

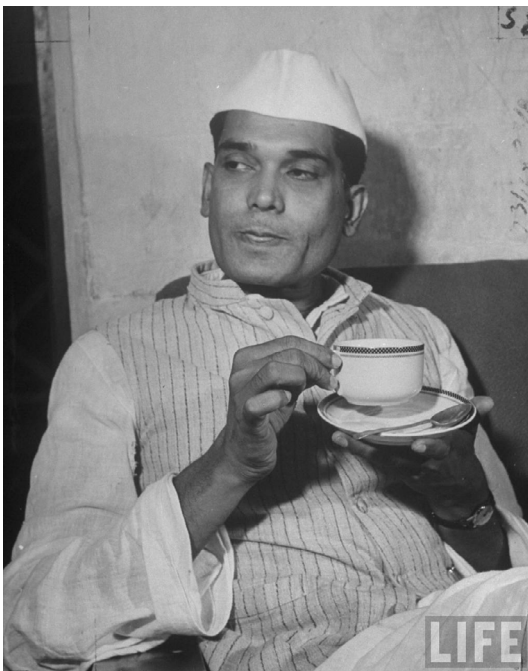
The 1950s: Journeys into Postcolonial South Asia

Friday, July 8th 2022 - 2:15 pm (CEST) Online (Zoom)

Registration <https://bit.ly/37L4zuQ>

Jayaprakash Narayan, the CIA, and the Future of Cultural Freedom

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*Jayaprakash Narayan in 1944.
Photographed by Margaret Bourke-White
for Life Magazine.'*

Since the 1990s, there has been a general amnesia in Indian public life about the role of the Cold War in shaping the country's economic plans, military conflicts, foreign policy, and cultural life. This talk takes us back to the early years of the Cold War, spotlighting the complex relationship between the veteran socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan (1902-1979) and the CIA-sponsored Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom (ICCF).

I argue that it was the debates of the 1950s that set the stage for the outbreak of Cold War paranoia in the years leading up to the Indian Emergency (1975-77), which saw Narayan and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi

trade bitter accusations about the presence of a 'foreign hand' in India. Lingering with the contradictions in Narayan and Gandhi's ideologies, I suggest that Indian participation in the cultural Cold War became ossified and ritualistic over time, ultimately foreclosing attempts to carve out a 'non-aligned' space for intellectual or cultural life in the newly independent nation.