

Lohia as a Doctoral Student in Berlin

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Details on Rammanohar Lohia's time in Berlin in the late 1920s and early 1930s as a doctoral student at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität are sketchy at best though it was a time of great social and political upheaval in Germany. Yet putting together the few written records available with some intelligent conjecture, it is reasonable to conclude that his three and a half years in the German capital had a decisive influence on the development of his mindset, his habits and his affinities as a grown-up man. His exposure to an education system and society that had no parallel to what he was familiar with widened his mental horizon and contributed to making him the holistic thinker he was.

R ammanohar Lohia spent a little over three years, from autumn 1929 to February-March 1933, as a doctoral student at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, today's Humboldt-Universität, in Berlin. These were formative years in Lohia's intellectual and political evolution, which he remembered as an "age of enthusiasms". When he arrived in Berlin, he was very young, just over 19 years, with a BA degree from the University of Calcutta and a nationalist fervour imbibed from his family. Within a year of his return to India, he was to join the socialist movement as one of the founders of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP). For Germany, these were tumultuous years of economic problems, workers' protests and political drama. Lohia's arrival coincided with the beginning of the world economic depression. By the time he left, the Nazis had captured power and the Weimar Republic had disappeared. How did these extraordinary times in a happening place affect a young mind? In which ways did his education and exposure to intellectual currents in Germany influence his thinking? How did he relate and react to the volatile political situation in Germany? This paper attempts to reconstruct the available evidence to respond to these questions. However, the answer must remain fragmentary due to a paucity of sources.

There are no letters Lohia must have sent home, no diary, no sustained autobiographical reflections or descriptions of this chapter in his life by his contemporaries.¹ Even his biographers² deal with the German interval rather summarily. And worse, his doctoral dissertation is not traceable. What we have are some official records in the university archives,³ a few articles that Lohia wrote on Germany after his return to India,⁴ occasional autobiographical reflections in his writings,⁵ speeches and letters,⁶ and episodic evidence of his activities that can be placed in the larger context of what we know about politics and ideas in Germany and the Indian community in Berlin at that time.⁷ Due to these limitations, it may not be possible to establish direct links between Lohia's student years in Berlin and his later intellectual development, his political convictions and actions, and his views on history and society. But there is sufficient material to indicate that the young Lohia was influenced by the intellectual ferment in the university, the cultural atmosphere of Berlin and the political situation in Germany – all of which had a lasting impact on his future thoughts and actions.

Germany, Not England

We know that Lohia had been educated in Akbarpur, Bombay, Banaras and Calcutta before setting out to study abroad in 1929 (Kelkar 2009: 27-31). He first went to London but very soon made up his mind to move to Berlin. We do not know clearly why and

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on whose advice he chose Berlin, but the choice was obviously linked to his nationalist unease (Kelkar 2009: 32-33). His nationalist family background might have influenced his decision in favour of Germany. He was proud of India's civilisation, familiar with Sanskrit and aware of the contribution of German indologists to rediscovering the language, culture and religion of ancient India (Deepak and Mohan 2006). And there was Germany's reputation as a place of learning, where science, industry and culture were well advanced and internationally acclaimed. Thus he certainly was one those young men "imbued with the spirit of discovering a new world, which was not bounded by Thomas Cook, Ballard Pier, Tilbury Docks, Gower Street, three or four years in England and back" (Mirza 1950: xii). But deciding on Germany as a place for higher studies carried two disadvantages. First, irrespective of its merit, a German degree had lesser commercial value than even an ordinary English degree.⁸ And second, the movements of Indians in Germany were monitored by the British embassy with the help of informants, and after their return home, the colonial power considered them to be potential revolutionaries. Lohia might not have been aware of these or may not have cared for them when he opted for Berlin.

