe our research into these collections in terms of other questions: the relations between the GDR and India, the politics of the Cold War and its operation in the creation of historiographical frameworks, the victims of Stalinist terror and their posthumous reinstatement (albeit only in the realms of historiography), the rehabilitation of Indian collaborators with the Nazis and their elevation to diplomatic power, or the status of the Indian Communist Party in its undivided and post-split forms (the CPI split in 1964 largely as a consequence of the Sino-Indian border dispute and the war of 1962),[28] to name a few possibilities (and it is beyond the scope of this short essay to do more than name them).

"The" Archive? In Lieu of a Conclusion

Even an archive created for a particular purpose, then, is not the equivalent of a tuna-friendly net, and even a tuna-friendly net is intended not to catch tuna but its user doesn't quite know what else it might accidentally catch, and even less what else it has failed to catch. While publishing archivists have indeed spent some time understanding the anxieties of archive-users or archive-refuseniks, they have also continued to focus on seemingly banal considerations such as the usability of an archive, the expectations of archi-

28 Neville Maxwell, *India's China War* (London: Cape, 1970).

ve users, and the purposes of archives other than for historical research.[29] Discernible nevertheless, in the move from a passive to a power-knowledge view of archives, was the acknowledgement of the possibility that archives, and therefore the archival profession itself, had an intellectual history.[30] That an archive was expected to assist the process of collective memory was acknowledged: and it was possible to raise questions as to the deliberate effacement of memory by non-archiving or by strategic destruction of the built environment, itself an archive.[31] We have known, of course, since the 1920s, that collective memory is taught, rather than being anyone's actually lived memory;[32] and it was acknowledged that archives produced memory and identity, with archivists complicit in the process.[33] It made sense, therefore, that in order to cement memories or identities that were not part of a dominant narrative, other archives could be self-consciously created to serve that purpose, to be part of such a differentiated diversification of archivally-available voices.[34] But as we still had to read 'the colonial archive', we needed to pay attention not just to the content of colonial archives, but also to their form, because 'the archive was the supreme technology of the late nineteenth century colonial state'.[35] And of course, before we could read against the grain, we had to know how to read with the grain.[36] In

29 See for example Louise Craven, ed., *What Are Archives? Cultural and Theoretical Perspectives: A Reader* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), which attempts a survey.

30 Tom Nesmith, "Reopening Archives: Bringing New Contextualities into Archival Theory and Practice," *Archivaria* 60 (Fall 2005): 259-74.

31 Kenneth E Foote, "To Remember and Forget: Archives, Memory, and Culture," *American Archivist* 53 (Summer 1990): 378-92.

32 Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (new edition, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992). His theorisation dates from 1925.

33 Joan M Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 1-19: Joan M Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 171-85.

34 Catherine Hobbs, "The Character of Personal Archives: Reflections on the Value of Records of Individuals," *Archivaria* 52 (Fall 2001): 126-135: Shaunna Moore and Susan Pell, "Autonomous Archives," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16, Issues 4-5 (2010): 255-68; Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens and Elizabeth Shepherd, "Whose memories, whose archives? Independent community archives, autonomy and the mainstream," *Archival Science* 9 (June 2009): 71-86.

35 Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Art of Governance," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 87-109: 87.

36 Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Art of Governance": 100.

some ways we can consider all of this in the vein of Bernard Cohn's article on the census and the production of hard categories of social stratification:[37] and it is both obvious and necessary to place on record that archives produce the realities that they claim merely to collect descriptions of. But they cannot do that without the historians, and the historiography, that draw upon them. And if we work, as all of this implies, with an active as opposed to a passive conception of archives, then historians definitely produce, or invent, the archives that produce the realities they choose to call into being.

Let us, for the sake of argument, call this process of production 'playing the archival game' – there isn't an obvious archive for the study of 'x' or 'y', so let's create it and start collecting, creatively looking for material wherever we may find it – and whether we house it in a particular physical space or it remains in our imagination, collated and ordered, though its component bits come from different archives (in both senses, repository and content) is not important. But you cannot control the meanings of the archives you create: your own emplotment is undermined by what you have invented as an archive, in your own ordering and of course in others' reordering (or partial reconjuring, following footnotes and bibliographies to reconfigure that which remained in your imagination), where you cannot control what meanings or narratives it generates. Why, though, is this not true of 'the' archive, state-run celebrations of the state's stateness? Given the scale and nature of the operations, does the dream-catcher not catch other people's dreams?

Jacques Derrida reminds us of what he thinks are the origins and meanings of the Archive:

> the Greek arkheion: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons, those who commanded. The citizens who thus held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make or to represent the law. On account of their publicly recognized authority, it is at their home, in that place which is their house (private house,

37 Bernard Cohn, "The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia," in *An Anthropologist Among the Historians*, ed. Bernard Cohn (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), 224-54.

> family house, or employee's house), that official documents are filed. The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives."[38]

Obviously the European impulse to return, etymologically or historically (the distinction is often forgotten) to a Greek or Latin origin (mirrored today by counter-indigenisms from South Asia) does not make for a reliable history of that origin, far less of the continuation and continuities of the entities themselves. Does this power exist in the collections described in this article? What power to interpret, with any authority, resides in these collections that have become archives? Is the act of archiving them an attempt to challenge the Archon? Or is a 'real' archive, in the Derridean sense, only that which embodies the power of the state? And to complete the journey round the circle that passes as an argument in this vein, an archive is state authority is an archive; without state authority it is not an archive.

What I am suggesting is that the singular control over history and memory that is implied by this Derridean position has never existed; and that an etymology is not a history. Inventing the archive is not the same as reading the archive, with or against the grain: in the first, material is made to serve as archival evidence, called into being in the service of a question or set of questions; in the second, the material is already archival, only to be 'read' differently by different historians. 'The' colonial archive – where is that? When was that? The Invention of the Archive can now be a phrase that is recoverable from the enormous condescension of historiography: we invent an archive every time we have a question to answer; and then someone reinvents the archive in the service of a new question.

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38 Derrida, "Archive Fever", 9-10.