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# The Forgotten Lobby: Advocates for India in the U.S. During World War II

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The Forgotten Lobby: Advocates for India in  
the U.S. during World War II

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Submitted for Honors for the  
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## Chapter 1: The Forgotten Lobby

When a classified government document appeared in the *Washington Post* on July 25, 1944, rumors swirled in the wartime capital—who had betrayed their country? The confidential report addressed Indian independence—a sensitive issue for the United States and leading ally Great Britain. As President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s personal representative to India, career diplomat William Phillips had written a devastating report that was intended for the president’s eyes only. Instead, readers of Drew Pearson’s nationally syndicated political column, “Washington Merry-Go-Round,” now knew that Phillips sympathized with the Indian nationalist cause, criticized British resistance toward Indian independence, and believed that the ongoing colonial tension throughout India was impairing the U.S. ability to fight Axis powers in Asia.<sup>1</sup> Who was responsible for the disclosure of this information? President Roosevelt speculated that Sumner Welles, the former Undersecretary of State, had leaked the report. Welles was both a personal friend of Pearson’s and a vocal supporter of Indian independence.<sup>2</sup> The president was wrong, however. Robert Crane, a junior desk officer on South Asia in the State Department Division of Cultural Relations, was the one who risked prison to advance the cause of Indian independence, though his role in the affair remained undiscovered for more than four decades.<sup>3</sup>

Crane had joined the State Department at the end of 1943. Fresh from his graduate studies on the history of U.S.-Indian relations at American University, the youthful diplomat

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<sup>1</sup> William Phillips to President Franklin Roosevelt, May 14, 1943, Washington, Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers (FRUS), 1943, The Near East and Africa*, University of Wisconsin Digital Collections, 221-222.

<sup>2</sup> M.S. Venkataramani and B. K. Shrivastava, *Roosevelt, Gandhi, Churchill: America and the Last Phase of India’s Freedom Struggle* (New Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1983), 212.

<sup>3</sup> Robert I. Crane, “U.S.-India Relations: The Early Phase, 1941-1945,” *Asian Affairs* 15, no. 4 (Winter 1988/1989), 191.

supported the Indian National Congress and opposed British imperialism in South Asia. He recognized the potential effect if the explosive Phillips report was made public. In a public opinion poll conducted one month before Phillips wrote his report, 62 percent of the respondents believed Britain should establish Indian independence, with an additional 7 percent of the American public in support of independence if it would be granted after the war.<sup>4</sup> Well aware of this widespread anti-colonial sentiment, Crane quietly passed a copy of the classified document to some Indian friends in Washington.<sup>5</sup> By doing so, he violated U.S. legal code addressing wartime disclosure of classified information that had been first established by the controversial 1917 Espionage Act. If convicted of this federal crime, Crane would have lost his government position, faced fines up to \$10,000, and/or imprisonment for up to twenty years.<sup>6</sup> Crane risked all of this to help promote Indian independence.

Yet Crane was merely one link within a coordinated chain of individuals who managed to move a high-security document from within the U.S. State Department to one of America's most prominent political journalists. British intelligence agents quickly accused Major Altaf Qadir, a staff officer of the Indian Agent General and Indian journalist Chamal Lal of leaking to Pearson. Subsequent first-hand testimony placed the report in the hands of either K.A.D. Naoroji, an Indian member the Government of India Supply Mission to the United States, K.C. Mahendra, an owner of a Bombay import-export company, or Obaidur

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<sup>4</sup> National Opinion Research Center, April 6, 1943, Qtd. in Gary R. Hess, *America Encounters India, 1941-1947* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), 129.

<sup>5</sup> Crane, "U.S.-India Relations," 189-193.

<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey R. Stone, "Judge Learned Hand and the Espionage Act of 1917: A Mystery Unraveled," *University of Chicago Law Review* 70, no. 1 (Winter 2003), 336.

Rahman, a press officer at the Indian High Commission.<sup>7</sup> Dr. Anup Singh, a leading figure in two of the organizations then lobbying within the U.S. for Indian independence—the India League of America and the National Committee for India’s Independence—, has since claimed that he was actually the one who arranged to get the report from Crane to Pearson.<sup>8</sup> Although this competing testimony has muddled the exact pathway of the leaked document, the confusion surrounding the leak illuminates the different facets of a complex pressure group that worked to advance the cause of India’s independence from United States. The range of individuals involved—a junior State Department staffer, a leading American political commentator, Indian businessmen, foreign diplomats and journalists, high-ranking government officials, and intellectuals—only highlights the reach of this now forgotten lobby. Moreover, this was a story that could not have occurred at the outset of the war. This thesis will explain how in a few short years, under the politically savvy and creative leadership of a remarkable lobbyist named J.J. Singh, a tiny, twelve-member cultural group evolved into a nationally prominent coalition that embodied, and in some cases helped pioneer, modern tactics of American public opinion mobilization and government influence-peddling.

While the elusive path of the leaked report helps illustrate the make-up of this maturing lobbying network, it also highlights the inherent complexity of investigating the nature of any group attempting to influence U.S. foreign policy. Lobbying efforts are often controversial and almost always conducted out of the public eye. The word “lobby” itself has neutral origins, and referred initially to a large meeting hall in the British House of Commons

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<sup>7</sup> Harold Gould *Sikhs, Swamis, Students, and Spies: The India Lobby in the United States, 1900-1946* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006), 373-374.

<sup>8</sup> Venkataramani, *Roosevelt, Gandhi, Churchill*, 213.

where the public could meet with legislators.<sup>9</sup> Yet Americans have almost always expressed ambivalence about such interactions. In *Federalist* 10, James Madison warned against the “mischiefs of faction,” and the possibility that a small minority group could exert their interests over that of the democratic majority through corrupt influence-peddling.<sup>10</sup> When scholar Doreen Bierbrier describes the American Zionist Emergency Council as a “pressure group” operating from 1943-1949, she feels compelled to note that she does not use the phrase in “any pejorative sense.”<sup>11</sup> I intend to use the term “India Lobby” to describe the diverse network or pressure group that operated in the United States during World War II advocating principally for Indian independence. By using this term, I aspire to place this often overlooked movement within the context of the more well-known pressure group from this period, the American Zionists who are often categorized as the Jewish or Israel Lobby.

My thesis addresses several key questions about lobbying activities. Who comprised the India Lobby and what strategies and tactics did they deploy to mobilize American opinion makers and to influence government policy in favor of India’s fight for independence? How does the development of an India Lobby fit into the context of the history of lobbies in the United States? Was the India Lobby successful? More broadly, how should historians define success for lobbying efforts? By focusing on the leadership of the Lobby and by using their correspondence, newsletters and reminiscences, this project will demonstrate how the India Lobby evolved a mobilization strategy from two distinct stages of rhetorical and recruitment tactics, and how this evolution produced tangible results by 1945.

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<sup>9</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. “lobby,” online version September 2011, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/109495>.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Tony Smith, *Foreign Attachments: The Power of Ethnic Groups in the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: 2000), 6-7.

<sup>11</sup> Doreen Bierbrier, “American Zionist Emergency Council: An Analysis of a Pressure Group,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (September 1970), 82.

During World War II, advocates for India's independence attempted to raise awareness and support in the United States by aligning their cause with the liberal and Wilsonian spirit of the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration. To amplify their voice, these activists used internationalist rhetoric to initiate a coalition of Indian-Americans, journalists, politicians and leading liberals, forming a coordinated network—the India Lobby. The Lobby began defining its organization and objectives with this broad rhetorical strategy during its first formative year (1941-1942) in New York City. Following initial achievements in Lobby growth, increased publicity, and official American action on the India situation, the India Lobby refocused its attention to America's power-center, Washington, DC, while sharpening a mobilization strategy that targeted liberal opinion makers. From 1942 to 1945, members of the India Lobby, following the lead of India League of America president J.J. Singh, made concerted efforts to turn general liberal support for Indian independence into a political strategy that impacted the Roosevelt Administration's wartime alliance with Britain. During this second period of development, the India Lobby expanded in size, sophistication, and influence as its focused recruitment tactics enabled the Lobby to mobilize key groups within Roosevelt's New Deal coalition, such as African Americans. The India Lobby's increasingly aggressive tactics also helped to discourage U.S. support for British imperialism during the second half of the war.

Before detailing these ideas in a narrative exploration of the India Lobby's development, the next chapter of this thesis outlines the historiographical stakes of the project, which bring together three distinct strands of scholarship. Chapter 3, "A Volcano of Unrest," then details the first phase of Lobby development by highlighting how the India Lobby employed the rhetorical framework of the 1941 Atlantic Charter to place Indian



independence within the liberal discussion of internationalism. Chapter 3 also explores the India Lobby's early mobilization successes after J.J. Singh became its *de facto* leader as the president of the India League of America in December 1941. By examining both British and American missions to India in the spring of 1942, this chapter also captures the shift in the Roosevelt Administration's involvement in the India situation as the relationship between British imperialists and Indian nationalists deteriorated during a period known as the Quit India movement.

Chapter 4, "The Indian Acid Test," explains how rather than succumbing to the policy setback posed by Quit India, the India Lobby expanded their rhetorical and recruitment tactics during this second phase of intensified mobilization. The Lobby gained powerful board members as executive secretary of the NAACP, Walter White, and the Jewish Democratic Congressman from Brooklyn, Emanuel Celler, joined the India League of America in 1944. The addition of these influential liberal voices to the India Lobby helps explain why the Administration turned a deaf ear towards British pressure to condemn Indian nationalists in the wake of the Phillips leak. With the help of Madame Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit (the sister of Indian nationalist leader Jawaharlal Nehru) the Lobby made a vigorous effort to promote Indian independence at the 1945 United Nations Conference at San Francisco.

One month after the sensational Phillips leak, *India Today* announced that Pearl Buck, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author and vocal advocate of civil rights in Asia and the United States, had been elected the honorary president of the India League of America. In her acceptance speech, Buck stated, "I have joined the India League of America because I have been brought to the conviction, finally, after long, close and continuing experience with

people and events in Asia, that India has become an immediate test case for world democracy, in the eyes of all the darker peoples, everywhere.”<sup>12</sup> Although Buck had promoted India’s fight for freedom throughout the war, the India Lobby’s ability to generate both publicity and policy results in the wake of the Phillips leak appeared to finally convince the noted author to accept a formal affiliation with the Lobby’s main activist organization. It was one of several achievements that seemed so critical at the time, but have been essentially forgotten since.

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<sup>12</sup> “League Activities,” *India Today* 5, no. 6 (September 1944): 4.

## Chapter 2: India: “The Mother of History”?

Mark Twain once described India as a land of “a hundred nations and a hundred tongues, cradle of human race, birthplace of human speech, mother of history, grandmother of legends, great grandmother of tradition.”<sup>13</sup> Although the popular American author described India as a crucial component of world history, the India Lobby—a group devoted to raising the importance of India independence in the United States—is largely overlooked in scholarly discourse. This analysis of the India Lobby addresses three discrete areas of recent historiography: the history of lobbies in the United States, the study of U.S. policy towards British India during World War II, and the increasing global outlook of the modern American civil rights movement. While these are distinct areas of scholarship, they share a general disregard for the specific activities and significance of the wartime India Lobby. Yet the India Lobby poses a useful case study for all three areas of scholarship, especially with the emerging emphasis on the “colored cosmopolitanism” of African American and Indian nationalists.

Labeling the advocates for Indian independence as the India Lobby immediately calls to mind a deep and contentious body of scholarship on the history of American pressure groups. There are several key works in this field, but Alexander DeConde’s *Ethnicity, Race, and American Foreign Policy* (1992) is the most significant because of his ability to trace the persistence of ethnicity on American foreign policy. DeConde, for example, notes that early American colonists formed one of the first, and the most powerful American ethnic groups, the Anglo-Americans. Later minority groups, such as Indian-Americans, had to confront and

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<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Sandhya Shukla, *India Abroad: Diasporic Cultures of Postwar America and England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 25.

develop strategies to counter Anglo-American dominance.<sup>14</sup> In *Democracy & Diplomacy* (1996) diplomatic historian Melvin Small enhances DeConde's focus on America's long tradition of contesting foreign policies within domestic politics, by labeling the election of 1800 as the first in which the influence of an ethnic minority was felt over a particular foreign policy issue—in this case, the Irish-Americans in New York and Pennsylvania voting for the Anglophobe Thomas Jefferson over the Anglophile John Adams.<sup>15</sup> Yet neither DeConde nor Small even mention an India Lobby or describe any Indian-American pressure group activities.

Joseph O'Grady identifies the early twentieth century as a key turning point for the influence of ethnic nationalist pressure groups as a transition “from the age when public opinion failed to influence policy formulation to one in which it seemed to be a dominant consideration.”<sup>16</sup> For example, during World War I the Polish-American ethnic lobby demonstrated the power of their vote. According to DeConde, after President Woodrow Wilson received Polish-American electoral support, the president made a rare commitment to his ideal of self-determination, and publically voiced his support for Polish independence.<sup>17</sup> Self-determination became the rallying cry for widely recognized twentieth-century pressure groups such as the American Zionists. Although the India Lobby's objectives in many ways mirrored the nationalist goal of the American Zionists—the creation of a nation-state out of the British colonial system—and despite the fact that the two movements were

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<sup>14</sup> Alexander DeConde, *Ethnicity, Race, and American Foreign Policy* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 11-13.

<sup>15</sup> Melvin Small, *Democracy and Diplomacy: The Impact of Domestic Politics on U.S. Foreign Policy, 1789-1994* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 8.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph P. O'Grady, *The Immigrants' Influence on Wilson's Peace Politics* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), 3-4.

<sup>17</sup> DeConde, *Ethnicity and Race*, 89.

contemporary players in wartime Washington, scholars often describe the Jewish Lobby as the most successful pressure group on American foreign policy, while failing to even acknowledge the existence of an India Lobby.<sup>18</sup> Historian John Snetsinger goes as far as to describe the Jewish Lobby as “a symbol of foreign policy lobbying effectiveness.”<sup>19</sup> Clearly, the successes of the Jewish Lobby have overshadowed the substantially smaller India Lobby and its important contributions to developing pressure group strategy.

In 1937, the small Indian-American community founded three organizations to promote different concerns—trade, civil rights, and cultural understanding. Headquartered in New York, Indian businessmen established the Indian Chamber of Commerce to promote the American market to Indian businesses. Mubarak Ali Khan established the India Welfare League to provide aid to Indian immigrants by securing citizenship rights, which Congress had revoked in the previous decade’s wave of tightening immigration laws, following a pivotal February 19, 1923 U.S. Supreme Court decision.<sup>20</sup> The third organization, the New York-based India League of America, was a small cultural group that published a monthly

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas Ambrosio, ed., *Ethnic Identity Groups and U.S. Foreign Policy*, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 7; Edward Tivnan, *The Lobby: Jewish Political Power and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1987), 28; Bierbrier, “The American Zionist Emergency Council,” 103.

