

From Missionary Work in the Pacific to the YWCA in India, Burma and Ceylon: Jean Begg, New Zealand internationalist, on the affective entanglements of a cosmopolitan life

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DRAFT ONLY

In 1931, New Zealander Jean Begg assumed the headship of the Y for India, Burma and Ceylon.¹ The three British colonies were administered as one part of the Y's wider interests in 'the east' (the other being in the Far East of Japan and China). In this way, the organisation reiterated common usage and assumptions about the non-west and echoed aspects of the British colonial administration of it. Burma was governed by the Secretary of State for India until 1937, for example, while Ceylon had its own colonial Governor and remained a British Crown Colony until 1948. (Both we should note both had nationalist movements during these years protesting against British rule, that like India involved advocating for devolution.)² And internal and external pressures (not least, from the Indian women's movement itself) had seen greater representation by local women involved in their own Y branches, and calls for Indian and other women to be represented at the World Y in Geneva. And, in an effort to engage *with* women from the east, the Far East Division of the World Y held their meetings each year in the region, for example in Ceylon. And so we can say that although the Y in many ways reiterated assumptions about the sameness of women and cultures or civilisations in these countries, it was also in the process of engaging with cultural or 'racial' and increasingly 'national' difference in ways that would impact directly on the organisational hierarchy and the ways in which Anglo women in the organisation reflected on their own activities, and Begg was part of that story. But if Begg and her peers were not followers of the Mayo camp, yet I will argue

¹ Who from

² Burma and nationalist movements – Young Men's Buddhist Assoc modelled on the YMCA; 1920s constitutional reform. 1920 and again in 1930 national uni student strikes. British troops quell. Sep admin from India in 1937. Need refs. Ceylon: Br Crown Col till 1948.

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– along with the other papers in this panel - that their assumption remained that Indian womanhood was still to achieve full maturity (rather like girls in Y programs around the world) and, along with India, still required guidance as though adolescent citizen and psychological subjects. Moreover, these views were not so much an obstacle to cosmopolitanisms ostensibly shared with elite women in the Y but were, in fact, the grounds on which Begg and other white women of her background and generation, experienced the affective potential of a new world order in interracial relations.

Throughout her time in India during the 1930s, Begg's letters home to Dunedin at the most southern tip of the southern island of NZ, and those she wrote to the Foreign Division of the World Y in NY, indicate just how much Indian nationalism was a concern for her as a white woman of progressive international outlook, and how it was part of the stuff of her daily working life within the Y. Sometimes it featured explicitly in her exchanges with Indian women on her staff but necessarily shaped in more general ways not recorded by her, the interactions she had with a largely invisible (at least in the archives I am working with) group of Indian women and men such as servants and cooks in her household and workspace, or more generally encountered in the street). The nationalist cause also constituted a profound context for her imaginings of the future of the Y in India, and her on own ethical position in relation to both: Begg arguably sought to resolve the evident tension of being a white woman in India at this time by advocating for local staff, students and young women in the organisation or who participated in its activities to be encouraged through practical means (training, travel funds) to assume positions of authority within the Y's internal hierarchy.

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During the increasingly volatile decade during her nine years in this role [in India as well as globally - leading up to WW2 when she became a colonel], as well as running the regional headquarters in Calcutta Begg was kept busy making regular trips to other Y branches across India, Ceylon and Burma (calculates by 1933 that she had travelled already 18,500 miles mostly by train; YM March 9 1933). Every summer she moved to Anandagari in the hills of Ootacamund to convene the annual summer school for the Y as well as host events for other groups like the girl guides. Every three years or so she went home on sabbatical: in 1935 that trip entailed recovering from malaria and included time in the UK, as well as travelling via home in NZ across the Pacific to the US to promote her work in India and to secure renewed funding. Reflecting on the pressing matter of Indian Dominion status within the British Commonwealth, she wrote often about her concerns for a peaceful process of change to her family and friends, and to her US colleagues (These were world events and world issues, as well as those pertaining to her career and her self-image as white; and it concerned Americans also given that British imperial rule coming under critique from US progressives even as they were part of US imperial rule in the Philippines, Hawaii and Samoa). The goal of Indianisation or indigenisation meant encouraging leadership in regional branches by not only Indian women, Christian, Muslim and Hindu, but also European women born in India and Anglo-Indian women. All groups were to be involved, Begg was careful to note in her promotion of her campaign to the Foreign Division, and through them, to US philanthropists, expressing in this way another version of the All-India ethos that was important also to the All Indian Women's Conferences with the early involvement of Margaret Cousins, theosophists and others in Madras. (See Sumita Mukherjee's new book *Indian Suffragettes* for a critical appraisal of these conferences)

