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# Hindustan (newspaper)

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*Hindustan* was a propaganda periodical for South Asian prisoners of war in the so-called *Inderlager* (Camp of Indians), a segregated area within the *Halbmondlager* (Half Moon Camp) in Wünsdorf, near Berlin. *Hindustan* was produced within the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient* (NfO, Information Center for the Orient), a special propaganda bureau founded in 1914 within the German Foreign Office.

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## Aim and Concept

Tunisian propagandist [Salih as-Sarif at-Tunisi \(1869–1920\)](#), together with the head of the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient* (NfO, Information Center for the Orient), [Max von Oppenheim \(1860–1946\)](#), came up with the idea of producing a [propaganda](#) newspaper for Muslim [prisoners](#) in German camps, in the beginning of 1915. The production of this newspaper with the programmatic title *El Dschihad*, was part of the broader German propaganda strategy of “revolutionizing the Islamic territories of our enemies.”<sup>[1]</sup> *El Dschihad* was supposed to be printed in the languages Arabic, Russian, Turko-Tatarian, Georgian, Hindi, and Urdu, in order to reach prisoners from the respective regions.

On behalf of the so-called [Berlin Indian Independence Committee](#) (IIC), [Har Dayal \(1884-1957\)](#) and [Mohamed Barkatullah \(1854-1927\)](#) expressed strong reservations. They objected not only to being

involved in this kind of propagandist work, but also to the title *El Dschihad*. Their chief objective was not exclusively pan-Islamic propaganda, but to strengthen anti-colonial and nationalist sentiments among the South Asian prisoners. Subsequently, instead of *El Dschihad*, the IIC suggested the title *Hindustan* for the Hindi and Urdu editions of the camp newspaper. These two languages were chosen because of the targeted readership in the camp, but also because of the language expertise within the NfO.

## Actors and Content

Among the South Asians involved in the production of the newspaper were Mansur Ahmad, Taraknath Das (1884-1958), Virendranath Chattopadhyaya (1880-1937), Chempakaraman Pillai (1891-1934) and Bhupendranath Datta (1884-1961). From the German side, the famous scholar Helmuth von Glasenapp (1891–1963) and the former missionary Ferdinand Graetsch, were involved. A total of eighty-four issues appeared in Hindi as well as in Urdu, from the beginning of April 1915<sup>[2]</sup> until 21 August 1918. The frequency of publication ranged from every few days up to every two weeks. Unlike other propaganda material produced in the NfO, *Hindustan* was published in comparatively small numbers (700 copies, each for Hindi and Urdu editions). It was – with few exceptions - distributed exclusively in the Half Moon Camp.

*Hindustan* contained different types of articles. Some articles were related to Germany itself and presented the country as a culturally and economically prospering power with great military resources. The newspaper also had to contribute to an image of Germany as an Islam-friendly country. Other articles contained information about the latest developments in various theaters of the war. A third focus was political and economic developments in South Asia.

The Hindi and Urdu editions were mostly identical, but differed in how much they conveyed pan-Islamic propaganda. Whereas the latter could be found in the Urdu edition, such ideas were not included in the Hindi edition.

Heike Liebau, Zentrum Moderner Orient

Reviewed by external referees on behalf of the General Editors

## Notes

1. ↑ Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Berlin, R20938, appendix to Vol. 2, Denkschrift betreffend die Revolutionierung der islamischen Gebiete unserer Feinde, by Max Freiherr von Oppenheim, October 1914.
2. ↑ We do not have the exact date, since the first issue is missing for both languages. Number 2 of the Urdu edition appeared on 9 April 1915.

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