<sup>19</sup> John Snetsinger, “Race and Ethnicity” in *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, ed. Alexander DeConde, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1978.), 293.

<sup>20</sup> In the opinion delivered by Justice Sutherland in *U.S. v. Bhagat Singh Thind* (261 U.S. 204), naturalized Indian-Americans were denied their previously held citizenship rights on the basis that: “the physical group characteristics of the Hindus render them readily distinguishable from the various groups of persons in this country commonly recognized as white.... It cannot be doubted that the children born in this country of Hindu parents would retain indefinitely the clear evidence of their ancestry. It is very far from our thought to suggest the slightest question of racial superiority or inferiority. What we suggest is merely racial difference, and it is of such character and extent that the great body of our people instinctively recognize it and reject the thought of assimilation” (<http://laws.findlaw.com/us/261/204.html>); Hess, *America Encounters India*, 5-16.

bulletin aiming “to interpret India and America to each other.”<sup>21</sup> Despite their earnest efforts, these organizations failed to register on a larger scale of American consciousness. No doubt this was mostly a by-product of size. According to the 1940 census, only about 2,405 Indians resided within the United States, and most of these immigrants worked as farm laborers in California.<sup>22</sup> By contrast, when the precursor to the Jewish Lobby, the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs, formed in 1940, its membership totaled 171,132, over seventy times the number of Indians residing in America at the time.<sup>23</sup>

Some scholars include descriptions of Indian American political activity in their broader analyses of U.S. policy toward British India during World War II.<sup>24</sup> Through a careful study of American, Indian and Indian-American newspapers as well as contemporary U.S. opinion polls on the subject of Indian independence, historian Gary Hess creates the most reliable account of the shifting American public opinion towards the India situation, a key indicator of India Lobby efforts. Hess’ *America Encounters India, 1941-1947* (1971), remains the most comprehensive and widely cited study of U.S. policy in British India during World War II. Although Kenton Clymer’s *Quest for Freedom: The United States and India’s Independence* (1995) is a more extensive study of the decade leading up to Indian Independence, Hess’ earlier work provides a more sophisticated examination of the interaction between public opinion and the various lobbying efforts. While both scholars

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<sup>21</sup> *India Today* 1, no. 8 (November, 1940), 1.

<sup>22</sup> Sanjeev Khagram, "Seen, Rich, but Unheard?" in *Asian Americans and Politics: Perspectives, Experiences, and Prospects*, Gordon Chang, ed., (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2000), 267.

<sup>23</sup> Bierbrier, “The American Zionist Emergency Council,” 83.

<sup>24</sup> Both the diplomatic relationship and the scholarship on the subject is relatively new—the noted Sanskrit scholar W. Norman Brown established the first graduate program in Indian history in the United States at the University of Pennsylvania in 1948, Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 1-2.

describe J.J. Singh as the primary “spokesman” for Indian independence in the United States, Clymer neglects to explain Singh’s precarious position as the leader of a nationalistic pressure group.<sup>25</sup> In his first chapter, Clymer cites a 1940 letter written by Jawaharlal Nehru that dismissed Indian-American activists as merely rabble-rousers: “unfortunately, the Indians in American are a very unsatisfactory lot. They shout a lot and do no work. Often they do injury to our cause.” While labeling Nehru’s criticism of Singh as unwarranted (Singh, after all, was not yet the president of the India League of America), Clymer also suggests that the letter was motivated by Nehru’s personal dislike of Singh.<sup>26</sup> This basic analysis, however, does not acknowledge Singh’s complicated role as the leader of a pressure group that promoted the interests of its homeland, but lacked the legitimacy of representing an established government. Within this contextual framework it would make sense that Nehru and Singh were occasionally at loggerheads. Thus, although Clymer adds flesh to the bare-bones scholarly treatment of the India Lobby, Hess’ earlier analysis remains the more valuable piece of scholarship.

Scholars who examine the U.S. relationship with British India during World War II describe a shift in U.S. policy towards Indian internal affairs after Pearl Harbor. Because of the newfound urgency of American military strategic interest in the Pacific, U.S. officials no longer dismissed political unrest in India as the sole concern of the British Crown.<sup>27</sup> Yet this is never portrayed as a by-product of American domestic politics, pressure groups or aroused public opinion. Scholar Dennis Kux concentrates so closely on this official policy shift in the first chapter of *India and the United States: Estranged Democracies, 1941–1991* (1992), that

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<sup>25</sup> Hess, *America Encounters India*, 85; Clymer, *Quest for India*, 23.

<sup>26</sup> Clymer, *Quest for India*, 23, fn. 37.

<sup>27</sup> Kux, *Estranged Democracies*, 10; Gould, *Sikhs, Swamis, Students, and Spies*, 315-316; Hess, *American Encounters India*, 33; Clymer, *Quest for Freedom*, 39.

he hardly mentions the existence of an India Lobby or domestic pressure. The closest Kux comes to this subject is a single cursory statement about “domestic pressure for US action.”<sup>28</sup>

Harold Gould’s *Sikhs, Swamis, Students, and Spies: The India Lobby in the United States, 1940-1946* (2006) is the only work that includes in depth analysis of what I have labeled as the India Lobby. Although Gould also uses the term the “India Lobby” in his work, he loosely defines the India Lobby as an amorphous group of Indian activists that promoted a variety of causes over the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup> In contrast, I employ the term to recognize the India Lobby’s development of modern lobbying strategies during a unique wartime period. Additionally, Gould provides sparse documentation of his sources. A retired professor of anthropology, Gould self-published his book while serving as a visiting scholar at the University of Virginia’s Center for South Asian Studies. Though an entertaining narrative, *Sikhs, Swamis, Students, and Spies* contains minimal citations and a significant number of factual errors and typos.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the analysis of the India Lobby within scholarship of U.S. policy in British India during World War II relies heavily on a few key studies and does not fully illuminate the nature of the Lobby itself.

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<sup>28</sup> Kux, *Estranged Democracies*, 23. Both the chronological breadth of Kux’s study as well as his position as a former member of the Foreign Service may explain his preoccupation with the official avenues of diplomacy.

<sup>29</sup> Gould, *Sikhs, Swamis, Students, and Spies*, 40.

<sup>30</sup> For example, Gould includes three different birth years for Robert Crane, the man who he dedicated *Sikhs, Swamis, Students, and Spies* to, with the inscription, “to the memory of Professor Robert I. Crane (1922-1997), a dear friend, loyal colleague, and the inspiration for this work.” When Gould introduces Crane’s involvement in the Phillips leak on page 367, however, he gives Crane’s dates as: 1920-1997. On the following page, Gould’s caption of an image of Crane reads, “Robert I. Crane (1927-1997). According to the obituary of Crane that appeared in *The Journal of Asia Studies*, which Crane edited for five years, Crane was born in 1920, “Obituaries for Robert I. Crane and John Whitney Hall,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 2 (May, 1998), 633.



By contrast, *India Today*, the monthly periodical published by the India League of America, is an example of the primary source evidence that captures the development of the India League of America and the strategy of the India Lobby. For example, the periodical contains continual references to the Atlantic Charter and President Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" speech, documenting the Lobby's rhetorical strategy of aligning Indian independence with the internationalist principle of universal self-determination. Although not a widely circulating publication, by reading the complete series of *India Today* periodicals from January 1941 through December 1945, I have gained valuable insight into the Lobby's internal structure and dynamics.<sup>31</sup> Articles in *India Today* also demonstrate the Lobby's crucial understanding of the shifting nature of the U.S. government within the State Department, Capitol Hill and the White House. Because the Lobby was ultimately attempting to influence U.S. foreign policy, the rapid expansion of departments and agencies within the executive branch during World War II was particularly important. To address the increasing importance and complexity of military and foreign policy, President Roosevelt established a range of organizations including the Office of War Information, the Office of Strategic Services, and a new pentagonal military headquarters in Arlington, Virginia.<sup>32</sup> My examination of *India Today* has enabled me to build my narrative around the perspective of the India Lobby itself, a viewpoint that all three areas of historiography bypass.

The recent scholarly examination of the international dynamics of the black civil rights movement does take Indian nationalism, both in India and the U.S., more seriously

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<sup>31</sup> I would like to thank the library staff at both Dickinson and at Bucknell University for helping me access this publication.

<sup>32</sup> George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 541-544; According to Clymer, William Phillips provided the persistence necessary to get the British Government of India to agree to allow an OSS office in New Delhi (Clymer, 174).

than traditional political and diplomatic histories. This scholarship focuses on the black community's identification of Indian independence as an anti-colonial movement and explores how the causes became emblematic of a shared fight against racial oppression.<sup>33</sup> For example, in his foundation-laying work, *Rising Up a Prophet: The African-American Encounter With Gandhi* (1992), Sudarshan Kapur argues that wartime African American exposure to Gandhian nonviolence, largely through the black press, made the later utilization of civil disobedience tactics during the civil rights movement possible.<sup>34</sup>

Most studies, such as Kapur's, that weigh the impact of the Indian nationalist movement on the black civil rights movement, are not concerned with Indian Americans. In *A Rising Wind* (1996), however, Brenda Plummer changes the usual discourse by arguing that African Americans became interested in India's struggle for independence after several activists followed "liberal leadership into the foreign policy arena."<sup>35</sup> Plummer writes that "Indian immigrants who had formed nationalist support groups in the United States kept in close contact with liberal sympathizers and provide an early example of successful lobbying by nonwhite ethnics."<sup>36</sup> My study takes this isolated but significant reference and expands it with details drawn directly from the manuscript collections of the NAACP and other critical primary sources.

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<sup>33</sup> Sudarshan Kapur, *Rising up a Prophet: The African-American Encounter with Gandhi* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992); Brenda Plummer, *A Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Gerald Horne, *The End of Empires: African Americans and India* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2008); Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

<sup>34</sup> Kumar, *Rising Up a Prophet*, 4.

<sup>35</sup> Plummer, *A Rising Wind*, 6, 96.

<sup>36</sup> Plummer, *A Rising Wind*, 95.

With the title of her influential work, *A Rising Wind*, Plummer references Walter White and his embrace of the shared African American and Indian struggle for freedom—White titled his 1945 reflection on the treatment of African American soldiers during the war *A Rising Wind*. For Plummer and subsequent historians, White’s avid advancement of Indian independence as the head of the most powerful civil rights organization (the NAACP) captured the essence of the connection between the two causes—White was not merely critiquing imperialist policy, but expounding a rallying cry for all oppressed colored races. For White and other black supporters of Indian nationalism, the Indian movement was not only significant because it was an example of shared racial oppression, but the “internationalist anticolonial discourse” that emerged during this period, shaped the expression, and success of, the civil rights movement in the subsequent decades.<sup>37</sup>

In the most recent treatment of the subject, published only this year, historian Nico Slate creates the nuanced term “colored cosmopolitanism” to describe the shared worldview of black Americans and Indian nationalists who forged a “united front against racism, imperialism, and other forms of oppression,” while also questioning the very definitions of “colored” and “freedom.”<sup>38</sup> Slate’s term, “colored cosmopolitanism” offers the most evocative description of the emerging outlook and rhetorical strategy of the India Lobby as it developed during World War II. Although Slate discusses this idea primarily as originating from within the black community, the India Lobby came to embody the solidarity-building essence of colored cosmopolitanism by 1943. In turn, Slate’s concept of colored cosmopolitanism can add a nuanced ideological layer to narrow diplomatic histories of the development of American lobbies and of U.S.-India relations. By incorporating a synthesis

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<sup>37</sup> Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism*, 2.

of the three different areas of historical scholarship into my narrative exploration of the evolution of the India Lobby, I aim to both refocus the discussion of the India Lobby to reflect its own worldview, as well as reducing reliance on one-sided treatments of the subject by exposing the significant historiographic connections between these separate areas of historical discourse.

### Chapter 3: The “Volcano of Unrest”: January 1941-July 1942

As Franklin D. Roosevelt entered his unprecedented third term as the president of the United States, he spoke to the nation about creating a world “founded upon four essential freedoms.” In his state of the union address on January 6, 1941, Roosevelt adapted Woodrow Wilson’s vision of international collective security and spoke of America’s role in creating a new world, based on “freedom of expression, freedom of religion, freedom from want and freedom from fear.”<sup>39</sup> This revised Wilsonian internationalism, which stressed universal human rights, became the ideological framework behind America’s participation in World War II.<sup>40</sup> Although the United States had failed to join the League of Nations after World War I, the legacy of Wilsonianism, or an American commitment to internationalism, persisted. Although the United States was not a member of the League, internationalists such as historian James T. Shotwell, executive secretary of the League of Nations Association Clark M. Eichelberger, and Franklin Roosevelt’s vice-president Henry Wallace continued to promote the ideology behind the organization—members of the world order held a “collective responsibility” toward each other to maintain stability, peace, and freedom in the world.<sup>41</sup> After meeting for the first time as heads of state on August 9, 1941 off the coast of Newfoundland, Roosevelt and Churchill culminated their four-daylong conference with a non-binding, eight-article declaration that expressed a vision of internationalism and would establish the ideological tone of World War II—the Atlantic Charter.

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<sup>39</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, “The Four Freedoms,” January 6, 1941, *American Rhetoric*, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/fdrtheffourfreedoms.htm>.

<sup>40</sup> G. John Ikenberry, Thomas J. Knock, Anne-Maire Slaughter and Tony Smith, *The Crisis of American Foreign Policy: Wilsonianism in the Twenty-first Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 18.

<sup>41</sup> Warren F. Kuchl, “Internationalism,” in *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy* vol. 2, edited by Alexander DeConde (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1978), 448-449.

The Atlantic Charter was not a treaty, but a declaration to establish “a better future for the world,” that expanded upon Wilsonian internationalist principles.<sup>42</sup> Although the United States was not yet an active participant in the war by August of 1941, the Atlantic Charter outlined an Allied vision of a peaceful postwar world, where every individual could “live out their lives in freedom from fear and want.”<sup>43</sup> American advocates for Indian independence saw the codification of internationalism in the Atlantic Charter as an opportunity. Using the Atlantic Charter as their template, the emerging India Lobby framed their campaign for Indian independence around internationalist principles designed to resonate with American liberals.

The issue of India came up during the Atlantic Conference. Elliott Roosevelt, who served as a note-taker, sensed that his father strongly disagreed with the Prime Minister on the subject of India’s eventual independence. Elliott reported that during one discussion, the president asserted, “I can’t believe that we can fight a war against Fascist slavery and at the same time not work to free people all over the world from backward colonial policy.”<sup>44</sup> Some historians dispute the accuracy of Elliott Roosevelt’s account, since no one else present recorded the president making such a divisive statement about India.<sup>45</sup> However, in his Pulitzer Prize-winning memoir, *Roosevelt and Hopkins, An Intimate History* (1948), FDR speechwriter Robert Sherwood recollected that the President took the Charter “much more seriously” than his British counterpart, who viewed the declaration as “not much more than a

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<sup>42</sup> “Joint Statement by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill,” August 14, 1941, *FRUS, 1941, General, The Soviet Union*, 367-368; *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*, edited by Francis L. Loewenheim, Harold D. Langley, and Manfred Jonas (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1975), 155.