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For Begg the sense of being accepted into the world of Indian women in her circle was an essential part of realising her own desire to be of service, and in her objectives for the modern future of the Y. She wrote of the impact she felt from attending the AIWC of 1931/2 in Madras, with education as its theme, writing in a letter that: 'I am so glad to get these opportunities to go with Indian women' (source). And often she advised NY of the importance that Anglo women who planned to visit India should be sure to listen and learn from local women: Begg conveyed her hope and those of her local colleagues, for example, that the World Y should prioritise this aim for their annual conference in the region, and she made a handwritten correction to a document outlining her plans for new ways to engage local women in the organisation – from training centres to learning houses. Begg clearly valued opportunities to spend time in among Indian women, obviously feeling that, if the situation allowed, she would be welcomed into their conversations and thus worldview. She had attended the NCW of India conference, she reported, but found it not nearly as inspiring as the AIWC at which Indian women dominated. Her biography adds more of her observations: in classic humanitarian or indeed cosmopolitan terms at once admiring and ethnographic, Begg paints a picture of Indian women dressed in lovely saris, some holding children in their arms, who do not behave as would normally be expected of delegates to a conference, as they talk among themselves and don't listen to the speaker, however somehow decisions are made and they still manage to get things done....³ During the AIWC that year, she attended a garden party at the World's Headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar in honor of an elderly Annie Besant. Some unnamed people (presumably fellow delegates) had said it would be a waste of time and why go, but she wanted to

³ Rewa Begg, *Jean Begg CBE: Her Story*

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see 'that remarkable old lady. The theosophists are very strong here – and they have begun some good pieces of Social Work in India.' (20 Dec 1931)

Travelling back with Indian delegates from 'her' Y on the train, their discussion of the political situation in India made her very aware that the Viceroy's 'retort to Mr Gandhi has made everyone furious. I do hope our English officials will be patient.' Using a shocking word (please note) to underline her disgust at some British, she added 'I know they will be tried but these people have been tried for years and we have such senseless officials – so superior and unintelligent and treating Indians like "niggers". The good ones are in the minority.' (Jan 2 1932). And when in Bombay later that same month [Check might be out of order here], she found the political situation even more obvious in that city, where 'much more "feeling" is shown here...' [given it was a site of considerable political agitation, presumably including openly anti-British feeling on the street?] Nonetheless, she was relieved to find that the women she met were very 'sane' and so 'I do hope that all will be well.' (25 March 1932) 'Sane' perhaps sounds strange to our ears, but it reflects the language both of the Y and of social sciences of mental hygiene, standing for calm and rational – two virtues sought by the Y in its work with young women and among its own secretaries outlining what it meant to be a Y worker, connecting self-knowledge and self-control with the ideal of service; with Christian and psychological/sociological elements...⁴

Oppression was everywhere (if only) one looked: By 1932, Gandhi and other nationalist leaders had been arrested, and legislation outlawing political organisation established during the war continued to enable police brutality and summary arrests on a seemingly daily occurrence. On one of her trips, this time to Nagpur and Jhansi?, Jean was surprised to see Gandhi caps being worn, given the police

⁴ Eg The Dawn and Vic Y archives.