Lohia's arrival in Germany in autumn 1929 coincided with the New York stock market crash and the beginning of the world economic depression, and by the time he left, the Weimar Republic had disappeared. In between, during the course of about 40 months, the country was in constant turmoil. There were three elections to the German parliament (Reichstag) and four chancellors (Reichskanzler) took office, heading diverse coalition governments. The number of unemployed people ranged between five and eight million. Though the large political parties mobilised their supporters, they failed to prevent the ascent of the Nazi party and its brown shirts to power, establishing the "Third Reich" in 1933. We do not know the exact date of Lohia's departure from Germany in March 1933. Adolf Hitler was appointed Reichskanzler on 30 January 1933. Lohia was in Berlin to witness the Reichstag arson on 27 February 1933, which went along with mass detention of anti-Nazi activists.⁹ He must have been on his way back home at the time of the formation of the propaganda ministry under Joseph Goebbels in mid-March, when the open persecution of Jews began with a boycott of their shops. When Lohia's seat of learning, the university of Berlin, witnessed a pile of burning books on 10 May 1933, he definitely was no longer in Berlin.

Lohia came to the third largest city in the world, which had large-scale industries, numerous educational institutions and a flourishing, multifaceted cultural life. The sound film had made its debut and the movie star Greta Garbo left a particular impact on young Lohia, who failed to fulfil his wish to meet her after independence.¹⁰ But Berlin was also "a centre which attracted political exiles and radical elements from abroad", of whom Jawaharlal Nehru took notice during his visit in 1926-27 (Nehru 1982: 161). The German capital offered a number of institutions for higher education, among them the university of Berlin (the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, today's Humboldt-Universität), the Engineering university (Technische Hochschule, today's Technische Universität), the Commercial College (Handelshochschule) and

several other institutions in the fields of art and music (today's Universität der Künste, Hochschule für Musik, and the like). In addition, the Kaiser Wilhelm Institutes were famous for their research in science. And Berlin attracted the majority of foreign students in Germany at that time.¹¹

Lohia's knowledge about higher education in Germany was certainly limited and he was unfamiliar with its structure and details.¹² As there was no chance for a foreign student to earn a living in Germany, we may rightly assume that he was supported by his family, but he also "obtained scholarships from a couple of trusts" (Kelkar 2009: 32). In a system of "academic freedom", there was no worked-out plan for a student or a register of attendance, which in any way was not compulsory. There were no fixed textbooks either, but professors would generally give a list of books that would aid the students in their studies. As the English residential system was not common, the students had to find a furnished room. We know of at least two places where Lohia stayed for a while before shifting to a cheaper or more convenient accommodation.¹³

At the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität

Like the majority of his fellow students, Lohia did not come with knowledge of German, which was a precondition for following the lectures. The Deutsches Institut für Ausländer (German Institute for Foreigners) at the Berlin university offered an eight-month language course, divided into four sections, each of two months duration. This institute also arranged lectures on German history, economy, art and culture. From late October 1929, Lohia attended the course, and "spoke German almost always, at least in the first few months" (Mitra 1983: 59). He seemed to have followed the advice he offered his friend and writer Roma Mitra years later to make herself at home in the German language – go to a theatre, to clubs or cabarets, listen to speeches of political leaders and take up a novel even if you do not understand it fully. His proficiency in German was very good. Even decades later, he wrote letters in German with ease and conversed with Albert Einstein in German during his visit to the US in 1951.¹⁴ Some authors go to the extent of establishing a link between his knowledge of German and its impact on his language and expression "which became Sanskritised and, to an extent, also Germanised", something which Lohia is supposed to have himself conceded in a statement to a trial court in 1940 (Prasad 1974: 125).

During the language course, Lohia was permitted to attend lectures, but was recognised only as a *Gasthoerer* (a student who "audited" a course) and not a regular student, which he became after the successful completion of the language course by appearing for his *Immatrikulation* (registration as a regular student) on 5 May 1930.¹⁵ University records do not tell us much about his academic activities after registration. There is no direct record of the kind of disciplines Lohia studied or the number of lectures he attended during his studies at the Berlin university. In a brief biography attached to the papers submitted with his application for the examination for a doctor's degree, Lohia stated that he studied national economy and attended the seminars of Hermann Schumacher (1868-1952). In those days, the national economy was part of a discipline called *Staatswissenschaften* (state sciences),

which was taught at the *Staatswissenschaftlich-Statistische Seminar* (Seminar for state sciences and statistics). This institution was part of the philosophy faculty of the Berlin university, where lectures on a wide range of subjects to do with the economy were offered and much sought after.¹⁶

Schumacher and Ludwig Bernhard (1875-1935) were professors on the national economy and managing directors of this institution between 1920 and 1927. Werner Sombart (1863-1941) was also there as a professor on the national economy and economic history since 1918, and he interacted with Lohia.¹⁷ Schumacher's research focus was on economic and financial subjects, production, consumption and market relations. Bernhard was not so much interested in economic history as in industry and application-related problems. We learn from Lohia's letter on 24 January 1933 to the Dean of the faculty that he wanted to be examined in *Nationalökonomie* (national economy) as his major subject and in *Philosophie* (philosophy) and *Geschichte* (history) as secondary subjects. One can rightly assume that Lohia attended lectures in all these three subjects.