<sup>43</sup> *FRUS, 1941, General, The Soviet Union*, 364-369.

<sup>44</sup> Elliott Roosevelt and James Brough, *A Rendezvous with Destiny* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1975), 295.

<sup>45</sup> Kux, *Estranged Democracies*, 9, fn. 17.

publicity handout.”<sup>46</sup> Although Elliott Roosevelt may not have quoted his father verbatim, his description of the exchange between FDR and Churchill captured their diverging views on colonial possessions such as India. While Churchill was determined that the British Empire would not dissolve under his leadership, leading diplomatic historian Gaddis Smith writes that Roosevelt believed that “a refusal by the imperial powers to set colonial peoples on the road to independence was an immediate obstacle to the war effort.”<sup>47</sup> Yet it remained unclear how Roosevelt would act on these principles in the case of Indian subcontinent –soon-to-be a pivotal theater in the war against Japan.

Throughout 1941, Roosevelt refused to clarify his position on India. Eleanor Roosevelt, the vocal First Lady who described herself as a “realistic pacifist,” specifically asked her husband about his stance on India in late August.<sup>48</sup> The President replied, “I cannot have probable feelings on India.”<sup>49</sup> While FDR was playing his cards close to his chest, Churchill worked diligently to limit the anti-imperial reach of the Charter, in particular, its third article, which claimed to “respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and...to see sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.”<sup>50</sup> On September 9, in a speech before the British House of Commons, the Prime Minister claimed that the Charter’s discussion of self-government applied to the context of Nazi territorial aggression in Europe,

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<sup>46</sup> Robert Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins, An Intimate History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), 362.

<sup>47</sup> Gaddis Smith, *American Diplomacy during the Second World War, 1941-1945* (New York: Wiley, 1965), 14, 78.

<sup>48</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt to Lewis B. Chamberlin, February 19, 1934, quoted in Jason Berger, *A New Deal for the World: Eleanor Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 12.

<sup>49</sup> Franklin Roosevelt to Eleanor Roosevelt, August 21, 1941, quoted in Hess, 32.

<sup>50</sup> *FRUS, 1941, General, The Soviet Union*, 364-369.

and that “the progressive evolution of self-governing institutions in the regions and peoples which owe allegiance to the British Crown” was “quite a separate problem.”<sup>51</sup>

American internationalist publications including *The New Republic*, *The Christian Century*, and *Asia* (a periodical published by India League member Richard Walsh) quickly ran articles attacking British efforts to limit the Charter.<sup>52</sup> Dr. Anup Singh’s essay in the September issue of *Harper’s Magazine* clearly demonstrated the India Lobby’s involvement in the rhetorical pushback against Churchill. Singh’s colleague, Haridas Muzumdar, described Singh as a “crusader for India’s freedom first and as [a] professional lecturer... second.”<sup>53</sup> Dr. Anup Singh received his doctorate in political science from Harvard, and acted as the editor of *India Today* and director of the India League’s Research Bureau. In his piece, Singh singled out Churchill’s intransigence on policy towards Indian independence as an expression of paternalism, writing that the Prime Minister “has always held that not the leaders of India, but the Parliament of Britain alone has the wisdom to guide these masses.”<sup>54</sup> Singh had an astute measure of the Prime Minister’s attitude towards India, since Churchill later described India as being protected from the war, and “carried through the struggle on the shoulders of our small Island.”<sup>55</sup>

On December 7, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and the United States formally entered World War II. Rather than sidelining the issue of Indian independence, however, Pearl Harbor only generated additional American interest in the Indian sub-continent because

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<sup>51</sup> “Mr. Churchill’s Speech,” *The Times*, Wednesday, September 10, 1941, pg. 9.

<sup>52</sup> Hess, *America Encounters India*, 29-30.

<sup>53</sup> Haridas Muzumdar, *America’s Contributions to India’s Freedom* (Allahabad, India: Vanguard Press, 1962), 28.

<sup>54</sup> Anup Singh, “Britain’s Last Chance in India,” *Harper’s Magazine* (September 1941), 362-363.

<sup>55</sup> Winston Churchill, *The Second World War: The Hinge of Fate* vol. 4 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), 204.



turmoil in the region represented a potential liability for the Allied war effort in the Pacific. Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, the Indian Agent-General stationed in Washington, DC, claimed that before Pearl Harbor the United States could afford to ignore the political unrest in India, but their entry into the war made Indian affairs “direct and pressing.”<sup>56</sup> India’s newfound strategic importance became an opportunity for the India Lobby to further their argument that India’s independence was part of the global battle for freedom. Whenever *India Today* editors referred to Indian nationalist goals in the “As We See It” editorial column during this period, they routinely used the phrase “the freedom of India” much more so than “the independence of India.” In the twenty “As We See It” columns published from January 1941 to December 1942, the editors used the word “freedom” ten times more frequently than “independence.”<sup>57</sup> While “independence” was a political goal, “freedom” was a universal human right. This subtle distinction captured the Lobby’s emerging rhetorical strategy. While Britain’s immediate political relationship with India might limit America’s involvement on the issue of independence, the freedom of India was an issue that surpassed political boundaries and instead embodied a universal struggle for freedom.

At the annual meeting on December 21, the India League of America elected J.J. Singh as its new president, heralding a new era in coordinated Lobby activity.<sup>58</sup> Over six feet

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<sup>56</sup> Girja Shankar Bajpai, *India and the United States of America* (New Delhi: Indian Institute of International Affairs, 1944), 3.

<sup>57</sup> The January 1942 “As We See It” declared, “India has striven actively for her freedom for over 25 years now.” In July 1942, the column read, “If the cause of freedom is betrayed in India, it is betrayed everywhere. Freedom is indivisible.” The concluding lines of the editorial column in the December 1942 issue of *India Today* stated, “We hope that voices will continue to rise for India’s freedom. They must not be muzzled now—at least not in America, land of Washington, Lincoln, and Patrick Henry.” “As We See It,” *India Today* 2, no. 10 (January 1942): 4; “As We See It,” *India Today* 3, no. 4 (July 1942): 4; “As We See It,” *India Today* 3, no. 9 (December 1942): 4.

<sup>58</sup> “India League’s Activities in 1941,” *India Today* 2, no. 9 (December 1941): 4.

tall, with a sharp hooked nose, and an infectious personality, Sirdat Jagjit “J.J.” Singh was instrumental in transforming the India Lobby from a handful of concerned Indian-Americans into a network capable of harnessing mass media, attracting high-profile supporters, and utilizing trends of internationalism to advance their cause. J.J. Singh moved to the United States in 1926 and opened “India Arts and Crafts,” an import shop at 14 East 56th Street in Manhattan. Singh began attending India League of America meetings in 1939. At the time, 12 members actively came to meetings.<sup>59</sup> The India League of America had been founded two years previously in New York to “interpret India and America to each other,” though one contemporary described the League’s meetings as somber evenings, “reverently devoted to a reading of the works of Rabindranath Tagore or some other poet, author or philosopher.”<sup>60</sup> When the League elected Singh as its president in 1941, the organization had held 22 meetings over the course of the year for its 26 members, seven of which were part of the executive board.<sup>61</sup>

The day after Singh’s election, Roosevelt and Churchill’s first wartime conference in Washington began. During Churchill’s three-week stay in Washington, Roosevelt suggested that Britain reconsider granting India its independence. Churchill later reflected, “I reacted so strongly and at such length that he never raised it verbally again.”<sup>62</sup> According to one of Roosevelt’s biographers, however, the India issue remained a persistent concern of the

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<sup>59</sup> Robert Shaplen, “Profiles: One-Man Lobby,” *New Yorker Magazine*, March 24, 1950, 35, 40.

<sup>60</sup> *India Today* 1, no. 8 (November, 1940): 1; Malti Singh, “J.J. Singh: India’s Man in the United States; An Indian American’s Campaign to ‘Influence the Influencers’” *India Abroad* 27, no. 44 (August 1, 1997), 20.

<sup>61</sup> “India League’s Activities in 1941,” *India Today* 2, no. 9 (December 1941): 4.

<sup>62</sup> Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, 209.

president's. In the fifth volume of his biographical series on FDR, Kenneth S. Davis concludes:

Ever since Pearl Harbor, and especially after Singapore's fall, India and its defense had been a growing concern of Roosevelt's—and it was, for him, an unusually principled concern. He fully shared the predominant American view that Britain had no right to rule and exploit the nearly four hundred million Indian people, whereas Gandhi and Nehru, with their National Congress Party, had every right to struggle for Indian independence.<sup>63</sup>

In Davis' analysis, as the military situation in the Pacific worsened (Singapore fell to the Japanese on February 15, 1942), India's strategic significance as a bastion against the Axis tide also raised its moral importance, suggesting even more fruitful ground for the rhetorical strategy of India's American advocates. Ten days after Singapore's fall, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee expressed concern to Undersecretary Sumner Welles about the tenuous military situation in the Far East. Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long reported that the committee had "a serious undercurrent of anti-British feeling," and that the senators resolved "we should demand that India be given a status of autonomy. The only way to get the people of India to fight was to get them to fight for India."<sup>64</sup> With the possibility of losing the Pacific looming over the heads, at least some leading U.S. policy makers were willing to directly challenge British sensibilities on the India issue.

Pressure on the British came from other allies as well. After touring India with his wife, the Chinese Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, wrote a farewell message that the London *Times* published on February 23, 1942. Chiang spoke of world opinion supporting India's

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<sup>63</sup> Kenneth S. Davis, *FDR: The War President, 1940-1943* (New York: Random House, 2000), 465.

<sup>64</sup> Long to Welles, February 25, 1942, in *FRUS, 1942. General; the British Commonwealth; the Far East*, 606.

right to independence, claiming, “I confidently believe that our great ally, Great Britain, without waiting for any demands on the part of the people of India, will as speedily as possible give them real political power.”<sup>65</sup>

Responding to these various developments, the British decided to take action in India. Two days after the publication of Chiang’s letter, Churchill formed an “India Committee” out of leading members of his Cabinet to advise the War Council on the India issue.<sup>66</sup> Ultimately, the Committee nominated Labour Party leader and Lord Privy Seal, Sir Stafford Cripps, to lead a mission to the sub-continent. British and American officials, and Indian nationalists all received Cripps’ nomination favorably. The Privy Seal was not only an experienced politician, but also a personal friend of Jawaharlal Nehru. Before his mission began, Indians viewed Cripps as a sympathetic mediator—*India Today* reported that the “India press unanimously endorsed the choice of Sir Stafford Cripps.”<sup>67</sup>

The British India Committee instructed Cripps to propose the possibility of Dominion Status for India following the war, in an attempt to generate Indian support for the war effort.<sup>68</sup> Yet Auriol Weigold, an expert in British-Indian relations, characterizes the Cripps mission as a propaganda ruse, “designed to persuade American public opinion and Roosevelt that Churchill, his India Committee, and his War Cabinet had done everything possible to

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<sup>65</sup> “India’s Road to Freedom: General Chiang’s Message,” *The Times*, February 23, 1942, 3.

<sup>66</sup> Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, 208.

<sup>67</sup> “Cripps- Early Reactions in India,” *India Today* 2, no. 12 (March, 1942): 4; Hess, 42.

<sup>68</sup> The British government began granting its colonies “dominion status” in the late nineteenth century, allowing the colony a form of self-government and a degree of independence while still maintaining an overarching imperial structure. “Dominion Status,” *Commonwealth of Nations*, 2012, <http://www.commonwealth-of-nations.org/The-Commonwealth-History,4,3,3>.

secure a settlement with India.”<sup>69</sup> Two days later, the U.S. State Department announced plans to send a “technical mission” to India to “examine and report on the possibilities of American assistance” in the development of Indian industry under the leadership of former Assistant Secretary of War Louis Johnson. Within days, however, the US government announced that Johnson’s role had been elevated to personal representative of the president.<sup>70</sup> The timing of the American announcements points to Roosevelt’s desire to make sure that U.S. interests were represented in any major policy decisions being made in India.

Yet the American president was still being cagey about his exact intentions. The day following the announcement of the technical mission, March 10, Roosevelt wrote Churchill a personal letter offering unsolicited advice about the India situation, suggesting an analogy to American history with a comparison of the situation to the Articles of Confederation. After intruding in British colonial affairs, however, Roosevelt then appeared to backtrack by writing: “For the love of Heaven don’t bring me into this, though I do want to be of help. It is, strictly speaking, none of my business, except insofar as it is a part and parcel of the successful fight that you and I are making.”<sup>71</sup>

Unaware of Roosevelt’s hedging, the India Lobby continued to attempt to influence U.S. policy in British India by building on wartime events and targeting specific areas of

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<sup>69</sup> Auriol Weigold, *Churchill, Roosevelt, and India: Propaganda during World War II* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 42. Rather than framing the Cripps mission as a propaganda ploy, British historian Christopher Thorne writes that Churchill was merely using the conclusion of the mission as an opportunity, so “the matter could be put on one side whilst the more urgent and important task of winning the war was attended to,” *Allies of a Kind, The United States, Britain, and the War Against Japan, 1941-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 236. Additionally, Gary Hess presents the Cripps mission as a British response to multiple sources of pressure (38).

<sup>70</sup> “Press Release issued by the State Department, March 6, 1942,” *FRUS, 1942, General; the British Commonwealth; the Far East*, 613.

<sup>71</sup> Roosevelt to Churchill, March 10, 1942, *FRUS, 1942, General; the British Commonwealth; the Far East*, 616.

public opinion. For example, Chiang Kai-shek's vocal support of Indian independence not only added another level of international pressure on the British, but it also gave the India Lobby the opportunity to garner support from Americans sympathetic to China. Thus, in recognition of Chiang Kai-shek's visit to India, 2,200 people gathered in New York City on March 14 to celebrate "India-China Day," an event hosted by the former presidential candidate Wendell Willkie and organized by Pearl Buck and the East and West Association. The event included both Chinese and Indian cultural performances, speeches from the Chinese Ambassador Dr. Hu Shih and India Lobby leader Dr. Anup Singh, and messages from the Indian Agent-General Bajpai, and Nehru himself. In her closing speech, Pearl Buck linked Indian freedom to American racial equality and Chinese political equality, concluding the day with the internationalist statement, "freedom for all—that is a meaning of this war, or it has no meaning."<sup>72</sup>

After arriving in India in early April, Louis Johnson immediately took a stand for American promotion of freedom in India. One day after his arrival he cabled the President, urging Roosevelt to personally intercede on the matter of India's independence with Churchill.<sup>73</sup> Without delay Johnson also began acting as an intermediary between the British and Indian nationalist leaders. Johnson later reported to the president that both Cripps and Nehru indicated, "that the fact they have not already failed has been due to the efforts of your personal representative."<sup>74</sup> When Cripps himself began factoring Johnson's suggestions into the British proposals, the British Government of India had had enough. Viceroy Linlithgow appealed to the Prime Minister, who in turn pressured Roosevelt's London aide Harry

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<sup>72</sup> "India-China Day," *India Today* 2, no. 12, (March, 1942): 2.