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crackdown on any such symbols of resistance (10 March 1932). Wearing 'Khaddar' or home spun clothing, usually led to a beating, such as had happened to the Scottish doctor she met who had been living on an Ashram, (June 6 193?) In February 1932, she wrote that 'One reads every day of lathi charges by policy when dispensing crowds...', perhaps while sitting at her desk and looking from her window (in her new rooms on Corporation Road) into the back of the police station where she could see the lathis or seven foot poles all lined up. She was already 'beginning to hate the sight of them' and so planned to set up some of kind of screen that would block them from her view without obstructing the breeze that came through her window (DATE check, Feb 1932) – a rather poignant metaphor for her existence as a white woman who hoped for peaceful and cooperative change even as she might be considered part of the problem.... To her sister she wrote, 'The situation in India is inexplicable – all the Congress leaders, including Mr Gandhi, are in prison ...India is only marking time, and getting more furious as the days go by. It feels like the calm before the storm...' (Jan 24 1932)

At same time as being disappointed by the British government, however, Begg was critical of the Indian Congress and doubted India was ready to rule alone. Back in Calcutta after the AIWC, a colleague, Madjuri Dutt, came into her room one evening and they talked till one in the morning on the same subject: while noting that Dutt was very bitter over Gandhi's arrest and the increase of police powers, in her letter home Begg added that she felt it was a difficult topic to discuss (that is, between Indians and non-Indians) because there were in her view: 'many arguments on both sides.' (2 March 193?) She explained further in another letter home that now that Gandhi was in jail, everyone was so much angrier with the British, and yet in her view '[the Indian] Congress is at a very difficult stage of development', being willing

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to approve what were in her views 'extreme anti-government measures.' (Feb 7 1932) This assertion of the still-adolescent state of India reflected Begg's Christian ecumenical and progressive social welfare worldview, as she considered gradual devolution and cooperative decolonisation would require maturity and reason on both sides. In occupying this middle ground, as though each side were equal to the other, Begg can be recognised within the larger context of liberal humanitarian imperialism described compellingly by Amanda Behm and others,⁵ her perspective she felt was largely shared by the Indian women in her peer group (of more later in the paper) as well as by the Australian and NZ women's networks in which she moved, with their own connections into the AIWCs and via the BCL and the PPWA (Begg being directly involved in the first two conferences of the PPWA in 1928 and 1930).

By May 1932? Begg had succeeded in her plans and wrote home from the summer school at Anandagari that the Secretaries conference was about to start. She was proud of the fact that thirty-two secretaries had arrived from as far away as Karachi, Rangoon (Burma) and Galle (Ceylon) as well as delegates from the Student Y and Junior membership. While she felt that there was a 'terrific task ahead', she was optimistic, noting that their chair was a 'very fine Indian woman'. (Thereby suggesting that she wanted the event to be seen as for and by Indian and other non-white women...) She reported that she was writing this letter while a group of young secs were sitting around her chatting. It would be nice to have some photos of them... [indeed it would!]⁶ (Suggests also a maternal or familial image of them sitting at her feet ...) For the most promising (meaning most willing to take on responsibility,

⁵ Fns for critics of empire; also Behm on settler model and reforming empire.

⁶ May 1932 letter home, JB papers. Most of what follows are from JBP. But need to check also my notes re correctly identifying YWCA microfilm of letters for 1930s – overlap of dates.

