
SECONDARY SOURCES

Asia in World War I

L. M. Panikkar

Although the war of 1914–18, otherwise known as World War I, did not take place in Asia, Asia was not unaffected. The colonized nations of Asia were forced to join their colonial masters in the war, while China and Siam allied themselves with what they believed would be the winning side. Japan had treaty obligations. The Asian war effort consisted of dispatching soldiers from the colonized nations or labor brigades from nations such as China. Japan sent neither, but helped protect British interests in Asia, took over German interests, and economically replaced European businesses unable to continue in east Asia.

The war had considerable consequences for Asia. In this selection, L. M. Panikkar, the well-known Indian scholar and diplomat, describes them.

Consider: *The Asian perception of this war according to Panikkar; the effects on Asians of the ending of the myth of European supremacy.*

The Great War of 1914–18 was from the Asian point of view a civil war within the European community of nations. The direct participation of Asian countries, during some stages of this conflict, was at the invitation and by the encouragement of one of the parties, the *entente* Powers, and was greatly resented by the Germans. . . . [A]t the beginning of the twentieth century . . . European nations . . . remained unshakably convinced that they had inherited the earth, . . . It was the age of Kipling and the white man's burden, and it seemed the manifest destiny of the white race to hold the East in fee.

In 1914, when the German invaders had reached the Marne, divisions of the Indian Army under British officers had been rushed to France. . . . Later, they were extensively used in the defence of the Suez Canal and the Middle East and in campaigns elsewhere in Africa. In 1917, Siam declared war on Germany. An Indo-Chinese labour force had been recruited and was working in France. On August 14, 1917, China also joined the Allies. . . . However, opinion in India, China and even in Japan was at the time more pro-German than pro-Ally. In India, . . . public opinion rejoiced at every report of German victory and felt depressed when the Allies were winning. . . . [P]ublic opinion in the East looked upon the conflict as a civil war in which neither party had a claim to the friendship of the peoples of Asia, and if any party could appeal to the sympathy of Asians it was the Germanic alliance which had no tradition of Asian conquest and was allied with the chief Muslim power, Turkey.

But the participation of Asian people in the war had far-reaching consequences. The Indian soldier who fought on the Marne came back to India with other ideas of the *Sahib* than those he was taught to believe by decades of official propaganda. Indo-Chinese

SOURCE: L. M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance* (New York: Unwin Hyman, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers Limited).

Labou
repub.
Franc
becor
Chine
Pol
a resul
"self-d
acclair
Ape
also hu
war fo
the inc
placed
[T]
had a
Englan
mover
parties
somel
and hi
part of
ity, ab
China,
liberty
On
in imp
Churc
a faith
vative
dom. .

When t
educati
tied to
this a b.

SOURCE:
(Berkele

Labour Corps in the South of France returned to Annam with notions of democracy and republicanism which they had not entertained before. Among the Chinese who went to France at the time was a young man named Chou En-lai [Zhou Enlai], who stayed on to become a Communist and had to be expelled for activities among the members of the Chinese Labour Corps. . . .

Politically, a further weakening of the colonial and imperialist position came about as a result of President Wilson's declaration of fourteen points. In 1917, the doctrine of the "self-determination of peoples" had the ring of a new revelation. . . . [I]n Asia it was acclaimed as a doctrine of liberation. . . .

Apart from these political considerations economic forces generated by the war were also helping to undermine the supremacy of the West. Japan utilized the four years of war for a planned expansion of her trade in the East. India gained her first major start on the industrial road and, with the strain on British economy, Indian national capital was placed in a position of some advantage. . . .

[T]he growth of a powerful left-wing movement in the countries of Western Europe had a direct effect on shaping events in the Eastern Empire. The Labour Party in England during the days of its growth had been closely associated with the nationalist movement in India. . . . Annamite nationalism had worked hand in hand with left-wing parties in France. . . . [T]he influence of the Russian Revolution. Imperialism meant something totally different after Lenin's definition of it as the last phase of capitalism and his insistence that the liberation of subject peoples from colonial domination was a part of the struggle against capitalism. Also, Russia's call for and practice of racial equality, abolition of the special privileges that Tsarist Russia had acquired in Persia and China, . . . made it difficult for Western nations which had so long claimed to stand for liberty and progress to deny the claims of Eastern nations. . . .

One fact which stands out clear and illustrates this chasm in thought is the lack of faith in imperialist ideals in the period that followed the war. With the solitary exception of Churchill, there was not one major figure in any of the British parties who confessed to a faith in the white man's mission to rule. Successive Viceroy's of India, Liberal, Conservative and non-party, professed publicly their adherence to the cause of Indian freedom. . . . There was no conviction left of the European's superiority or sense of vision.

Chinese Intellectuals as Agents of Enlightenment

Vera Schwarcz

When the Qing (Ch'ing) Dynasty collapsed in 1911, it left an enormous vacuum in the political, educational, social, and literary life of China. Before that time all aspects of Chinese society were tied to Confucianism. The collapse of the dynastic cycle in the face of Western imperialism made this a bankrupt philosophy.

SOURCE: *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 3-10.