<sup>73</sup> Hess, *American Encounters India*, 47.

<sup>74</sup> "The Personal Representative of the President in India (Johnson) to the Secretary of State," April 7, 1942, in *FRUS, General; the British Commonwealth; the Far East*: 628-629.

Hopkins to distance the administration from its aggressive envoy.<sup>75</sup> Although Johnson returned to the United States for health reasons in early May without accomplishing anything concrete, he left as a firm ally of the nationalist cause. “It is impossible for an American, like myself, to come into your great country...without being at once impressed by the dignity and value of your civilization,” Johnson told the Indian press. “Nehru is my friend, and I know I want to be his.”<sup>76</sup> None of these words, however, did anything to prevent the failure of the Cripps mission.

In an April 11 telegram, Cripps informed Churchill that the Indian National Congress had rejected the British delegation’s proposals of a future Dominion Status on the grounds that India’s right to independence should be exercised immediately. The gloomy Cripps concluded that “there is clearly no hope of agreement, and I shall start home on Sunday.” The Prime Minister forwarded Cripps’ message along with other materials to Roosevelt, indicating that everything had been done to demonstrate “how great was the British desire to reach a settlement.”<sup>77</sup>

Roosevelt felt otherwise and responded to the Prime Minister immediately, using the threat of a negative American public reaction to urge the Prime Minister to keep the negotiations from collapsing.<sup>78</sup> The American president claimed, “American public opinion cannot understand why...the British Government ... is not willing to permit [India] to enjoy what is tantamount to self-government during the war.” Roosevelt also warned that if “India should subsequently be successfully invaded by Japan with attendant serious military or

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<sup>75</sup> Kux, *Estranged Democracies*, 15-17.

<sup>76</sup> “Colonel Louis Johnson on India and Indians,” *India Today*, 3, no. 2 (May 1942): 4.

<sup>77</sup> “The British Prime Minister to President Roosevelt,” April 11, 1942, in *FRUS, 1942, General; the British Commonwealth; the Far East*: 632-633.

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in “The British Prime Minister to President Roosevelt,” April 11, 1942, in *FRUS, 1942, General; the British Commonwealth; the Far East*: 632.

naval defeats for our side, the prejudicial reaction on American public opinion can hardly be over-estimated.”<sup>79</sup>

A month earlier, Roosevelt had declared that India was “none of [his] business.” Now he was adopting a confrontational tone with his closest ally. It seems unlikely that Roosevelt had reversed his stance about India in the span of one month, although the President himself often described his approach to foreign policy as being “a juggler, and I never let my right hand know what my left hand does.”<sup>80</sup> FDR scholar Warren Kimball goes as far to suggest that the phrase “American public opinion,” was really a euphemism for the President’s own opinion on the matter, a rhetorical veil which allowed Roosevelt to maintain his good relationship with Churchill.<sup>81</sup> Yet regardless of his true intentions, by invoking the specter of American public opinion to pressure Churchill, Roosevelt was employing one of his strongest policy tools. American public opinion not only mattered to him, as president, but also, he clearly expected it to matter to the British Prime Minister. This was the expectation that motivated pressure groups such as the India Lobby.

And by the spring of 1942, it seemed obvious that at least some significant element of the American public was engaged by the dramatic Indian situation. On March 1 the *New York Times* reprinted Philip Zec’s editorial cartoon from the *London Daily Mirror*, which depicted Mahatma Gandhi smiling up at the British gladiator who was seated upon a smoldering “Indian volcano of unrest.”<sup>82</sup> The cartoonist was confident that British newspaper readers would recognize Gandhi without any sort of identification other than the nationalist leader’s

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<sup>79</sup> “The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom,” April 11, 1942, in *FRUS*, 1942, General; *the British Commonwealth; the Far East*, 633-634.

<sup>80</sup> Franklin Roosevelt, May 15, 1942, quoted in Warren Kimball, *The Juggler, Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 7.

<sup>81</sup> Kimball, *The Juggler*, 9, 135.

<sup>82</sup> “A London Critic and the India Problem,” *New York Times*, March 1, 1942, pg. E3.



iconic glasses, bald head, and cross-legged position. So, clearly, were the editors of the *New York Times*. The *Times* published five editorial cartoons about India over the course of the year, with three published in the month of March alone. In 1942, American newspapers carried three times the number of articles on India than they ever had previously, reflecting, in Gary Hess' words: "unparalleled public interest in India."<sup>83</sup> Nine days after the Cripps Mission had arrived in India, a public opinion poll that conducted two random samples, found that 70 to 78 percent of Americans were "familiar with the plan to give India self-government." From those Americans who replied in the affirmative, 37 to 41 percent favored granting India dominion status at the time of the survey, 19 to 24 percent favored dominion status after the conclusion of the war, and only 2 percent did not agree with any plan of Indian self-government.<sup>84</sup> Americans were not only conscious of events in India, but a large percentage of them believed India's self-government should not wait until the end of the war.

While the extent of general American awareness of the diplomatic missions in India was itself impressive, the India Lobby worked to turn both American interest and support of Indian independence into a new direction for U.S. foreign policy. Lobby events, such as India-China Day, demonstrated how the Lobby used the internationalist tenants of universal freedom to mobilize support and create pressure on the Administration and Congress. The India Lobby also began asserting that British imperialism in India was an expression of the same racial discrimination blacks faced in the United States.

Not long after the failure of the Cripps mission, Walter White, the executive secretary of the NAACP, sent a telegram of "fraternal greetings" to the Indian National Congress. White identified the "struggle towards freedom for all races" in this early contact between the

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<sup>83</sup> Hess, *America Encounters India*, 33.

<sup>84</sup> Quoted in Hess, *America Encounters India*, 45.

leading black civil rights organization in the United States and the dominant Indian political party, implying that racial oppression was a global problem that should be challenged universally.<sup>85</sup> According to scholar Nico Slate, White was a key proponent of “colored cosmopolitanism,” a movement that created solidarity across the colored world by building a united front against all forms of racial oppression.<sup>86</sup> This internationalist movement expounded the belief in the rights and freedoms of all humans irrespective of race, nationality, or religion. At the same time, proponents of this ideology firmly believed that democracies should take the lead in promoting universalism. Thus, when Pearl Buck, “strictly a moderate liberal”, spoke at an East-West Association meeting in Boston on April 28, she phrased her appeal for support of India’s quest for independence as: “We Americans for victory’s sake, cannot let India be none of our business,” directly contrasting Roosevelt’s confidential claim that India was “none of my business.”<sup>87</sup> Though Buck was best known for her work supporting political rights in China, she identified both Indian nationalism and the African-American civil rights movement as congruent causes. One of her biographers describes Buck as the “leading American spokesperson for Indian liberation” in 1942, while the *Chicago Defender*, a foremost black newspaper, awarded Buck “Woman of the Year” in 1943.<sup>88</sup> Buck’s advocacy work exemplified how Slate’s framework of “colored cosmopolitanism” helps illuminate the ideological commonalities between these seemingly unconnected causes.

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<sup>85</sup> Walter White to India National Congress, April 16, 1942, *The Papers of the NAACP Part 14. Race Relations in the International Arena, 1940-1955*, Reel 9.

<sup>86</sup> Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism*, 2.

<sup>87</sup> Karen J. Leong, *The China Mystique: Pearl S. Buck, Anna May Wong, Mayling Soong, and the Transformation of American Orientalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 31; “Pearl Buck on India,” *India Today* 3, no. 2 (May, 1942): 2.

<sup>88</sup> Peter Conn, *Pearl S. Buck: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 268.

Yet almost exactly one year after the Lobby adopted the Atlantic Charter as its rhetorical framework, the movement faced an unexpected challenge. Just when everything seemed to be coming together and American public support for Indian independence appeared to be driving the president to demand a change in British policy, the failure of the Cripps mission led to a rupture between Indian nationalists and the British that changed the political dynamic. This new political climate became the impetus behind the India Lobby's subsequent strategic and structural evolution.

As Walter White explained in a letter to Pearl Buck on June 5, although the President expressed enthusiasm towards White's idea of a sending a black delegation to India, Roosevelt felt "it unwise to do anything right now because of Mr. Gandhi's statement that the chief interest of the United States in the Indian situation is based upon a desire to preserve and perpetuate 'British Imperialism' in the Orient."<sup>89</sup> The failure of the Cripps mission had created a practically untenable situation between Indian leaders and the British government. The day after the Indian National Congress rejected the Cripps proposal, Gandhi encouraged India to participate in "non-violent non-cooperation" to counter British imperial oppression, writing in his political newspaper *Harijan* that "non-violent resisters...will not bend the knee before the aggressor. Non-violent resisters will not be deceived by promises."<sup>90</sup> The editors of *India Today* scrambled to justify the Indian leaders' call for British withdrawal to their American audience by describing non-violent non-cooperation as a logical progression from the failed Cripps proposal, and not acquiescence to increasing Japanese aggression. Gandhi appeared to realize that his proposed civil disobedience campaign would alienate Roosevelt, an American president he had just accused of being complicit with British imperialism. On

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<sup>89</sup> Walter White to Pearl Buck, June 5, 1942, *The Papers of the NAACP Part 14*, Reel 9.

<sup>90</sup> Excerpted in "Non-Violent Non-Cooperation," *India Today* 3, no. 2 (May 1942): 1.

July 1, the Indian leader addressed a personal letter to the American president insisting, “my present proposal, that the British should unreservedly and without reference to the wishes of the people of India immediately withdraw their rule, is prompted by the friendliest intention.”<sup>91</sup> The editors of *India Today* jumped into the fray by claiming in an editorial that, “India will resist the aggressor with all that she has. America can best serve her own cause, and the larger cause of the United Nations by inducing Britain and India to immediately reopen the negotiations. It is late—but not too late.”<sup>92</sup>

It was too late, however. In the coming months, Gandhi’s proposed “non-violent non-cooperation” movement developed into a full-fledged Indian civil disobedience campaign just as the Allied war effort in the Pacific neared collapse. On July 14, 1942 the inner cabinet of the Indian National Congress passed a resolution demanding, “British rule in India must end immediately,” threatening a nation-wide civil disobedience campaign that would impede British Government of India activity through boycotts, strikes, and walkouts. The Congress framed the resolution in terms of the global fight for freedom, arguing that “India in bondage can play no effective part in defending herself and in effecting the fortunes of the war that is desolating humanity,” but these appeals to the spirit of the Atlantic Charter sounded defensive in the face of certain outrage from mainstream media in Britain and the U.S. Yet after years of unfulfilled promises about independence, India’s leaders had reached their breaking point. The editors of *India Today* devoted their entire July issue to the Indian National Congress resolution in an attempt to blunt the negative impact of the proposed “Quit India” movement. The editors defended the Congress, assigning blame to the British who had

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<sup>91</sup> Gandhi to Franklin Roosevelt, Sevagram, India, July 1, 1942, in *Mahatma Gandhi, Letters to Americans*, edited by Dr. E.S. Reddy (New Delhi: Shri Arun Maheshwari, 1998), 40-41.

<sup>92</sup> “As We See It,” *India Today* 3, no. 2: (May 1942): 4.

“driven...[India] to this desperate resolve.” The voice of the India Lobby never appeared more anxious. The *India Today* editorial concluded by declaring that “zero hour struck in India long ago.”<sup>93</sup>

On August 8 in Bombay, the All-India Congress Committee officially adopted the Quit India movement. The next day the *New York Times* reprinted two editorial cartoons. One, created by the Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist, and devote Christian, Vaughn Shoemaker of the *Chicago Daily News*, depicted Japan as the powerful wolf from “Little Red Riding Hood” salivating over an infantile Gandhi quaking in his “Independence Movement” cradle, just waiting to be eaten. The second, drawn by the New Zealand cartoonist, liberal David Low, showed Gandhi sitting at his iconic spinning wheel, being dropped as a bomb over a field of army tanks as the “new weapon from India.”<sup>94</sup> Both cartoons expressed a prevailing sentiment in Britain and now presumably in the United States—with the implementation of the Quit India movement, India was vulnerable to Japanese conquest. An August 9 *New York Times* editorial identified India as one of war’s six “crucial fronts” during the summer of 1942, and assessed that “London’s answer—supported by Washington—is that the issue is complex, that many interests must be considered, that freedom cannot be rushed through now without injustice and chaos in India, thereby leading to a fatal weakening of the Allied military position.”<sup>95</sup> According to one historian, the Quit India movement threatened to transform India into a “major internal security problem” that would

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<sup>93</sup> “As We See It,” *India Today* 3, no. 4 (July 1942): 2-3.

<sup>94</sup> “Mother India,” *New York Times*, August 9, 1942, E3. The title refers to Katherine Mayo’s widely popular novel, *Mother India* (1927), which presents colonialism as a positive force for moral improvement. Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism*, 58.; “Vaughn Shoemaker; Created John Q. Public,” *New York Times*, August 22, 1991. “Britain’s Mr. Low Examines the India Question,” *New York Times*, August 9, 1942, E3; “Biography: David Low,” *British Cartoon Archive*, <http://www.cartoons.ac.uk/artists/davidlow/biography>.

<sup>95</sup> “Global Prospect,” *New York Times*, August 9, 1942, E1.

forestall any further US pressure regarding British control of the sub-continent.<sup>96</sup> Gary Hess, claims that during this period, “Roosevelt had in effect closed the door on India.”<sup>97</sup>

The British certainly responded to Quit India without any of their previous sensitivity to American anti-colonial opinion. The British government of India arrested Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, and more than 60,000 other Indians guilty of participating in the civil disobedience movement.<sup>98</sup> By the end of August over 1,000 people had died and 3,000 were injured in the uproar.<sup>99</sup> On August 12, the India League of America held an emergency meeting condemning the mass imprisonment of Indian nationalists. They expressed their conviction that “Britain’s policy of ruthless suppression, designed to stifle the people’s demand for freedom, will culminate in disaster and destroy forever the slender remaining chance of settlement in India,” and appealed to President Roosevelt to intervene, “for an immediate settlement of the India problem based upon the Four Freedoms.”<sup>100</sup> But they were soon to discover that appealing to the Four Freedoms was no longer an effective lobbying strategy.

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<sup>96</sup> Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan*, 135.

<sup>97</sup> Winston Churchill to Franklin D. Roosevelt, July 31, 1942, in *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*, 230-231; Hess, *America Encounters India*, 80.

<sup>98</sup> Clymer, *Quest for Freedom*, 93.

<sup>99</sup> Kux, *Estranged Democracies*, 24.

<sup>100</sup> “Emergency Meeting of the India League of America,” *India Today* 3, no. 5 (August, 1942): 2.