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but also redolent of so much more concerning their own agency) of her secretaries, in 1936 Begg advised her colleagues at the Foreign Division, especially her confidant, the long-time Y leader Sarah Scudder Lyon (head also of the Foreign and Overseas Department renamed the Foreign Division that she led until her retirement in 1944) that a carefully selected group should travel to the US to gain more experience. And so Begg helped to organise trips for Sosa Matthews, her 'Senior Indian Secretary' at Travancore: 'Travancore' she wrote, 'is almost ready to do without an overseas secretary', and for another two women, one a Dutch Burgher who was to represent Ceylonese women, to visit headquarters in NY and from there a range of regional branches in the US. Sosa Matthews should also stop in Hawaii on the way, she reasoned, in order to see how the pineapple plantations deployed the most advanced forms of social welfare among workers by appointing like to like for each 'racial' groups. And it would be vital for her to travel to the Southern States to visit Tuskegee, the world-renowned success story in the experiment of Black education – where 'Negro' teachers taught Negro students. Another question also of importance to consider carefully would be who to appoint among Anglo women who would be happy to work under Sosa Williams' direction on her return... (Notably this is the only reference to African America in Begg's letters from the US. What is left out of her accounts of difference and, indirectly therefore, of the politics of whiteness, is something I'd be pleased to come back to in question time.) By 1937, Begg was even more clear about her intentions, that the training of local secretaries should be part of reforming the role: national summer schools would use small groups to produce new kinds of secretaries educated in a combination of 'social work, Christian principles, Y principles and technique.' (Feb 25 1937, YM). Henceforth, funding for training of local women would be directed to two distinct tiers: voluntary

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and professional. And to better inform the next meeting of the World Y Executive, Begg wrote to Lyons in NY that she was seeking an Indian woman to right a report about the 'real slant of Indian thought' while the Y needed to supply a lecturer to talk about the 'our different concept of God from that of other religions.' (8 March, 1937, YM)

In many ways, Begg is recognisable for her somewhat conflicted liberal progressivism, expressive of the tensions within her white identity reflecting the spiritual, ecumenical, affective and embodied experiences of living and working in India and among Indian women and young people hopeful for their nation's future. And yet, her story is also full of surprises. Her trajectory from a Christian nonconformist Scottish Church with a social activist background in NZ to the Indian Y was far from straightforward, circling first through missionary teaching in the Pacific and then social work training in New York. Moreover, several times prior to accepting her role in India, Begg resisted job offers from the Y, feeling she would be better served working outside of what she saw as the constraints of an organisation presumably meaning that it was not on the frontline of social change (working with those at greatest risk...).

After high school, Begg had trained at a local Christian college to become a missionary teacher. In 1910 she took up a post with the LMS at Atalouma in American Samoa. But she would become increasingly unhappy over the following years with the limits placed upon her work as head teacher in the main girls' boarding school that drew from mission and private schools across American Samoa. After months of unhappiness and ill-health (she felt induced by stress), in 1918 she wrote to her mother that she could postpone her departure no longer. She told her that the Samoans had everything in the world they might need, reprising in

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this way the classic notion of less advanced races in tropical climates, and stating in quite strikingly blunt fashion that ‘they [as a people] are children, and need only good patient leaders – and you know too, that I am neither good nor patient.’ Indicating her desire to work instead among the white urban poor, Begg concluded that ‘I know I can and will do better work amongst white women and girls.’ And continued: ‘So I am going out in the world [Samoa clearly not being ‘in the world’ in this sense of engaging with modernity] – to study folks and so long as I live, I hope to spend my life being a friend of my weakest sisters.’ It will be ‘hard work, and I must earn my living along the way.’ (Oct 12 1918) She explained to family and friends a couple of months later that as her time on Samoa was coming to an end, she had enjoyed talking about her future with an American military nurse who studied Social Service before she went into the Navy. (Dec 23 1918) Later in NY, she would discuss the Y with another colleague (from NZ), the two of them agreeing that what she wanted to achieve would be limited by Y work... (source).