Lohia had attended only five semesters as a regular student while six semesters were required as the minimum before being allowed to appear for the doctoral examination. In the letter mentioned above, Lohia declared his intention to return to India at the end of the ongoing semester and therefore requested that his *Gasthoerer* semester or his studies in India be recognised. On the margin of his letter, Schumacher's comment, written on 28 November 1932, reads, "Taking into consideration the successful study in Calcutta, I warmly recommend the application of Ram Lohia, whom I came to know and to estimate as a diligent, intelligent and educated student." The request was granted on 27 December¹⁸ and within a month, on 24 January 1933, Lohia submitted his dissertation, as required in German, *Die Besteuerung des Salzes in Indien* ("Salt taxation in India").¹⁹ For students from abroad, the examination for a doctor's degree was of great importance as it denoted the completion of university study in Germany. The degree of doctor was conferred only after the submission of a written treatise and an oral examination by the faculty in question. On 24 January itself, the Dean asked if Schumacher and Bernhard to evaluate the dissertation.²⁰

Since no copy of Lohia's dissertation has survived, the typed assessment by both professors gives us an idea, at least to an extent, about the content and structure of the dissertation, the theme of which, according to Schumacher, had so far "not been made the subject of a scientific monograph". From Schumacher, we come to know that Lohia dealt with the "significance of the salt tax within the framework of the Indian tax system, for what reasons it was introduced, how far it could have been substituted by other taxes and which possibilities of mitigation will follow at present and in future". On the dominant interpretation and the method applied in the dissertation, Schumacher cited "the analysis of salt consumption (pp 10-17), the characterisation of the salt tax (pp 39-46), the debate about its role within the financial system (pp 85-91) and the final paragraph (pp 149-65)". Lohia had obviously limited his analysis to the Indian aspects of his subject. In Schumacher's assessment, "The history of salt tax in Europe" was "not utilised as a comparison for debating the Indian salt tax".

It seems Lohia had to revise the first draft of his dissertation because, according to Schumacher, "the first draft was in major parts not different from an indictment against the British government". The professor added that "hardly anything" of this was left in the revised draft, apart from sporadic mentions in a couple of places. He pointed out that "it deserves great recognition how the candidate rose to an objective scientific description. He utilised well the valuable material included in numerous official reports as well as the eminent literature and also managed to structure his material." Minor deficiencies aside, the dissertation's overall achievement was "laudable". Schumacher concluded, and signed his recommendation on 8 February 1933. After evaluating the dissertation, on 25 February 1933, Bernhard wrote "Agreed" on Schumacher's typed assessment.

The oral examiners for Lohia's three subjects were Schumacher and Bernhard for the national economy, Hermann Oncken (1869-1945) for history and Max Dessoir (1867-1947) for philosophy. Oncken dealt with modern German history but was also interested in Anglo-American history. For Lohia, he was the professor "to whom many like me of the Berlin university owe the taste for history" (Lohia 2000: 21). Dessoir, with a doctorate in philosophy and medicine and a chair in philosophy at the university since 1920, worked mainly on problems of aesthetics and art and was interested in parapsychology.²¹ All the four examiners had to arrive at a common result for the oral examination, which took place in late February 1933. The four professors submitted hand written notes on the topics they had enquired about,²² but we do not have Lohia's answers.²³ Schumacher noted, "Currencies in India; England's switchover to paper currency: reasons and consequences; land revenue and enterprise profit; functions of an enterprise", and recorded the result as *gut* (good). Oncken, the only examiner who noted 25 February as the date of the examination, asked Lohia about "Sealey and imperial historiography; 18th century England; acquisition of India: East India Company; secession of America: economic and political reasons; Burke; War in the Orient 1877." His conclusion was *gut bis sehr gut* (good to very good). Bernhard, with a "gut", wrote, "I examined basic terms of the national economy". Dessoir's philosophy examination was on "The psychological experiment; types of memory; Nietzsche: slave uprising of morality, continual return; relation to Hinduism" and his verdict was "*sehr gut*".