#### Chapter 4: “The Indian Acid Test”: August 1942- June 1945

Out of a selection of six major American newspapers that reported on the Quit India movement, five published pointed critiques within three days of the Indian nationalists’ adoption of the civil disobedience movement. These papers ranged from New York to Washington, Boston to Chicago, and Pittsburgh to Atlanta.<sup>101</sup> On August 8, the day Indian nationalists adopted their civil disobedience campaign, the *New York Times* alone, published three articles on the movement, one of which was entitled, “Axis Utilizes Gandhi’s Cause.”<sup>102</sup> According to Hess, editorials in the *New York Herald Tribune*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Baltimore Sun*, *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, and *The Christian Science Monitor* also condemned the Indian nationalists for welcoming a Japanese invasion.<sup>103</sup> The American press not only portrayed the civil disobedience movement as Indian capitulation to the Axis war machine, it also questioned whether the nationalists actually adopted non-violence. The August 11 *Washington Post* article “Violent Nonviolence” described the first two days of the civil disobedience movement as resulting in “assaults on policemen, the burning of police booths and stations, the stoning of public conveyances and the looting of shops,” while the *Chicago Tribune* labeled the movement’s participants as “Mohandas K. Gandhi’s zealots.”<sup>104</sup> Even the *Daily Boston Globe*’s relatively tempered analysis of Quit India concluded, “we have sympathy for India, but we will not commit suicide for her.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> I consulted the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, the *Daily Boston Globe*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *The Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Atlanta Constitution*.

<sup>102</sup> “Axis Utilizes Gandhi’s Cause,” *New York Times*, August 8, 1942, pg. 12.

<sup>103</sup> Hess, *America Encounters India*, 71.

<sup>104</sup> “Violent Nonviolence,” *Washington Post*, August 11, 1942, pg. 8; “New Riots Flare in India,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 11, 1942, pg. 3.

<sup>105</sup> Dorothy Thompson, “Gandhi Chooses to Be Rebel Rather Than Revolutionary,” *Daily Boston Globe*, August 12, 1942, pg. 16.

The one newspaper out of these initial six that published an article that did not condemn the Quit India movement was the leading black paper, *The Pittsburgh Courier*. In contrast to the mainstream portrayal of Quit India, the *Courier* allowed its audience to read Gandhi's own explanation of the movement, and concluded its article with an announcement that, "an appeal to the British government to take the initiative in reopening negotiations with the Indian leaders for a settlement is being made by 25 leading English authors and writers."<sup>106</sup> In a follow-up article one week later, the black newspaper voiced its full support of Quit India with the piercing question, "will the civil disobedience campaign succeed or will thousands of Indians be slaughtered?"<sup>107</sup> While the mainstream American press denounced the Indian nationalist movement, *The Pittsburgh Courier* reaffirmed its support for India. J.J. Singh and the India Lobby recognized the opportunity and responded by developing an explicit mobilization strategy that targeted the black community. Rather than fading into the background, as some scholars suggest, the India Lobby actually intensified their efforts to impact American policy towards Indian independence.

Before the Quit India movement, the Office of Wartime Information (OWI) had approached NAACP leader Walter White about contributing to a wartime radio broadcast program called "Voices of Freedom." The OWI wanted White to send a goodwill message to the people of Japan and India. On August 10, 1942, two days after the Indian National Congress announced their civil disobedience movement and the British responded by arresting Indian nationalists, White backed out of his commitment. He explained that the British arrests made it impossible for him to speak in the radio broadcast, since now he had

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<sup>106</sup> "Gandhi Tells Churchill: 'Free India and Africa and the Colored Races Will Help the United Nations Turn Japan Out of the Countries She Has Conquered,'" *The Pittsburgh Courier*, August 8, 1942, pg. 20.

<sup>107</sup> "Showdown in India," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, August 15, 1942, pg. 6.



“nothing convincing to say.”<sup>108</sup> “India is an acid test of good faith and the truth of the war aims which the United Nations profess,” wrote civil rights activist Pauli Murray, “a dozen Harlems throughout the United States have their eyes fixed on India, where they seek some light concerning the future of the Colored peoples.”<sup>109</sup> The black community’s supportive response to Quit India exemplified the new kind of focused, liberal audience that the India Lobby actively pursued as it began to heighten its mobilization efforts in the fall of 1942.

To combat Quit India’s negative political repercussions for the India Lobby, the Lobby not only refocused its appeal among American liberals, but it also redirected its geographic focus from New York City to Washington, DC. In August, the India League of America opened its first branch office at 1734 F. St. NW in Washington, DC, recognizing the capital’s growing role as America’s power center.<sup>110</sup> This was a pioneering move. Although the New York-based Jewish Lobby organized under the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs (later the AZEC) in 1940, even by 1943 their former chairman Rabbi Stephen Wise noted that they had yet to develop a Washington office, “nor could boast of a single resident representative there.”<sup>111</sup> The fallout Quit India also prompted the India Lobby to increase its fiscal impact. By the end of the year, the India Lobby’s projected that its expenditures for 1943 would reach \$10,000, the equivalent of roughly \$134,000 today, and double its 1942 expenses. In contrast, the Jewish Lobby’s projected budget for the 1943-1944 fiscal year was

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<sup>108</sup> Walter White to Alan P. Murray, August 10, 1942, Washington, DC, in *The Papers of the NAACP Part 14*, Reel 9.

<sup>109</sup> Pauli Murray, “An American Negro Views the Indian Question,” *The Call*, September 4, 1942, pg. 4; “Harlem and India,” *City Reporter* 4, no. 34 (August 25, 1942): 2, in *The Papers of the NAACP Part 14*, Reel 9.

<sup>110</sup> *India Today* 3, no. 5 (August 1942): 4.

<sup>111</sup> Quoted in Bierbrier, “The American Zionist Emergency Council,” 85.

\$509,382, what would equal about \$6.8 million today.<sup>112</sup> While the India Lobby's geographic and monetary expansion were concrete signs of its maturation, the Lobby's achievements in the wake of the Quit India policy setback were all the more remarkable given the organization's comparatively small size.

Meanwhile, the India Lobby continued to battle the negative portrayal of their cause in the press, and on September 28 placed a full-page advertisement on page nine of the *New York Times* titled "INDIA: The Time for Mediation is NOW." 57 prominent Americans signed the advertisement, including ACLU director Roger Baldwin, Jewish Lobby leader Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, *The New Republic* editor Bruce Bliven, and author Upton Sinclair, demonstrating the India Lobby's continued appeal within liberal circles.<sup>113</sup> The Lobby's amplified level of activity extended to physical mobilization as well. The September issue of *India Today* highlighted the increased turnout to meetings in major American cities: in Chicago on August 27, 2,200 attended a meeting held by Post War World Council, in Washington, DC the September 9<sup>th</sup> India League meeting attracted 1,500 audience members, while "in spite of the rain" in Boston on September 20, "several hundred turned up" at the Friends of Asia meeting at Old South Meeting House.<sup>114</sup> Although the Quit India crisis had altered impressions of Indian nationalism within the mainstream press, the India Lobby could now rely on increasing dedication among core members—and new friends—who joined in

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<sup>112</sup> Informational Pamphlet, *The Papers of the NAACP Part 14*, Reel 9. According to Bierbrier, "the American Zionist community was the largest and wealthiest in the world" (Bierbrier, 86-87). I calculated today's money equivalents using the purchasing power calculator at <http://www.measuringworth.com/ppowerus/>.

<sup>113</sup> "Display Ad 9," *New York Times*, September 28, 1942, pg. 9.

<sup>114</sup> *India Today* 3, no. 6 (September 1942): 1-2. The impact of the respective Indian and Israel Lobbies should also be understood in the context of their magnitude—while the India Lobby drew several thousand supporters to various events throughout the war, AEZC rallies could draw more than 200,000 people (Bierbrier, 97).

response the Indian nationalists' controversial move. In other words, the Quit India movement exposed the India Lobby's true supporters.

On October 5, the Post War World Council organized an emergency conference to "promote India's Freedom now." At this meeting, the newly formed National Coordinating Committee laid out its strategic approach to encouraging mediation regarding Indian independence, disseminating information, and "accelerating" public opinion. Those at the October 5 meeting also discussed outreach to a list of organizations that read like a directory of the American liberal coalition: "YWCA, Methodist Student Movement, NAACP, March on Washington Committee, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Federal Council of Churches, Worker's Defense League, War Resister's League, NCPW, LID, World Federalists, Consumer's Cooperative League, Chinese Institute, Chinese News Service, League of Nations Association, American Friends' Service Committee, Greater Participation of India in the War Committee, farm organizations, Labor unions."<sup>115</sup>

The Socialist leader and future India League member, Norman Thomas, presided over the Committee's next meeting. For their first item of business, the Committee vowed to provide complete support for the India League of America against a "renegade League of Indian Independence," to maintain the unity of the India Lobby in this moment of crisis. The Committee's recognition of the India League as the leader of the Lobby's liberal coalition demonstrated the status the India League had gained under the guidance of J.J. Singh. The emergence of a "renegade" organization, however, also raised the issue of competing pressure groups, a significant challenge faced by ethnic lobbies seeking to be the sole voice of an unformed nation—the Jewish Lobby similarly reminded its constituents to "mobilize

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<sup>115</sup> "Minutes of Conference Called by Post War World Council," October 5, 1942, *The Papers of the NAACP Part 14*, Reel 9.

public opinion behind the accredited Zionist bodies.”<sup>116</sup> To be most effective, the India Lobby wanted to present a united front rather than displaying internal divisions. For example, one year later, Dr. Anup Singh left the India League of American to co-found the National Committee for India’s Independence in Washington, DC. In contrast to the League, the new organization was organized and composed solely of Indians who resided in the United States.<sup>117</sup> Even though Dr. Singh’s mobilization strategies contradicted J.J. Singh’s vision of appealing to prominent *American* liberals, the two organizations shared the same objective—gaining American support for Indian independence. The emergence of competing advocacy organizations during this second phase of Lobby activity actually highlighted the maturation of the India Lobby from a small twelve-person cultural organization into a national pressure group with multiple strategies (and organizations) for influencing policy in Washington.

Ultimately, J.J. Singh’s focused recruitment of American liberal power brokers became the India Lobby’s predominate mobilization strategy following Quit India. The Coordinating Committee adopted Singh’s strategy of attracting “a deputation of very prominent liberals” to go “down to Washington for the purpose of bringing pressure to bear on Congress and the President.” The Committee also proposed “activating Labor” on the India issue by having J.J. Singh speak at a convention of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, a federation of industrial unions, in Boston in November, and personally approach other union leaders.<sup>118</sup> Although the British Ambassador to the United States, Lord

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<sup>116</sup> Quoted in Bierbrier, “The American Zionist Emergency Council,” 84.

<sup>117</sup> Anup Singh to Walter White, June 15, 1944, *Papers of the NAACP*, Reel 9.

<sup>118</sup> “Minutes of Coordinating Committee on Indian Freedom,” October 19, 1942, *The Papers of the NAACP Part 14*, Reel 9. Singh’s efforts evidently paid off—the C.I.O. resolved to support the “aspirations of the Indian people for national independence,” and urged President

Halifax, incorrectly labeled the India League of America as the “local agency of the Indian National Congress,” in his annual political review of the United States for London, he astutely noted that the League (and the corresponding India Lobby) had “intensified” its activities in the summer of 1942. The Ambassador’s observations of active sympathy for Indian nationalism in “doctrinaire left-wing circles,” and of widespread criticism of British policy in the U.S. press and government during this summer highlight the growing perception that under J.J. Singh’s leadership, the India Lobby was achieving tangible results.<sup>119</sup> Nehru had perhaps spoken too soon, when he sarcastically remarked two years earlier that, “unfortunately, the Indians in American are a very unsatisfactory lot. They shout a lot and do no work. Often they do injury to our cause.”<sup>120</sup> Despite the tumult of the summer of 1942, the India Lobby expanded both its outreach and impact on key elements of American public opinion and, liberal public-opinion makers.

On October 26, Wendell Willkie, the former 1940 Republican presidential candidate, gave a nation-wide radio broadcast about his recently completed world tour that mentioned how the U.S. position on India mattered to other Asian leaders who “cannot tell from our vague and vacillating talk whether or not we do stand for freedom.” Willkie then called for a “Pacific Charter” for the region.<sup>121</sup> Both Gary Hess and Dennis Kux identify Willkie’s speech as the catalyst that pushed Roosevelt once again to attempt a more active role in

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Roosevelt to “exert his influence to secure the liberation of the Indian Congress leaders now imprisoned.” In “C.I.O. Urges Mediation in India,” *India Today* 3, no. 9 (December 1942): 2.

<sup>119</sup> Edward Fredrick Linley Wood, *Confidential Dispatches; Analyses of America by the British Ambassador, 1939-1945*, ed. Thomas E. Hackey (Evanston, Illinois: New University Press, 1974), 65. Halifax sent his 1942 annual report to British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden on June 26, 1943 from Washington, DC.

<sup>120</sup> Quoted in Clymer, *Quest for Freedom*, 23.

<sup>121</sup> “Text of Willkie’s Address to the Nation Renewing his Plea for a Second Front,” *New York Times*, October 27, 1942, pg. 8.

solving the India problem. Yet only Hess makes any connection to the numerous other publicity efforts that summer and autumn on behalf of India.<sup>122</sup> To date, the diplomatic history of US-British-India relations has not made space for the lobbying efforts that actually escalated after Quit India. It is true, however, that Willkie caught Roosevelt's attention. The president issued a statement reaffirming the universal nature of the Atlantic Charter, and dismissing the suggestion that Willkie's speech had sparked any serious controversy.<sup>123</sup> Willkie's speech had sparked the President to send William Phillips, the director of the London department of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the intelligence-gathering agency that preceded the CIA, as his second personal representative to India.<sup>124</sup>

Kux casts the second of the president's personal emissaries to India as the opposite of his first envoy. "If Louis Johnson typified the back-slapping, rough and tumble American politician," he writes, "William Phillips personified the American East Coast aristocracy."<sup>125</sup> Phillips, a Boston blueblood (his great-grandfather was the first mayor of Boston) was also the President's second cousin by marriage. A 1935 *Time* magazine cover story, which showed a stern-looking Phillips in a black tie and top hat, concluded that, "rarely before has U. S. diplomacy had a less jarring personality than the present Undersecretary of State."<sup>126</sup> At various points in his career, the U.S. State Department had stationed Phillips in England, China, the Netherlands, Canada, and Italy, where he had served as ambassador. As

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<sup>122</sup> Kux, *Estranged Democracies*, 28; Hess, *America Encounters India*, 94.

<sup>123</sup> "Charter Says 'All' President Replies," *New York Times*, October 28, 1942, pg. 4.

<sup>124</sup> William Phillips, *Ventures in Diplomacy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952), 218; Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 542.

<sup>125</sup> Kux, *Estranged Democracies*, 28.