By early 1918, she advised her sister?, that she had finally sent her resignation letter to the Rev Williams ‘telling him of what I think of the LMS methods [with their focus on Christian teaching and bible studies]’ commenting that ‘ – if a girl took a course in carpentry ...? instead of theology it’d be better for her.’ (Feb 11 1918)⁷ In March, she advised family at home that she would be leaving in June but in the meantime was ‘[d]oing as I’m bidden – just going “quietly” – I feel so disappointed with myself...’ (March 23 1919) A copy of the Rev Williams letter of reply appears among her 1930s correspondence with the Y in NY to whom she was writing about Indian woman

⁷ Heaps of writing about the role of education (ie the supposedly wrong kind) leading to unrest among ‘native’ peoples, including in Samoa. Mau is later, but all through access to education is linked to forms of resistance. Samoa appeals to the PMC in the interwar years. See O’Brien; and Keesing on ed in Samoa pointing out that the British ed models used by NZ promotes English but agri training etc; US style includes more on local languages and drew from its edu program in the Philippines. Lots on US imperialism.

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leading regional branches, as if she had sought out a copy to impress upon them just what the opponents of indigenous women's education could be like. In his reply the Rev Williams supposed that her stated 'call to "social service"' [in quotes] was surely no different to working among Samoans. He noted that she was not sure yet if she would work 'in the Foreign Field or amongst people of your own race' (although she is quite clear about her decision to work with her own in letters to home). But that she was most interested in the 'moral conditions of so many sisters in civilised lands'. He assumed that by moral conditions she meant those 'in connection with sex' of that sort that arises among all young people – again in his opinion working in Samoa could not be more fulfilling on this count. (MS 1006-06 Pt one). (Hints here and the early maturation of 'native' women in the tropics, and in particular about Samoan society, thinking ahead of course to Mead and Samoan studies controversy by the 1930s) Later, while writing from India about her hopes for a training trip to be undertaken by one of her most promising Indian secretaries, Begg made an ironic aside in a letter home that she hoped Sosa Matthews would visit Fiji to see the kinds of education and training taking place in there in the Pacific, and that surely this would please the Rev Williams!

After resigning from her position as a mission teacher in Samoa, Begg went on to study social work in NY, and from that exciting city wrote home about her studies and her placements in the court system working with delinquent girls. Her letters document in some detail the kinds of intellectual scaffolding and social theory that gave Begg a language about identity and maturation that would also inform the approaches of her colleagues equally advocating new approaches in the Y in the 1930s, and to which she contributed.

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She explained her studies to her family and friends, including her class on sociology at Columbia with Prof Giddings, in which she found also students from Asia. And she joined the Cosmopolitan Club, revelling in being with other outsiders (what this enjoyment entailed is perhaps indicated by the kinds of dress-ups documented at another club...). But mainly she was enrolled at the NY School of Social work, eager to participate in the practical placements program they student undertook as part of their coursework. Initially disappointed that she couldn't combine her studies with the Settlement House [earlier than the one in Chicago run by Jane Addams, an important figure in the early PPWA] (Aug 14 1919), she was glad that the Social Work program was 'secular' not 'religious', '... for I am out to get the points of view of the peoples. – But of course I never forget that I am a Christian.' She was taking subjects in Industrial Work, Child and Family Welfare, Community Problems, Social Research (their own research project – Begg would write her report on the reforms she felt were urgently needed at Inwood, based on the idea of farm colonies or self-sufficient communities with several houses rather than one dormitory – a model then being promoted across a range of sectors and around the world, including for delinquents and the feeble-minded). (eg July 16 1920 and image 132, page 22 of my notes) At one point, Begg saw similarities between this kind of village set up and the boarding school in Samoa, although quickly noting that of course her Samoan girls were not delinquents.⁸ For her Social Case Work course, she enjoyed her placement with the courts as an advocate for individual cases, which could involve collecting their school reports and visiting their homes, the aim being to save them from prison and have them placed in a reformatory like Inwood (3 Oct 1919). She concluded her

⁸ Reference here debates about village life vs cities in contemporary nationalist thought.

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letter by stating: 'I often compare this work with that of Samoa – New York is the antithesis of Samoa – I couldn't have chosen any spot worse ...' (meaning *better*).