The overall assessment for the oral examination was *cum laude* (passed with praise or distinction), and Lohia concluded his doctoral study with the overall assessment "gut". Lohia confirmed, in his own handwriting on 25 February 1933, that he had received his dissertation. But the degree of Doctor of Philosophy was conferred on a candidate only after he submitted 150 copies of his dissertation in print.²⁴ Lohia could not meet this requirement and the degree was not awarded to him.²⁵ There are two possibilities – one, he did not have the money to print his dissertation; or two, he no longer had his dissertation with him when he arrived in India. So far, there is no direct evidence that the British confiscated it or that he lost it otherwise, notwithstanding a statement by his biographer that "all his luggage was confiscated before he reached India's shores".²⁶

There is very little information about the intellectual debates Lohia may have participated in and the circles he moved in except a passing reference to discussions with students of history in the Berlin university restaurant, "Some of them were Hegelians and some Marxists ... [they wanted to know] how India, with its mature civilisation, fell under foreign rule" (Lohia 2000: 1). On another occasion, he wondered "why the liberal and the social democrat were so wooden, polite and correct, when the Nazi and the commi (communist) were all spirit and élan" (Mitra 1983: 48f). There is also a reference suggesting that Lohia was impressed with Einstein's attitude towards students. He compared the scientist's classes to the way Indian rishis might have taught their disciples (Deepak and Mohan 2006: 22).

Political Contacts and Context

There is very limited verifiable evidence on Lohia's political activities during this period. Although his biographer links his early return to the advice of one of his professors (Kelkar 2009: 37),²⁷ there is nothing definite linking Lohia's return to the political situation in Germany. We also do not find facts about any left-wing political activities that Lohia took part in as a student in Germany beyond disrupting a League of Nations session in Geneva and signing a letter of protest against British policy in India in 1930. However, some publications mention that he "was a student activist while he studied for his degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Berlin University" (Lohia 2000: iii; Wofford 2002: v). His very first article published in *The Hindu* on 25 March 1933 mentions that the author "was for some time the Secretary of the 'Hindustan Association of Central Europe'" (Lohia 1933: 1). But there is no independent evidence to establish when he occupied this position or what the nature of his political activity was. So, we have to infer what he could have done from what we know in general about the political context of that time.

We do not find many references to events and personalities of that period in Lohia's writings. But Lohia later recalled or referred to persons he had met during his stay in Berlin. "I made friends, but not one who has endured except perhaps for Werner who is I do not know whether alive or dead" (Mitra 1983: 77). He was referring to Werner Oertel, obviously a co-student, who later "used to be Mayor of a town some 40 or 50 miles from Frankfurt ... Everybody else is dead from those old days" (Mitra 1983: 55). We also know of some women he came to know in Germany, but these do not seem to have been political friendships.²⁸ Later, Lohia offered an explanation for why friends of those days had not lasted, remarking, "I must have been a pretty hopeless person to my friends when I was young". But, for him, part of the explanation was also to be found "in the German character. The individual German is a very likable person, as long as he is there and you are there, but you should never make the mistake of imagining that the moment would endure. More or less, like me when I was young" (Mitra 1983: 77).

Lohia attended meetings held by various political parties (Kelkar 2009: 36-37) and had definite opinions about their representatives. "I did not like the German Socialists, but my intellectual kinship was with them. Emotionally, I was with the communists for their warm-heartedness and the Nazis for their anti-British

passions, which were to me at least pro-man passions" (Kelkar 2009: 77). Of the many demonstrations, meetings, clashes between activists of the left and right, and emergency decrees, which were typical of daily life in Berlin in those years, Lohia later remembered only "one of the tram cars strike in Berlin" (Kelkar 2009: 37).²⁹ But he was aware of the growth of Nazism and obviously knew sympathisers among the staff and students in the university and among his acquaintances outside it.³⁰ On the new political climate in the early 1930s, he said, "I may emphasise that the individual Nazi, particularly in the universities, was not a complete image of Hitler and was willing to disagree with the Fuehrer in some directions. The exclusive rigidities seem to have been a later phenomenon" (Kelkar 2009: 77). Back in India, he sketched the picture of a Nazi sympathiser, a female child, whose family he knew.