<sup>126</sup> Though founded in 1630, Boston did not adopt a city charter until 1822. "The Cabinet: Professionals to London," *Time* 26, no. 24 (December 9, 1935); Caroline H. Keith, "Phillips, William," *American National Biography Online*, 2000.

Roosevelt's personal representative Phillips gained the status of an ambassador in India.<sup>127</sup>

Yet it is quite possible that Roosevelt, the juggler, was making a calculated move by sending such a high profile representative to India without any real expectation of success. It may have been a tactic to placate liberals with an empty gesture. According to Kenton Clymer, it would have been harder to imagine "someone less likely than Phillips to sympathize with the Indian nationalist leaders, much less with the masses."<sup>128</sup>

The British quickly commended Phillips' appointment, with one senior diplomat claiming: "I can hardly conceive a better appointment or one which is likely to be more helpful to our cause in India...."<sup>129</sup> Secretary of State Cordell Hull carefully instructed Phillips that while the "entire Government earnestly favor[s] freedom for all dependent peoples at the earliest date practicable," the diplomat should by no means "bring pressure...to bear on the British" or initiate any American plans.<sup>130</sup> It was a delicate situation, and clearly Phillips had his work cut out for him. Just before leaving for India, Phillips replied with a long missive of his own that began, "I hope, Mr. Secretary, that you do not expect too much of me." The wary ambassador left Great Britain on December 28 to arrive at his post in New Delhi on January 8, 1943.

The India problem became even more complex on February 10, 1943 when Gandhi began a three-week long fast from prison. Until the end of Gandhi's fast on March 3, Phillips communicated almost daily with the State Department. To add to the high-tension atmosphere that Gandhi had created, Phillips informed Hull on February 10 that for the first

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<sup>127</sup> Phillips, *Ventures in Diplomacy*.

<sup>128</sup> Clymer, *Quest for Freedom*, 124.

<sup>129</sup> Earl of Perth to Neville Butler, November 29, 1942, in Clymer, *Quest for Freedom*, 122.

<sup>130</sup> Cordell Hull to William Phillips, November 20, 1942, in *FRUS, 1942, General; the British Commonwealth; the Far East*, 746-748.

time Viceroy Linlithgow appeared suspicious of Phillips' mission and U.S. motives toward India. Phillips reported the Viceroy's negative attitude resulted from the growing amount of attention that he was receiving as Roosevelt's representative, mostly from Indians who believed that, "the President of the United States alone can bring any influence to bear upon the British Government."<sup>131</sup> Phillips further explained that the Indian conviction arose from President Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech and statements in the Atlantic Charter. Phillips reported, "the pressure on me as the President's representative to do something to save Gandhi's life is increasing hourly."<sup>132</sup> By March 1943, Phillips informed the President that Indian animosity towards the British appeared to have reached a new high. Phillips then outlined his first policy suggestion, advising a meeting facilitated by the US with all Indian leaders to discuss the region's future. The senior diplomat explicitly warned the president that if the impasse in India continued, it "may affect our conduct of the war in this part of the world and our future relations with colored races. It may not be successful, but, at least, America will have taken a step in furthering the ideals of the Atlantic Charter."<sup>133</sup> As Phillips' reports became increasingly critical of British policy in India, Roosevelt expressed surprise to his aide Harry Hopkins, writing that it was all "amazingly radical for a man like Bill."<sup>134</sup> It is worth noting, however, that even within private communication, U.S. officials described their involvement in the India situation with internationalist language

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<sup>131</sup> William Phillips to Cordell Hull, February 10, 1943, William Phillips to Franklin Roosevelt, February 11, 1943, both in *FRUS, 1943, The Near East and Africa*, 187-191.

<sup>132</sup> William Phillips to Cordell Hull, February 19, 1943, in *FRUS, 1943, The Near East and Africa*, 196.

<sup>133</sup> William Phillips to Franklin Roosevelt, March 3, 1943, *FRUS, 1943, The Near East and Africa*, 205-207.

<sup>134</sup> Franklin Roosevelt to Harry Hopkins, March 19, 1943, in *F.D.R.: His Personal Letters*, ed. Elliot Roosevelt, vol. 2 (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1950), 1414.



When Phillips suggested that Roosevelt intervene in the India situation after Gandhi ended his fast, the personal representative asked the President to consider “our future relations with colored races” in his policy decision.<sup>135</sup> This comment perfectly illustrates the impact of a rising spirit of “colored cosmopolitanism,” yet Nico Slate does not address the details of this narrative moment in his recent monograph. When J.J. Singh first invited Walter White to join the India League’s National Advisory Board, he asked the vocal civil rights activist to join the League as a fellow supporter of “international justice and democracy.”<sup>136</sup> While Singh’s language reflected a refined Wilsonianism, his attempt to recruit the head of the leading American civil rights organization—the NAACP—demonstrated Singh’s efforts to identify the India Lobby’s cause with the emerging colored cosmopolitanism.

By 1943, the concentrated nature of the India Lobby’s constituency was increasingly apparent. A full-page advertisement of the March 22 edition of the *Washington Post*, asked a single question: “WHAT ABOUT INDIA—NOW?” Funded by R. Lal Singh, a resident of Los Angeles and a member of the Indian National Congress, the graphic advertisement included pro-Indian quotations from various “leaders of American thought.”<sup>137</sup> At the same time, however, a public opinion poll conducted on April 6, 1943 indicated that American support of the Indian nationalist cause had declined from its high of the previous summer. Though 62 percent of polled Americans believed that Britain should grant India its independence, only 19 percent of that same group felt that independence should be given immediately, down from a high of 43 percent the previous summer. Additionally, of the

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<sup>135</sup> Phillips, *Ventures in Diplomacy*, 229.

<sup>136</sup> J.J. Singh, Roger Baldwin and Frances Gunter to Walter White, New York, May 22, 1943, *The Papers of the NAACP Part 14*, Reel 9.

<sup>137</sup> “Display Ad. 14,” *Washington Post*, March 22, 1943, pg. 16.

group who favored independence, 22 percent thought that the United States should help Indian attain its independence while 43 percent believed the matter should still be left up to the British.<sup>138</sup> By contrast, a poll published in the leading black newspaper, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, indicated that as of October 1942, an overwhelming majority of black Americans supported immediate Indian independence. Out of the 10,000 black Americans who were asked: “Do you believe that India should contend for her rights and her liberty now?” nearly 88 percent, replied “yes.”<sup>139</sup> The India Lobby, in turn, redirected its energy to mobilizing this incredibly supportive constituency.

Back in India, however, William Phillips was unable to help bridge the differences between British officials and Indian nationalists. He left India on April 29, 1943, never to return. In his memoir, Phillips wrote, “I realized that I had barely scratched the surface of India’s problems.”<sup>140</sup> Phillips met with FDR to relay his impressions of the India situation. Yet the president proved too talkative and Phillips was unable to fully describe what he had learned about India and British policy over the past four months. Undeterred, however, the envoy hurried over to the State Department, where he dictated a “short memorandum” about his mission. Since Prime Minister Churchill was in Washington for a conference with the president on war planning, Phillips was able to meet with him at the British Embassy on Saturday, May 23, to summarize the contents of his report. Phillips informed the Prime Minister that because of America’s military interest in India, the United States should be involved in the question of its independence, for “if we do nothing...then we must be prepared for various serious consequences in the internal situation in India which may

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<sup>138</sup> Quoted in Hess, *America Encounters India*, 129.

<sup>139</sup> “India Justified in Freedom Fight, Readers Declare,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, October 10, 1942, pg. 1

<sup>140</sup> Phillips, *Ventures in Diplomacy*, 249.

develop as a result of despair and misery and anti-white sentiments of hundreds of millions of subject people.”<sup>141</sup> After hearing Phillips’ assessment, Churchill exploded: “My answer to you is: Take India if that is what you want! Take it by all mean! But I warn you that if I open the door a crack there will be the greatest blood-bath in all history.”<sup>142</sup> Fourteen months later, Drew Pearson, the feisty columnist who would later title his memoir, “Confessions of ‘an S.O.B.’,” published this hastily composed, confidential report that so enraged the British Prime Minister in the *Washington Post*.<sup>143</sup>

The culmination of Phillips’ mission and the White House’s retreat from taking an active role in the India situation did not deter the India Lobby, and for the next year the pressure group only increased their strategic efforts to recruit linchpin members of the liberal coalition to advance the fight for Indian independence in the United States.<sup>144</sup> White joined the League’s National Advisory Board on June 27, 1944, after a year of Singh’s persistent wooing.<sup>145</sup> Singh’s correspondence with the future Executive Board member illuminates Singh’s importance. White believed in “colored cosmopolitanism,” but that did not automatically translate into a willingness to formally identify with the India Lobby. Instead, Singh used his understanding of American politics and his infectious personality to advance

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<sup>141</sup> Phillips, *Ventures in Diplomacy*, 251-252.

<sup>142</sup> Phillips, *Ventures in Diplomacy*, 250-253. In a sense, Churchill was right. The partition of India and West and East Pakistan upon independence forced 14 million people from their homes, in the largest—and incredibly violent—human migration in recent history.

<sup>143</sup> Drew Pearson, “Confessions of an S.O.B.,” *Saturday Evening Post*, November 3, 1956, pg. 23.

<sup>144</sup> In a *New York Times* editorial letter exchange between chairman of the American Defense Group at Harvard University, Ralph Barton Perry, and Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, Welles dismissed the idea of active U.S. intervention in India as pure lunacy, writing: “to make active intervention in the Indian situation a test of liberalism, as some have done, presupposes a definition of liberalism which, I must confess, is beyond my comprehension,” from “Welles Explains African Dealings,” *New York Times*, April 11, 1943, pg. 1.

<sup>145</sup> Walter White to J.J. Singh, New York, June 27, 1944, *The Papers of the NAACP Part 14*, Reel 11.

the cause of the India Lobby by forming personal relationships with leading American liberals –whether “colored” or not. This process of mobilization has never been studied before and reveals a high degree of professionalism. In a June 7 letter, for example, Singh addressed White’s concerns about the time commitment with flattery: “my colleagues and I will deem it a great pleasure and privilege to have you on our Advisory Committee. I do hope, sir, that you will be able to accept our invitation.”<sup>146</sup> In a follow-up letter two weeks later, Singh added to his argument by including Democratic Congressman Emanuel Celler’s name in an enclosed list of new prestigious members of the League, clearly relying on Celler’s reputation as a well-known liberal to attract White to the India League.<sup>147</sup> Singh, in turn, was able to utilize White’s many connections to advance the cause of the India Lobby. Less than four months after becoming a member of the India League, White described Singh in an introductory letter to New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia as “not only a very close friend but one of the most intelligent persons on the Indian and other questions I know.”<sup>148</sup> Clearly, Singh was becoming a prototypical modern lobbyist –aggressive and effective in the arts of flattery, outreach and networking.

Shortly after White and Celler joined the India League of America, Drew Pearson, published excerpts from the leaked Phillips report in his daily column on July 25, 1944.

Pearson had been reporting on Phillips’ policy recommendations for over a year, but this

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<sup>146</sup> J.J. Singh to Walter White, June 7, 1944, New York, *The Papers of the NAACP Part 14*, Reel 11.

<sup>147</sup> J.J. Singh to Walter White, June 21, 1944, New York, *The Papers of the NAACP Part 14*, Reel 11.

<sup>148</sup> Walter White to Fiorello La Guardia, December 8, 1944, New York, *The Papers of the NAACP Part 14*, Reel 11. In fact, White was returning the favor. In preparation for the Secretary’s long-anticipated trip to India, Singh wrote five letters of introduction to leading Indians, writing that White was “a great friend of India and I depend on him for counsel and guidance for my work here.” J.J. Singh to Walter White, November 28, 1944, New York, quoted in Horne, *The End of Empires*, 178.

marked the first time that he had access to the actual classified document. On June 3, 1943, Pearson had characterized Phillips' report as "blunt, in spots bitter" noting that this was significant because Phillips had previously displayed "pro-British" sympathies. Pearson had also labeled Phillips as "mild, not addicted to crusading, but a thorough, conscientious diplomat."<sup>149</sup> The revelations from the actual report, however, were stunning. Phillips had not only stated in May 1943 that it was "time for the British to act," but the president's representative had also declared that it was imperative for the United States to get involved in the India situation to provide "proof positive to all peoples...that this is not a war of power politics but a war for all we say it is."<sup>150</sup>

Pearson later claimed that it was merely "luck" that enabled him to get his hands on the leaked governmental report.<sup>151</sup> Clearly, however, as the opening of this thesis describes in some detail, there was much more than luck involved. The stakes could not be higher for the advocates of Indian independence in 1943 and 1944. They needed to mobilize pressure on the American government. Following the aftermath of Quit India and with the failure of the Phillips mission, there was a palpable sense of urgency for members of the India Lobby. The complicated chain of custody of the leaked Phillips report only serves to underscore how mature and far-reaching that Lobby had become by summer 1944. The report's elusive path from the desk of junior State Department officer Robert Crane to finally find its way into Drew Pearson's hands documented the India Lobby's growth, as its influence extended within both the executive branch of the American government and a leading national newspaper. The Lobby activity surrounding the Phillips demonstrated the India Lobby's all-

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<sup>149</sup> Drew Pearson, "Washington Merry-Go-Round," *Washington Post*, June 3, 1943, pg. 16.

<sup>150</sup> William Phillips to Franklin Roosevelt, March 14, 1943, in *FRUS, 1943, The Near East and Africa: 221-222*.

<sup>151</sup> Pearson, "Confessions of an S.O.B.," pg. 88.

out attempt to revitalize the flagging official American interest in India's fight for independence.

On July 25—the day that Pearson published the leaked Phillips report—the India League of America sent out an official letter to “Friends” of the organization, calling on them to participate in an appeal to Lord Halifax to release Indian political prisoners. Singh had personally informed White of the plan several days previously, explaining that the petition would be submitted to the British Ambassador under the “signature of prominent Americans” on August 9—the two-year anniversary of the mass jailing of Indian nationalist leaders.<sup>152</sup> While White also received the July 25 form letter, the individual letter Singh had sent him a week earlier illustrates the careful planning that went into the India Lobby's activities at this time. Singh typed both letters to White on paper with the official India League letterhead, which listed members of the Executive Committee and National Advisory Board, but while the July 20 letterhead reached about halfway down the page, five days later it covered the entire length. The India League had reprinted its stationery specifically for July 25—it listed twenty additional members of the National Advisory Board (including both White and Celler) as well as the members' hometowns, which not only doubled the length of the letterhead but also demonstrated that while most of the League's members lived in the New York metropolitan area, the League's presence also extended to Ohio, Iowa, and even Colorado. The letter's postscript underscored that this particular letter was formatted to generate as large a response from its recipients as possible: the postscript noted that the enclosed appeal to Lord Halifax was prepared “in co-operation with Pearl S. Buck, Representative Emanuel Celler, Jo Davidson, Louis Fischer, Clare Boothe Luce, James G.