Hints appear in these letters also at her more specifically eugenic work: of the Women's Courts she wrote that the worst part was having girls committed to the 'feeble minded institution', commenting that 'I don't like that part of my work at all, but it has to be done.' (June 11 1920) By second year, she had specialised in the 'problem of the Delinquent Girl' and will learn more about her in Psychiatric Social Work, spelling this new word out for her family as 'sigh-key-a-trick' which meant the same as 'Mental Hygiene', presumably a recognisable term to NZers. (6 Oct 1920) She considered that the reformatories were very like Industrial Schools in NZ (which have a troubled history, to say the least).

Begg continued to resist the idea of working for the Y. While in NY in 1919, she is contacted by the National Training School of the Y suggesting she train with them instead. Begg wrote in her letter home that she is 'anxious to look from the outside-in' rather than within the Y where, presumably, she feels girls and women have been caught in the net already. She talked with Mrs Kaye of Christchurch? When she was on her way through NY and found her 'so understanding and experienced': 'she sees, I think, that I hope to do work that the YWCA doesn't do – as she says, "can't do." (Nov 6 1919). By 1921, again, she reports that NZ Y offered her a position that she will decline at present, 'I don't want to do "Y" work – tho' its finer and much more encouraging than the kind of work I'm doing'. (24 April 1921), that is, her work at Inwood. But presumably that position ended and Begg was back in NZ by the later 1920s, where she headed up the Y in Auckland for a while, and was appointed to the short-lived Government Eugenics Board (1926/7; elsewhere that it continued through 1930s...?) through which she promoted social workers for the court system.

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Training in the science of social work while - as she hastened to assure family and friends at home, still being actively Christian in her purpose and worldview - offers another window onto the contradictory nature of Begg's position as a white woman. She sought through her engagement with otherness in a range of distinct yet, I would argue, interconnected locations, an opportunity to develop self-knowledge through service at the same time as responding appropriately, as she saw it, the lives of those she worked among (despite her questioning of that organisation as her destination, these were key agendas of the Y's work with working class youth that found its equivalence among non-western women and girls). She hoped to serve Indian and a range of 'other' women considered in need of mentorship by helping them to achieve a higher stage of maturation and autonomy, or otherwise direct them into appropriately protective or educative institutional locations: whether in teaching Samoan girls, or working with delinquent girls in NY reformatories, or in India, where she hoped to see a new generation of Indian women take over responsibility for a largely white organisation that was still largely led by appointments from overseas. The model of maturation into adulthood as a dangerous and difficult time requiring careful guidance is very much like that of her accounts of the Indian woman and India itself.⁹

These themes were surely not new in Begg's life. After all, she was a Scottish settler colonial from the edge of the Pacific, in Dunedin at the most southerly point of NZ on a shipping route that directly linked Colombo with Australia, and NZ with the US. Given her location on the world map of colonial and interracial relations (later enacted by her and other Pakeha, Maori, and white Australian women as intercultural cooperation at the PPWA's first conferences held in Hawaii), it is

⁹ See ontogeny and phylogeny article and other work making this connection also (Fallace).

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perhaps not surprising that her first job as a young woman was a missionary teacher in Samoa, then divided between the US and NZ authorities (although she worked for the LMS on the US half), and then trained as a social worker in the US before returning for a few years to NZ where she led the Auckland Y for a few years and was appointed to the Government's Eugenics Board where she promoted social hygiene with eugenical leanings. Thus her biography helps us to reflect three intersecting aspects of whiteness that also informed, in more or less direct fashion, her work in India: we see her ambition to create a new set of relationships between the Anglo world and the formerly colonised world (thus applying in the interpersonal and NGO level, contemporary moves at the international through the PMC, the reformist discourse of liberal humanitarian imperialisms, and new interest in the Dominions and the British Commonwealth of Nations); she sought the improvement the white race through social and mental hygiene; and she was intrinsically a product of the settler world that provided a global model for the management of the Indigenous 'race' and the application of immigration restriction particularly anti-Asian immigration in the name of protecting the white Dominion nation – while the Maori and historical hostility to Chinese immigration in her home town of Dunedin are not discussed by Begg in her letters, all three were promoted in this interwar period as humanitarian: as positive signs of modernity. On the other hand, nor should Begg be seen as simply 'white' in the sense of being a unified colonising or settler subject: she was a single woman careerist, a social activist and Christian advocate for change, and, as a white woman, she was a Pakeha in NZ, but reported with some dismay being read as an Australian by American Navy officers in Samoa, as English in the US, and was 'British' in India. She never felt more British than while in England during the death of the King (but often referred to her Scottish heritage) and she