We do not know whether the "disagreement with the Fuehrer in some directions" among Nazis whom Lohia met applied also to Hitler's attitude towards India's freedom movement and leaders like Mahatma Gandhi. One can only speculate that Lohia's pro-Nazi acquaintances may have included followers of a nationalist line, who considered Germany a victim of western powers. Any weakening of these powers by liberation movements in the east was not only considered as support but also justification for common national aspirations (Sieferle 1987: 457). Probably not many among the Indian students were familiar with Hitler's pro-British statements, which were against India's struggle for self-determination, even before he came to power in 1933. There was also the advice of Indian patriot Taraknath Das to Indian students and to the Central Association of Indian Students in Germany, formed in 1931, to "refrain from political activities and propoganda". He added, "If any political work is to be carried on ...to further the cause of national aspirations, it should be done by some Indian political organisation such as the All India National Congress."³¹

Indian actress Zohra Segal, who studied in Dresden at Mary Wigman's Dance School from January 1931 to the summer of 1933, says in her memoirs, "This was a critical time in Germany and the Count and Countess (the couple she stayed with) and their friends would talk about Hitler and his movement. They thought it would all die down, and when a friend's son turned up in a brown shirt, everybody stared and said, 'No, is he really into that?' And the students were a bit nervous, especially those who were communists and radicals" (Erdman and Segal 1997: 17). Lohia had a sense of what was to be expected from the new situation and talked of the "painful experience during the 2/3 days, or perhaps a week after Hitler obtained partial power. I found my communist friends just as shaken up like rats as my socialist democratic friends ..." (Mitra 1983: 37). His article in *The Hindu* immediately after his return in March 1933 revealed a genuine familiarity with the overall political situation in Germany and the reasons for the rise of fascism. But it reflected the widespread notion of "how long will it go on" and the possibility of an "eventual fiasco of the economic programme of the Nazis" providing hope for the opposition (Lohia Collected Works 4). He maintained his interest in German politics even while in the CSP and wrote a series of commentaries on the rise of Nazism and Europe's march towards a world war.

In Lohia's writings, a few Germans appear among his acquaintances but we hardly find any reference to Indians. The exceptions are Brajesh Singh, who stayed with him for a while after he arrived from Moscow (Deepak and Mohan 2006: 25), and Juliao Menezes from Goa, who did engineering in Berlin. Menezes was with him when he disrupted the League of Nations session in Geneva (Kelkar 2009: 38). However, there were a good number of Indians in the German capital. Between October 1929 and February 1933, almost 100 Indians signed up for courses at the Deutsches Institut für Ausländer. Many of them were doctoral students like Lohia. For instance, there was Shanti Behari Seth in dentistry (Seth 2005: 75-99); Irawati Karve in anthropology; Jaisooraya Naidu, Sarojini Naidu's eldest son, in medicine (Mirza 1950: 33); and K A Hamied in chemistry (Hamied 1972: 34-53).³² Apprentices and trainees, who were associated with Berlin enterprises such as Siemens, AEG or other companies, formed another group of Indians. Indian ornithologist Salim Ali's father worked from 1929 to 1930 at the University of Berlin Zoological Museum (Ali 1985: 54-62). There was a third group of Indians in Berlin. They were small in number and one-time members of the Indian Independence Committee, formed in Berlin in late 1914 to rally German support for India's freedom. Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, Maulana Barakatullah and Bhupendranath Datta belonged to this group. But with the defeat of Germany in 1918 and no chance of getting support from Moscow, they were in a precarious situation. "They could not return to India ... They had no proper passports ... It was a life of insecurity and hardship, and day-to-day worry; of continual anxiety to find the wherewithal to eat and live" (Nehru 1982: 153).