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<sup>152</sup> J.J. Singh to Walter White, July 20, 1944, New York, *The Papers of the NAACP*, Reel 11.

Patton and Richard Walsh,” some of the India Lobby’s most active and influential members.<sup>153</sup> The volume of coordinated Lobby activity on July 25 seems to suggest that it was no coincidence that Singh sent out this appeal to India Lobby supporters on the very day that Pearson generated international attention towards the issue of Indian independence. At the very least, it proves that August 1944 was a critical moment in the public campaign to produce a policy change regarding India.

Singh timed things well. After almost a year of declining interest in the India situation, Phillips, his mission, and India’s fight for independence were once more headline news. The London *Times* correspondent in India reported that the “disclosures...have provoked a first-class Press controversy.”<sup>154</sup> When Phillips resigned from his position as a diplomatic advisor to General Dwight D. Eisenhower in London in early September, allegedly because of the controversy surrounding the leak, the American press vigorously defended its countryman. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* blamed the British for Phillips’ recall, writing that Phillips’ only offense was “giving the President... a truthful, factual report of the defective statesmanship of one of our allies.”<sup>155</sup> Additionally, according to a United Press article that appeared on page 3 of the *Washington Post*, the uproar surrounding the Phillips leak and recall inspired the British information service to categorically respond to Phillips’ criticisms of British policy in India (though without ever mentioning Phillips by name),

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<sup>153</sup> J.J. Singh to “Friend,” June 25, 1944, *The Papers of the NAACP*, Reel 11. The Lobby coordination between Pearson’s July 25 column and their appeal to Lord Halifax was not the only connection between Pearson and new League member White. White and Pearson’s correspondence, in which both men address the other by first name, indicates that White and Pearson already had a close relationship. Walter White to Drew Pearson, August 28, 1944; Drew Pearson to Walter White, August 30, 1944, Walter White to Drew Pearson, September 15, 1944, in *The Papers of the NAACP*, Reel 9.

<sup>154</sup> “Indian Army’s Good Name,” *Times* [London, England] September 6, 1944, pg. 3.

<sup>155</sup> “The Phillips Case,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 2, 1944, pg. 8. Similar articles appeared in the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Pittsburgh Courier*.

claiming that “Winston Churchill never had stated that the Atlantic Charter did not apply to India.”<sup>156</sup> Scholars, however, argue about the impact of the leak. Gary Hess describes the Pearson column as generating a “quick and definite” British response and a significant amount of attention in major Indian newspapers, but little reaction in the American press.<sup>157</sup> Richard Aldrich directly refutes Hess’ analysis and instead describes a “flap” in Washington, but little reaction in either Britain or India.<sup>158</sup> In the estimation of international relations scholar Marshall Windmiller, the Phillips leak “became a cause célèbre and caused a major diplomatic problem with Britain.”<sup>159</sup> Consequently, Kenton Clymer focuses solely on the British government’s irate reaction to the refusal of Roosevelt’s administration to publicly condemn Phillips’ statements.<sup>160</sup>

Clymer’s narrow focus on diplomacy actually highlights the most remarkable impact of the Lobby-directed leak—official American silence, presumably out of deference to a successful domestic pressure group. The only time J.J. Singh is mentioned by name in the State Department records *FRUS*, is in the wake of the publicity generated by Pearson’s exposé. On Wednesday, August 8, the British Minister Ronald Campbell approached the Acting Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, Jr. about Pearson’s column, while also mentioning, “that J.J. Singh’s India League was about to publish an appeal to His Majesty’s Government for immediate grant of Indian independence” the following day. Campbell reported that the India League also planned to publish a copy of the Pearson article along

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<sup>156</sup> United Press, “Newspaper Replies to Diplomat on His Report on India,” *The Washington Post*, September 9, 1944, pg. 3.

<sup>157</sup> Hess, *America Encounters India*, 143-144. Dennis Kux supports Hess’ analysis in *Estranged Democracies*, 36.

<sup>158</sup> Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan*, 149-150.

<sup>159</sup> Marshall Windmiller, “A Tumultuous Time: OSS and Army Intelligence in India, 1942-1946” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 8, no. 1 (1995): 114.

<sup>160</sup> Clymer, *Quest for Freedom*, 191-197.



with their appeal. The British Minister concluded his letter by demanding that the U.S. government take action: “this seems to me to underline the desirability of a statement clearly dissociating the United States Government from the opinions expressed by Phillips.... It also seems to indicate that *the sooner such a statement can be made the better* [emphasis added].”<sup>161</sup> Yet despite British pressure, the Administration remained silent, never publicly denouncing Phillips for his controversial report. Although no smoking gun details any official American concern over domestic public opinion, Warren Kimball goes as far to suspect that the report was “leaked...at the pleasure if not connivance of the President.”<sup>162</sup> The episode recalls Roosevelt’s warning to Churchill in April 1942 of the impact of American public opinion on British policy in India. Regardless of the true motivations for official American silence, the India Lobby felt vindicated. In the September issue of *India Today*, the editors devoted the first page and a half to a play by play of the Phillips leak, introducing the article with the congratulatory statement: “Anglo-American relations with respect to the Indian political deadlock seemed to be approaching a climax during the last few weeks.”<sup>163</sup>

An August 9, 1944 appeal to Lord Halifax, urging the British Government to release the imprisoned Indian nationalist leaders, had placed the Indian struggle for freedom in the context of Atlantic Charter principles, but now also did so with an explicit reference to the “United Nations.” The central paragraph of the public letter read:

Every member of the United Nations must face the fact that the continued imprisonment of India’s democratic leaders is an ever-present challenge to our professed war aims and a denial

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<sup>161</sup> The British Minister (Campbell) to the Acting Secretary of State, August 8, 1944 in *FRUS, 1944. The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, the Far East*: 241-242

<sup>162</sup> Kimball, *The Juggler*, 147.

<sup>163</sup> “Ambassador William Phillips,” *India Today* 5, no. 6 (September 1944): 1.

of those broad principles of human rights upon which true civilization anywhere must be founded. India's freedom is not India's question alone. It is the question of human liberty.<sup>164</sup>

On January 2, 1942, the British and American allies were among the 26 nations to sign the Declaration of United Nations, but it was only now in August 1944 that plans were being worked out at Dumbarton Oaks to create a United Nations organization. The pathway toward the foundational United Nations conference held in San Francisco in spring 1945 was one that marked the culmination of the India Lobby's second, mature stage of growth as an American pressure group.

Jawaharlal Nehru's younger sister, Madame Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, came to the United States in late 1944 and spearheaded an effort to focus part of the UN conference in San Francisco on the question of India. Mme. Pandit arrived in New York with the approval of the U.S. State Department, on a flight coordinated by U.S. air force commander Lt. General George Stratemeyer, ostensibly to visit her two daughters at Wellesley College. Pandit's arrival in New York on December 8 marked the one of first visits of an Indian nationalist leader to the United States. After India gained its independence, Pandit would become India's first ambassador to the Soviet Union, the Indian ambassador to the United States from 1949 to 1951, and the first female president of the United Nations General Assembly in 1953.<sup>165</sup> Pandit's charisma, sophistication, and obvious dedication to Indian nationalism captured the hearts of America. Gary Hess declares that Mme. Pandit was "the most effective voice of the nationalist cause heard in American during the war."<sup>166</sup> *The New*

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<sup>164</sup> "127 Prominent Americans Appeal to Lord Halifax for the Release of Nehru and Other Indian Leaders," August 9, 1944, courtesy of Bucknell University.

<sup>165</sup> David Taylor, "Pandit, Vijayalakshmi (1900–1990)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2011.

<sup>166</sup> Hess, *American Encounters India*, 152.

*York Post* article that accompanied a large picture of sari-clad Pandit sitting gracefully at a desk, identified Pandit as the equivalent of India's First Lady, and commented on her visit's significance, not only for the people of India, but also "to everyone who believes in the 'Four Freedoms' everywhere."<sup>167</sup>

The India Lobby made aggressive plans to capitalize on Mme. Pandit's arrival. J.J. Singh asked Walter White to approach America's own First Lady on the Lobby's behalf. Singh knew that White was a friend of Eleanor Roosevelt's, and that White's entreaty might be enough to secure a high profile meeting.<sup>168</sup> White subsequently wrote the First Lady that "nothing would do more to hearten the people of India and to offset anti-American propaganda in India than an invitation to Mrs. Pandit to be the over-night guest of yourself and the president at the White House."<sup>169</sup> On January 27, 1945, one week after her husband was inaugurated to his historic fourth term as president, Eleanor Roosevelt hosted a luncheon at the White House in Mme. Pandit's honor. The event that not only highlighted the two leaders' shared liberal ideologies, but also demonstrated the White House's desire not to alienate the Indian nationalist. Although the President was preoccupied with State Department preparations for the upcoming conference with Churchill at Malta and did not attend, his wife's presence was telling. The India Lobby had succeeded in getting Mme.

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<sup>167</sup> "First Lady of India," *New York Post*, photo credit December 19, 1944, in *The Papers of the NAACP*, Reel 9.

<sup>168</sup> J.J. Singh to Walter White, October 22, 1945, in *The Papers of the NAACP*, Reel 11. In this particular letter, Singh asks White to invite Mrs. Roosevelt to be the guest of honor at their January 1946 celebration of Indian Independence Day.

<sup>169</sup> Walter White to Eleanor Roosevelt, November 28, 1944, in *The Papers of the NAACP*, Reel 9.

Pandit the highest profile White House meeting, short of achieving an improbable conference with the president himself.<sup>170</sup>

Pandit made the most of her opportunity to win over the American people. The day before her lunch at the White House in Washington, DC, Pandit acted as the India League's guest of honor at their annual Independence Day celebration in New York City. By contrast, Pandit merely sent an Independence Day message for the February issue of *Voice of India*, the publication of the League's rival organization, the National Committee for India's Independence.<sup>171</sup> By this point the Indian leader had also given numerous press conferences and receptions, visited New York's City Hall at the invitation of Mayor LaGuardia, and had spent ten days leading the Indian delegation at the Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations at Hot Springs, VA.<sup>172</sup> Even after such an arduous schedule, Mme. Pandit captivated the one thousand guests at the India League Independence Day dinner with her description of what independence meant for the people of India. Pandit acknowledged the peculiarity behind the Indian practice of celebrating a day of independence before independence had actually been achieved, but explained that, "for a people struggling to be free, a day on which they can dedicate themselves to the cause is a vital necessity, and it is in this spirit that Indians everywhere observe the 26<sup>th</sup> of January."<sup>173</sup> By January 1945, the results of the India Lobby's mobilization strategies were indisputable. The India League now boasted of 44 National Advisory Board members and 440 members of its "Sponsoring

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<sup>170</sup> *India Today* 5, no. 4 (January 1945): 4.

<sup>171</sup> "Messages of Indian Independence Day," *Voice of India* 1, no. 6 (February 1945): 83.

<sup>172</sup> *India Today* 5, no. 3 (December 1944); *India Today* 5, no. 4 (January 1945).

<sup>173</sup> "Independence Day," *India Today* 5, no. 4 (January 1945): 1; "Introduction," *FRUS, 1945, Conferences at Malta and Yalta*, xi.

Committee.”<sup>174</sup> While Mme. Pandit’s visit gave the India Lobby the chance to share their work with a larger crowd than usual, the event demonstrated the years of India Lobby activity and the evolution of the India League under the leadership of J.J. Singh.

At the U.N. Conference in San Francisco which began in April, Mme. Pandit, Walter White, and other liberal leaders argued for the rights of the imperially oppressed Indians and racially oppressed African Americans as citizens of a new international, democratic order. For the India Lobby, the first issue the U.N. Conference raised was an issue of representation. As a signatory to the original 1942 Declaration of United Nations, India was entitled to its own delegates for the 1945 conference. Much to the dismay of Indian nationalists, however, the British Government of India selected the three members of the colonial government. J.J. Singh, who was in San Francisco acting as a correspondent for multiple Indian newspapers declared that the government delegates, or the “titled collaborationists,” were “persona non grata” with the people of India. Singh continued, “we know that the future of the world peace depends of effective international cooperation, but the San Francisco Conference will be building on a foundation of sand if it accepts the Viceroy’s appointees as representatives of India’s 390 million people.”<sup>175</sup> Singh argued that even though internationalist ideals had the potential to be realized at San Francisco—through the creation of an international body seeking to advance universal human rights—as long as

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<sup>174</sup> India League Independence Day Dinner program, in *The Papers of the NAACP*, Reel 9. The sixteen-page long program also noted that the India League’s objectives had changed order since May 1943. The three causes listed in January 1945 were: 1) fostering a closer relationship between India and the U.S.; 2) India’s “complete independence; 3) “ultimate freedom of all colonial peoples within a democratic world order.” In 1943, India’s independence was the primary goal of the League.

<sup>175</sup> “India and San Francisco Conference,” from the India League of America, in *Emanuel Celler Papers*, Box 497, Subject File: “India-correspondence, 1944-1947,” Library of Congress.

the world's leading powers continued to subjugate the rest of the world, the United Nations would not fully embody the freedoms it claimed to embrace.

Both the India League of America and the National Committee for India's Freedom endorsed Mme. Pandit as the true representative of the people of India. Pandit, the "brilliant silver-tongued orator," however, did not immediately jump on a train for San Francisco.<sup>176</sup> With the help of Clark H. Getts, "an amazing little man" and the owner of a lecture and production bureau, Pandit conducted a cross-country lecture tour on her way from New York to the West Coast.<sup>177</sup> Along the way, her speeches and behavior reflected internationalist rhetoric and emerging colored cosmopolitanism that had become the hallmark of the India independence movement. The profile of Pandit that Getts used throughout the tour declared that Mme. Pandit was "one of the world's most important women of our time, notable for her great ideals and deep personal sacrifices for the benefit of her people. Mrs. Pandit's influence is felt not only throughout India but throughout the world."<sup>178</sup> On the tour, Pandit made an especially noteworthy impression on America's black population. The renowned black publication, the *New York Amsterdam News*, announced that Pandit the "noted woman leader of India" would be the guest speaker at the first annual meeting of the Harlem chapter of Save the Children on February 23, 1945. *The Pittsburgh Courier* continued the black press' documentation of Pandit's lecture tour in a front-page article that praised the Indian leader for her devotion "to the general betterment of mankind along with the improvement of political and social conditions in her own country." The Baltimore paper, the *Afro-American*,

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<sup>176</sup> A. M. Wendell Malliet, "Little Nations Deal Blow to Ambition of Gen. Smuts," *New York Amsterdam News*, December 14, 1946, pg. 1.

<sup>177</sup> Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, *The Scope of Happiness, A Personal Memoir* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1979), 192.