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spoke and wrote English but with a smattering of Polynesian (Maori/Samoan) words understood by family and friends without the need for translation; sometimes burst into Samoan on NY streets; learned Hindi but barely used it in India. She experienced the shifting politics of whiteness over time and in different locations... this was one of the pleasures of travel and 'being in the world' that she sought.

In her work in India, Begg mobilised cutting-edge ideas about individual and 'racial' or national maturation via the language of contemporary social science, and that her analyses of international and interpersonal relations. They were not simply the hierarchical worldview that underpinned her cosmopolitanism, but provided her with a sense of professionalism that was intrinsic to her secularised Christian worldview – in other words, rather than the usual narrative 'from missionary to social work' I'm suggesting a more uncertain relationship between the two in Begg's career. She wrote to her colleague Ruth Woodsmall that her idea was for 'the East to become articulate and to have their own ideas about all the subjects that are being proposed, and even if they do seemingly run off the rails now and then, it shouldn't do any harm and it will be salutary for us all.' (June 3 1936, YM)

In the final minutes, I want to turn to an event in India that reveals some of that contradictory cosmopolitanism – the limits of the affective mindscapes of shared agendas and values - Begg's shock, and, she reported, that of her Indian women confidants and friends, when one of the Christian Indian students known to them would make an attempt on the life of the Governor. The question of Indian independence had become suddenly more personal in 1932, early on during her time in Calcutta. Begg had planned to attend a graduation ceremony at Calcutta University but was delayed by the move into her new premises on Corporation Road, and stayed behind to set up her office. This was just as well, she wrote, as on that

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day one of the students of the nearby Christian college (?) known to her and other women at the Y, attempted to assassinate the Governor of India. Bina Das (referred to by Begg as WHO) fired a shot in his direction and was arrested and imprisoned and is now remembered as a member of the Chhatri Sangha, a 'semi revolutionary outfit' for women in Calcutta. Begg expressed her shock at this terrorist act, assuming at one point that this young woman had been misled by propagandist, but wondering almost immediately if she was mistaken that sometimes it is the least likely (the most naïve or innocent) who so often take such actions (Feb 7 1932, page 26 of my notes). Bubbling below the surface is the unspoken question of whether this woman was what she had seemed – and, as her testimony before the judge in her trial indicates, she was a member of a revolutionary group whose sister was in jail. In her statement before the high court, Bina Das (daughter of a social worker, Sarala Devi – her father Beni Madhab Das) referred to the nationalist cause as an expression of her love for her country, rather than any personal animosity for the Governor, and that her love for her nation superseded even that for her family and for the education institution that had so much influenced her 'life and character'. She asserted that her 'sense of religion and morality' were deeply entwined, as she believed that any person who was a 'slave politically cannot realise God who is the embodiment of the spirit of freedom...'; therefore all 'the subject races of inhabiting this globe should be politically free.' Of this distressing incident, Begg wrote that her Indian colleagues were united with her in feeling horror at this act of terror. But, to her confusion and surprise, she found they would not discount a possible need in the future to take up arms against British rule. These were the same women she hoped would take over the Y, who seemed 'sane' but also remained ultimately unwilling to take responsibility for running the organisation from her...