The Hindustan Association of Central Europe mentioned earlier attracted representatives from all these three groups. It was supposed to cover the whole of Europe but it primarily represented the Indians in Berlin. Most of its members "were students, some were revolutionaries, and the rest businessmen. It was a heterogeneous crowd. The ages varied from 20 to 60 or more, the occupations were different, the political views and the ideologies were sometimes poles apart, but they were all held together by the Association" (Mirza 1950: 23). Lohia attended its meetings and get-togethers, "where all Indians used to meet frequently and discuss mostly politics and the question how to make India free from British rule" (Hamied 1972: 36). Its members organised lectures, contributed to journals and did a lot to acquaint an interested German public with India's history and culture and the latest political developments there, trying to correct the existing stereotypes in the public mind. They also looked after newcomers and visitors from India and arranged "national evenings" to which German friends and acquaintances were invited. We have already noted an unsupported reference to Lohia being the secretary of the association. His biographers also refer to one of its meetings in which Lohia apparently prevented a communist-sponsored resolution critical of the Indian National Congress from being carried (Deepak and Mohan 2006). But, again, there is no independent evidence to back this.

We can assume that Lohia must have been aware of the first conference of Indian students in Germany, which took place on 24-25 October 1931 and was initiated by the Hindustan Students'

Club of Munich. The conference was attended by Indian students from the universities of Berlin, Cologne, Freiburg, Hannover, Hohenheim, Karlsruhe, Munich and Stuttgart,³³ but we do not know whether Lohia was a delegate. However, Lohia certainly had links with another institution in Berlin whose existence could be traced back to an initiative by Nehru.³⁴ The Indian Information Bureau was opened on 15 February 1929 and worked till 1931. The bureau issued bulletins, published booklets on special subjects, and operated a reading room that had most of the leading Indian newspapers and periodicals besides a few German and British ones.³⁵ Lohia, for almost two years, must have belonged to the group of regular visitors to the bureau, availing himself of the various kinds of assistance it extended to Indian students in Berlin.

Though we do not know for certain who among the Indians residing in Berlin or visiting it came into contact with Lohia, two persons are very likely to have impressed him and also possibly influenced his political views. When Lohia came to know them in 1929-30, both had just come to different conclusions about the alliance of forces required to win India's freedom, and they were different from the ones they had held so far. Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, Sarojini Naidu's brother, was a central figure among Indians in Berlin for more than a decade. A student in Germany before the first world war, he continued propaganda against British rule in India after the war. Chatto, as he was called, was instrumental in establishing the Indian News and Information Bureau in 1921 in Berlin, which supported prospective Indian students with information about higher education in Germany. Towards the end of the 1920s, he changed his long-held position of favouring a united front, including the communists and the national revolutionaries, for India's liberation. From 1929 onwards, he supported the left-extremist policy of the Communist International.³⁶

For M N Roy, Berlin was a familiar place, which he had first visited in 1919 on his way to Moscow and more often in subsequent years. In the second half of the 1920s, he gradually changed his conviction that the leadership of the Communist Party would aid the anti-imperialist struggle. From April 1928 to October 1930, Roy stayed in Berlin. His views were published from 1929 onwards in periodicals run by a group of communist activists who were in opposition to the official Communist Party of Germany.³⁷ In May 1930, the Executive Committee of the Labour and Socialist International was in session in Berlin and a letter protesting against Gandhi's arrest and other repressive measures by the British government in India was submitted to it. Among the Indian signatories we find not only Roy but also Lohia (Barooah 2004: 276). There is the likelihood that Brajesh Singh, a disciple of Roy, was instrumental in associating Lohia with this initiative.

During the years Lohia spent in Berlin, a good number of well-known figures from India visited the German capital. He just missed Sarojini Naidu, who participated in an International Women's Alliance Conference in the summer of 1929 (Paranjape 1996: 229). In his early days in Berlin, Lohia could have encountered social reformer Keshav Karve, who visited various educational and women's institutions in the city and met Einstein.³⁸ In

1930, Rabindranath Tagore visited Berlin for the third time with an exhibition of his paintings. Other prominent Indians in the capital during this period included Devika Rani and her husband Himansu Rai, and the maharaja of Indore, Yeshwant Rao Holkar Bahadur, and his wife Sanyogita.

Conclusions

The years in Berlin were to stay with Lohia for the rest of his life. Though it is not easy to draw a direct connection between this period and his future thoughts and actions, these three and a half years certainly influenced the development of his mindset, his habits and his affinities as a grown-up man. At the university with a system so different from the one he was familiar with, German professors provided insights into the history, working and structure of western societies. They encouraged him to add question marks to statements that were too obvious and that were pitched as being relevant to countries like India.