<sup>178</sup> "Clark H. Getts presents Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit," Box 1, Coll. 4941, Clark Getts Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

followed suit, noting that after Mme. Pandit declared, “India sympathizes with all races fighting for freedom and equality, and the Indian people is in entire sympathy with the colored people of America,” in a speech in Baltimore, her audience rose in a standing ovation.<sup>179</sup> Getts, her manager and no fan of colored cosmopolitanism, was less than pleased with the attention Pandit gave American racial discrimination in her lectures, reflecting that “it became more and more difficult to find engagements for her, and she was rarely asked to come again.”<sup>180</sup> Getts’ observation demonstrates the limits of colored cosmopolitanism in 1945. There was a long road yet to travel in an America still defined by Jim Crow segregation not only in the South, but also within the victorious and segregated U.S. army.

On April 26, the opening day of the San Francisco conference, Mme. Pandit gave a press conference with over 400 members of the international press. Although the British Government had not endorsed Pandit’s presence in San Francisco, they did not make any moves to interfere. The lesson from the Phillips leak episode was apparent –American officials would not back British hardliners on India in any public way. On the other hand, Pandit and other advocates for India were not successful in convincing those present at San Francisco to urge the British for an immediate proclamation of independence. Nobody, it seems, could yet achieve their full objectives on the knotty India question.

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<sup>179</sup> “Speaker,” *New York Amsterdam News*, February 17, 1945, A8; “Mme. Pandit to Speak Here on April 9,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, March 31, 1945, pg. 1; “India Stands for Equality, Leader Tells Baltimoreans,” *Afro-American*, April 7, 1942, pg. 1.

<sup>180</sup> Clark H. Getts, “Madame Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit,” 1977, Box 1, Coll. 4941, Clark Getts Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

## Chapter 5: “From Bombay to Georgia I’m Beat to my Knees”

In the wake of the Quit India movement, R. Lal Singh, the nationalist editor of a Los Angeles-based periodical *India News*, began collecting material to publicize the immediate importance of Indian independence for an Allied victory. One item was a poem written by Langston Hughes, one of the twentieth century’s most influential voices in the black community. “How About It?” embodied the ideology of colored cosmopolitanism and reflected some of the rhetorical and mobilization strategies of the India Lobby. Within the poem’s first four stanzas, Hughes captured the internationalist vision of a global fight against oppression:

The President’s Four Freedoms  
Appeal to me.  
I would like to see those Freedoms  
Come to be.

If you believe  
In the Four Freedoms, too,  
Then share ‘em with me—  
Don’t keep ‘em all for you.

Show me that you mean  
Democracy, please—  
Cause from Bombay to Georgia  
I’m beat to my knees.

You can’t lock up Nehru  
Club Roland Hayes,  
Then make fine speeches  
About Freedom’s ways.<sup>181</sup>

Hughes’ poem encapsulates the two-stage evolution of the India Lobby. The poem opens with a reference to Roosevelt’s January 1941 state of the union address, whose

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<sup>181</sup> Langston Hughes, “How About It?” in *India News*, pg. 3, in *The Papers of the NAACP Part 14*, Reel 9.



internationalist principles reappeared in the Atlantic Charter. In turn, the India Lobby utilized the Atlantic Charter's ideological framework to make broad-based rhetorical appeals to a general American audience during the first year of the war. Just as the *India Today* editors used the phrase "the freedom of India" more frequently than "Indian independence" to characterize the Indian nationalist fight as part of the universal struggle for freedom, Hughes repeated the word "freedom" more often than any other word in these first four stanzas. In the second two stanzas, Hughes also clearly tied colonial oppression in India to racial oppression in America, the international link embodied by color cosmopolitanism. Hughes captured the transformation of the India Lobby in the post-Quit India climate, when the Lobby developed a more focused mobilization strategy targeting specific liberal constituencies like the black community. Finally, Hughes appealed, "show me that you mean democracy, please," capturing the India Lobby's objective to turn America's professed democratic principles into political action. Throughout World War II, the India Lobby remained steadfast in its goal of influencing U.S. policy makers to take a stand for Indian independence. As the India Lobby evolved over the course of the war, however, they adapted their lobbying strategies to their capabilities and the surrounding political climate.

During the India Lobby's four most active years, much had changed. The Japanese attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor, drawing the country with the world's largest industrial base into the war. Indian independence became an issue of strategic military importance for the United States, producing unprecedented American interest in the internal politics of Britain's most valued colony. By July 1945, both the United States and Great Britain were under new leadership. The British Labour Party defeated Churchill's longstanding Conservative Party, and Clement Atlee became the new prime minister. In the

United States, the man who had been the American president since 1933—Franklin Roosevelt—had died on April 12, less than one month before victory in Europe was declared on May 8. Though Roosevelt would not live to see the formation of the United Nations, historian Elizabeth Borgwardt concludes that through the creation of the Atlantic Charter, Roosevelt had made a lasting impact on the future of internationalism: “detailed blueprints such as the charters of the United Nations, Nuremberg, and Bretton Woods all drew their inspiration...explicitly from the Atlantic Charter.”<sup>182</sup> With his death, Roosevelt became a new symbol of internationalism. The day before the U.S. Senate debate on the ratification of the U.N. Charter began, the editors of the *New York Times* wrote: “we have the right to hope, as we must fervently pray, that the noble project launched in the Presidency of Woodrow Wilson, carried forward by Franklin D. Roosevelt, will win toward success under President Truman.”<sup>183</sup>

The India Lobby demonstrated their effectiveness as a pressure group by evolving alongside the changing global context. The Lobby began its strategic promotion of Indian independence by invoking internationalist rhetoric in August 1941, when creation of the Atlantic Charter provided the necessary framework. The Lobby’s dedicated promotion of the Charter reflected FDR speechwriter Roger’s Sherwood’s satirical analysis of Churchill’s attempt to redefine the broad application of its third article: “when you state a moral principle, you are stuck with it, no matter how many fingers you have kept crossed at the moment.”<sup>184</sup> It was not until J.J. Singh became president of the India League in December, however, that the India Lobby developed recruitment and mobilization strategies that took

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<sup>182</sup> Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America’s Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 44.

<sup>183</sup> “26 Years of History,” *New York Times*, July 1, 1945, pg. 46.

<sup>184</sup> Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, 362.

advantage of increased American strategic interest in India by appealing to an existing liberal coalition. For example, Singh recognized the potential of gaining an ally like NAACP executive secretary Walter White, a liberal who garnered support for Indian independence in the United States without becoming directly affiliated with the India Lobby until years later. Under J.J. Singh's political savvy leadership, the India Lobby not only survived the public opinion fallout caused by the Quit India movement, but came out on the other side of the policy setback, reinvigorated.

By the summer of 1944, J.J. Singh could boast of his efforts to convince both Walter White and Representative Emanuel Celler to join the India League. The July 25 leak of the Phillips report further demonstrated the India Lobby's ability to harness public opinion makers within the State Department, national press, and liberal social network. While the India Lobby's simultaneous 127-name appeal to British Ambassador Halifax caught the attention of British and American policy makers alike, the coordinated Lobby activity surrounding the leak revealed the real influence of the India Lobby as the Roosevelt Administration refrained from denouncing William Phillips' critique of British imperial policy in India. Although the British urged the U.S. government to disassociate the official American position on India from the leaked Phillips report, both the Administration and the Congress remained silent, causing "a major diplomatic problem with Britain."<sup>185</sup> For the India Lobby, this was a signal achievement.

J.J. Singh's development of the India League of America from a tiny, twelve-member cultural group into an organization that scholar Brenda Plummer describes as "an early example of successful lobbying by nonwhite ethnics," reflected Singh's awareness of

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<sup>185</sup> Windmiller, *A Tumultuous Time*, 114.

wartime political currents, the emerging international order, as well as his own tenacity and contagious personality. During Singh's tenure as the League's president (only five years less than the organization's 22 years of existence), the India Lobby achieved its two main policy objectives. With Congressman Emanuel Celler and Congresswoman Clare Luce Boothe's sponsorship of the Indian Naturalization and Immigration Bill (H.R. 3517), Indian nationals regained American citizenship rights on June 27, 1946.<sup>186</sup> Subsequently, on August 15, 1947, President Harry Truman congratulated Jawaharlal Nehru on India's independence, expressing his confidence that India would take "its place at the forefront of the nations of the world in the struggle to fashion a society founded in mutual trust and respect."<sup>187</sup>

The American press recognized Singh's impact with list of titles that read like individual accolades. The *New York Times* labeled Singh, an "unofficial envoy," the *New York Herald Tribune*, India's "unofficial ambassador," and *Time* magazine, a "one-man lobby."<sup>188</sup> Robert Shaplen would adopt this final designation as the subheading of his 1951 profile of Singh for *The New Yorker*.<sup>189</sup> All of these titles, however, give the impression that Singh impacted the relationship between India and the United States by operating as an individual, when in actuality the true testament of Singh's work was the remarkable liberal coalition he helped spearhead as the president of the India League of America. Singh's

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<sup>186</sup> Gould, *Sikhs, Swamis, Students, and Spies*, 432.

<sup>187</sup> "Truman Sends Best Wishes to India, Pakistan," August 15, 1947, Quoted in Clymer, 284.

<sup>188</sup> "The Unofficial Ambassador," *New York Times*, February 18, 1959, pg. 32; Quoted in "Messages of Greetings on the 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday of J.J. Singh," New Delhi: 1967, *Emanuel Celler Papers*, Box 500, Subject File: "India-J.J. Singh, 1946-69," Library of Congress, "Mr. Singh Goes to Washington," *TIME*, February 28, 1944.

<sup>189</sup> Shaplen, "One-Man Lobby," pg. 35-55. The glossy magazine of good wishes for J.J. Singh on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, put together by Dr. Gopal Singh, noted that the Shaplen profile was the first profile of an Indian in the *New Yorker*, "a sophisticated... magazine, which is most widely read by the intellectuals of America." "Messages of Greetings on the 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday of J.J. Singh," 2.

leadership and political savvy provided the direction necessary for the India Lobby to become more than a “one-man lobby.” During the war, the India Lobby transcended Singh’s influence as an individual and evolved into a modern pressure group that successfully impacted the increasingly complex system of American foreign policy.

Examining the development of the India Lobby side by side with the Jewish Lobby illuminates many similarities between these two wartime pressure groups. Beyond the two lobbies’ shared nationalistic aspirations, the commonalities in their coalition-building strategies demonstrate how the development of the India and Jewish Lobbies during World War II reflects a unique historical pattern of lobby growth within the United States. Although the Jewish Lobby boasted of a unified core constituency, by 1944, more than 3,000 organizations including “labor unions, churches, farm granges, Rotary clubs, none of them Jewish in their orientation—passed pro-Zionist resolutions and sent telegrams to Congress.”<sup>190</sup> In the fall of 1942, as the India Lobby was attempting to limit the public opinion damage caused by the Quit India movement, the Lobby proposed appealing to nearly an identical group of liberal organizations.<sup>191</sup> The India and Jewish Lobbies’ appeal to a laundry list of liberal organizations reveals the unique coalition-building atmosphere of World War II. Distinct from both the Great Depression and the subsequent Cold War, World War II was a specific political phase in American history. As evidenced by the development

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<sup>190</sup> Peter Gross, *Israel in the Mind of America* (New York: Knopf, 1983), 147; Bierbrier, 92.

<sup>191</sup> As noted on page 41, these groups include the “YWCA, Methodist Student Movement, NAACP, March on Washington Committee, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Federal Council of Churches, Worker’s Defense League, War Resister’s League, NCPW, LID, World Federalists, Consumer’s Cooperative League, Chinese Institute, Chinese News Service, League of Nations Association, American Friends’ Service Committee, Greater Participation of India in the War Committee, farm organizations, Labor unions.”

of both the India and Jewish Lobby during this period, this unique moment in American history proved fertile breeding ground for modern pressure groups.

Although J.J. Singh's strategies to mobilize a coalition of liberal public opinion makers are ignored in the story of the rise of the modern lobby, the shifting internationalist framework of the 1940s helps explain why the India Lobby has become forgotten. In 1941, the India Lobby adopted a distinct rhetorical strategy that positioned Indian independence within the framework of the Atlantic Charter and Wilsonian internationalism. By utilizing internationalist ideologies such as colored cosmopolitanism, and aligning itself with liberals like Pearl Buck and Walter White, the India Lobby placed itself within a wartime context of anti-colonial sentiment, which Cold War scholar Penny von Eschen describes as "an extension of Wilsonian internationalism."<sup>192</sup> In 1945, however, Wilson's legacy of anti-colonialism gave way to a new political ideology—Cold War anti-communism—, which spilt the India Lobby's broad wartime liberal coalition. The India Lobby attracted a wide spectrum of support during the war, with allies ranging from Henry Wallace to Eleanor Roosevelt to Henry Luce. With the ideological shift of the Cold War, however, left-leaning liberals like Wallace became increasingly ostracized from the Truman-led Democratic Party.

While J.J. Singh successfully rallied the India Lobby in the face of the Quit India policy setback in 1942, the 1945 Cold War shift in ideology proved to be an obstacle too large for even the undaunted Lobby leader. As Indian affairs began to be eclipsed by America's growing concern with global communism, Indian leaders once again took a policy step that undermined all of the sympathetic understanding that the India Lobby built during the war. India would become the world's largest democratic state when they officially

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<sup>192</sup> Much of my information about the Cold War context of the India Lobby comes from my interview with Professor Penny von Eschen on February 29, 2012.

declared their independence on August 15, 1947. However, as India's interim government prepared for its complete independence from Britain, Indian leaders began discussing a foreign policy of non-alignment, a policy they would solidify at the April 1955 Bandung Conference in Indonesia.<sup>193</sup> Non-alignment was a policy that confounded the Cold War-saturated Americans, and according to Von Eschen, many U.S. officials became convinced that India had been "duped by the communists." As the U.S.-Indian relationship appeared to reach a point of no return, the story of J.J. Singh and the India Lobby's wartime accomplishments was forgotten.

By illuminating the forgotten wartime story of the India Lobby, this study draws attention to how this unique group of advocates developed modern lobbying strategies, which raised the importance of India's independence to American policy makers in the midst of a world war. Although it is easy for historians to overlook the India Lobby during World War II, the advocates for India achieved real successes. Lobby efforts led to both immediate results—in awareness, mobilization, and policy—and a significant long-lasting solidarity between African American civil rights leaders and Indian nationalists. J.J. Singh never doubted the India Lobby's potential, writing, "there is a hell of a lot that a non-governmental organization, such as the India League of America, can accomplish."<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Matthew Jones, "A 'Segregated' Asia? Race, the Bandung Conference, and Pan Asianist Fears in American Thought and Policy, 1954-1955," *Diplomatic History* 29, no. 5 (November 2005), 852-853.

<sup>194</sup> J.J. Singh to Representative Emanuel Celler, Washington, May 24, 1951, in *Emanuel Celler Papers*, Box 498, Subject File: "India League of America," Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

## Research Blog

As I prepared my thesis I developed “What About India—Now?” a research blog that contains supporting materials for my project including visual sources, documents, and analysis. In many ways this blog documents my developing research and thought process over the course of the past two semesters. To view the blog, go to:

<http://blogs.dickinson.edu/hist-solnit/>.



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