In Germany, Lohia witnessed a parliamentary democracy in action and decline, and became acquainted with representatives

of forces both challenging the prevailing system and trying to sustain it. It was a time when he could not yet fully grasp the danger of the fascist regime not only for Germany but also the whole world, including India. Lohia lived in a thriving metropolis with a clearly visible distinction between its better-off and poor sections. He gained an idea of the impact of economic forces in the shape of the world recession, seeing the consequences with his own eyes. It was a wholly different culture that he got acquainted with in its various manifestations and achievements, both in excellence and decay.

The young student also became familiar with an Indian community abroad, united in striving for India's independence while harbouring different ideas about how to achieve it. They debated what each individual's contribution to it should be while living thousands of miles away from home. Back home in early 1933 with newly won insights, eye-opening experiences and a wider mental horizon, young Lohia joined the freedom movement and embarked on a chequered political career that made lasting contributions to the building of a new India.

NOTES

- This is no exception as in most cases, the Indian students who came to Germany in the 1920s and 1930s left no written or oral recollections.
- I have relied on the English version of Lohia's first biography by Indumati Kelkar (Kelkar 2009) and on Om Prakash Deepak's well-known but incomplete biography of Lohia, subsequently completed by Arvind Mohan (Deepak and Mohan 2006). Both these, written by Lohia's friends and admirers, have a short description of the Berlin days that appear to have drawn on conversations with him. There does not seem to be any independent investigation about Lohia's days in Berlin.
- Archiv der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Akte: Nichtabgeschlossene Promotionen, Philosophische Fakultät 974, Rammanohar Lohia.
- See, for example, Lohia's articles "Hitlerism in Germany" (1933), "Is It Recovery?" (1936) in Kapoor (forthcoming), Vol 4.
- See, for example, Lohia's references to conversations with students in Berlin University in *Wheel of History* (Lohia 1955: 1) and his meeting with Sombart in *Language* (Lohia 1956: 27-28).
- A significant source is Lohia's letters to Roma Mitra when she visited Germany. These letters are compiled in Mitra (1983).
- I have drawn on my own research here, in particular Oesterheld (2004).
- See the experience of Vikram Seth's uncle in England with his Berlin doctorate in dentistry (Seth 2005: 99f).
- Lohia mentions saying good-bye to Anna Marie Hessemer's family when the "Reichstag had already been burnt and there was general terror" and we do know that he wrote an article on his arrival in Madras which was published in *The Hindu* on 25 March 1933. This means the date of his departure was sometime in the first week of March 1933.
- During his visit to the United States in 1951, Lohia went to Los Angeles and Hollywood and, in his own words, failed in his "first mission there: to meet Greta Garbo, who was out of town" (Wofford 2002: 132).
- Of the 93,040 students in Germany in 1925, 8,824 came from foreign countries representing 55 nationalities. Among Asian countries, China held the first place (294), followed by students from Japan (103) and India (67) (Basu 1929: 145).
- For a detailed description of the differences between higher education in Germany and the British system, see Mirza (1950) and Basu (1929: 142-46).
- While attending the language course at the Deutsches Institut für Ausländer he stayed in a furnished room with a landlady in Steglitz, Lessingstraße 5 before shifting to the more convenient district Charlottenburg, Badenallee 9 preferred by the majority of Indian students in Berlin.
- See letters in German dated 2 October 1960 and 11 July 1961 (Mitra 1983) and his report about the meeting with Einstein (Wofford 2002: 5).
- If not otherwise mentioned, all quotations and information concerning Lohia at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Berlin are to be found in the Archiv der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Akte: Nichtabgeschlossene Promotionen, Philosophische Fakultät 974, Rammanohar Lohia. Translation from the German original by the author.
- The Seminar, founded in 1886 as the first economic science institute of the university, was from the very beginning a much sought after institution by students from abroad. Before 1914, 30 to 40% of its students were foreigners, much more than in any other German university (Zschaler 1997: 44).
- For a meeting between Sombart and Lohia, see Kelkar 2009: 33. Both Sering and Sombart were teachers of Zakir Husain. For more details of his study at the Berlin university between 1922 and 1926, see Oesterheld, J (2010), "Zakir Husain in Deutschland – Der Präsident als Student in Berlin".
- This involved a long sequence. The philosophy faculty in its session on 1 December 1932 decided to grant his request, and the Dean of the faculty forwarded it on 5 December 1932 to the minister for science, art and education, who finally approved it on 27 December. This was communicated to the candidate two days later.
- The title mentioned in his biography, "The Salt Tax and Sathyagraha", and the date of obtaining his doctorate, early 1932 (Kelkar 2009: 37), are incorrect.
- The book of PhD students of the philosophy faculty for 1932-33 carries, under the number 105, the notification for the examination for a doctor's degree of Rammanohar Lohia.
- For Dessoir's contribution to the discipline of philosophy at the university of Berlin, see Gerhardt et al 1999: 238-42.
- The handwritten topics are in German and have been translated by the author.
- For a description of Lohia's oral examination with questions and answers, see Kelkar 2009: 37-38.
- There would have been a chance to do so even after his return to India. Zakir Husain (1897-1969) obtained his doctorate in Economics from the Philosophy faculty after submitting his printed dissertation in 1930 though he had passed the oral examination in 1926.
- The final document on Lohia at the Berlin university is a registered letter to his last address from the Dean of the philosophy faculty dated 24 January 1936 and stamped 28 January 1936. It says that as he has not fulfilled the obligation of printing his dissertation and the time for doing so is over, the doctorate cannot be awarded to him. The letter was returned the same day with a stamp saying, "Adresse unknown".
- According to this widely accepted account, when Lohia landed in Madras, he had nothing except the clothes he was wearing. He went to the office of *The Hindu*, wrote an article and earned enough money to pay for his passage to Calcutta (Kelkar 2009: 39). We do know that an article was published in *The Hindu* on 25 March 1933.
- "Prof Schumacher told him towards the end of 1931: 'You should not live in this country much longer'" (Kelkar 2009: 37). For a similar mention, see Deepak and Mohan 2006.
- There is a reference to a woman student of medicine, M Fröhlich, to whom he sent his photograph from Calcutta after his return in 1933. (Information from Harish Chandra, Varanasi, in a letter to the author dated 30 March 2006.) Lohia also mentioned an American woman, Maxine Josephine, whom he had "met just once at a Berlin get-together and who asked me to see her in Paris" (Wofford 2002: 15). There is also a reference to the "first parachutist woman of Germany" (Lohia 1985: 132).
- Lohia most probably referred to the strike of Berlin public transport employees from 3 to 8 November 1932.
- A branch of the National Socialist German Students' Union founded in 1926 existed at his University. Its strength in the 100-member students body went up from two in the summer of 1927 to as high as 65 in the winter of 1931-32 (Rosche and Weiss 2002: 24).
- "The First Conference of Indian Students in Germany" (1931): *Modern Review*, 50 (6): 651. For further details of his position, see Mukherjee 1998; 200f.

- 32 Between the first and second world wars, there were about 50 dissertations by Indian students at the Berlin University, in subjects ranging from medicine, law, economics, philosophy, education, literature, and linguistics to botany, chemistry and physics (Oesterheld 2004).
- 33 Indian students from Frankfurt, Heidelberg, Tübingen and Jena were unable to attend, but expressed their sympathy for the objectives of the conference in writing.
- 34 After visiting Berlin in November 1926, Nehru wrote to his father Motilal, "For various reasons the Germans are well disposed to Indians at present and there are great facilities for industrial training which England neither has the capacity nor the good will to offer ...I wish more students could take advantage of these opportunities" (Gopal 1974: 250-51).
- 35 An overview of the activities of the Information Bureau is in the "First Annual Report of the Indian Information Bureau Berlin, 15 February 1929-15 February 1930. Druck Max Stadthagen, Berlin."
- 36 For Chatto's political activities and ideological positions held during his stay in Berlin, see Barooah 2004; 178-224 and 246-82.
- 37 For the text of these contributions and other details on M N Roy's stay in Berlin, see Ray 1990.
- 38 For pictures of Karve's Berlin visit, see *Maharshi Karve: His 105 Years* (1963), Poona; 54-56.
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