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BRITAIN, AND THE INDIAN
NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

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HERODOTUS

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Ηροδοτου Αλικαρνησσεος ιστοριης αποδεξις ηδε, ως μητε
τα γενομενα εξ ανθρωπων τωι χρονωι εξιτηλα γενηται,
μητε εργα μεγαλα τε και θωμαστα, τα μεν Ελλησι τα δε
ζαρβαροισι αποδεχθεντα, ακlea γενηται, τα τε αλλα και
δι ην αιτιην επολεμησαν αλληλοισι

—**HERODOTUS, BOOK 1**

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HERODOTUS

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Herodotus is one of the oldest departmental journals on campus run entirely by undergraduate students. Its mission is two-fold: to share high-quality historical writings with the Stanford community and to recognize excellent historical research by undergraduates. We hope that this newest volume will provide useful information, multiple points of entry for conversation, and a glimpse into the historical discipline.

These essays represent only a small sampling of the work being done by students under the direction of History Department faculty and staff. We note their chronological breadth— from medieval Europe to the Second World War—as well as their geographical breadth—covering India, South Africa, and our very own Stanford campus.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous assistance of the Carl F. Brand Fund, which has financed *Herodotus* for many years, and the aid graciously offered by dedicated Stanford faculty and staff. We would like especially to thank Margo Richardson and Monica Wheeler for their continuing support; without them, this issue of *Herodotus* would not have been possible.

Finally, we invite and encourage comments, submissions, and editorial interest in future volumes of *Herodotus*. Please direct any inquiries to Jolynn Khamky (jkhamky@stanford.edu), Piotr H. Kosicki (pkosicki@stanford.edu), or the History Department staff.

—*Herodotus* Editorial Staff,
May 2004

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1942: The United States, Great Britain, and the Indian Nationalist Movement

DINYAR PATEL

The vague but exciting image of a fabulous India which existed in the minds of most Americans has been suddenly destroyed. The India of the Yogis, of snake charmers and the rope trick, of that odd little man Gandhi in his loin cloth, of jewel-bedecked Maharajahs, Brahmin priests, and British Pukka Sahibs, has taken on a new meaning.

- Kate Mitchell, 1942¹

Introduction

For those Americans in the early twentieth century who knew anything about the country, India was a mythical Eastern land found only in literature and lore. Filled with extravagantly wealthy princes, wandering ascetics, and fierce warriors, India seemed as different from American society as could be possible. The pomp and pageantry of British imperialism added another layer of exoticism and mystique to the subcontinent. Seemingly detached from reality itself, India appeared to have little political importance or form. A significant number of interested US citizens had traveled through India or even settled within its borders, but the great majority of Americans were content to let the British fully operate and monopolize their imperial holding. India was someone else's business.

These attitudes were fundamentally changed in 1942. That year, America found itself intimately involved in issues dealing with a country of which it had hardly any real knowledge or contacts. In the span of a few months, the crown jewel of the British Empire went from being a lamentable example of European imperialism in the eyes of Americans to a grave consideration in Allied war strategy. The United States, deeply concerned that rapidly advancing Japanese forces would soon overrun the subcontinent, put great pressure on the United Kingdom to boost Indian morale via political concessions. This pressure helped convince Winston Churchill to dispatch the Cripps Mission to New Delhi in March, largely designed as a public relations gesture for the industrial power so critical in keeping the British Isles from falling to the Nazis. Roosevelt's direct and indirect involvement in the Cripps Mission showed the extent to which he felt India critical in the war effort; the Mission's failure also revealed how great India's power now was to complicate relations between two

longstanding allies. The Cripps Mission had further implications for the United States: it transformed Indian nationalism from a political and strategic consideration into a movement popularly supported by regular Americans. For a brief period during 1942, American foreign policy idealism even made it seem likely that the country's growing bonds with Indian nationalists would come at the expense of ties with the world's other great Anglo-Saxon power.

The Specter of Invasion: America's Sudden Strategic Reevaluation of India

Throughout the early twentieth century, Americans had remained aware of the Indian nationalist movement but maintained an attitude of detachment toward it, considering the country's struggle for self-rule a domestic matter of the British Empire. In 1906, William Jennings Bryan toured the subcontinent and left an even stauncher anti-imperialist; American officials in India, however, were careful to dismiss Bryan's pronouncements and affirm the government's *status quo*, pro-Raj position. Five years later, in 1911, Delhi native Har Dayal relocated to California where he briefly taught at Stanford University and set up the pro-independence Ghadar (Revolution) Party in San Francisco. Due to pressure from the British Embassy, Dayal was forced to leave the United States in 1914 and took up residence in wartime Germany.² Wilson's Fourteen Points had heartened Indian nationalists, who had made a strategic decision to side with Great Britain and support the war; however, they grew disillusioned when the subsequent Rowlatt Acts (suspending civil liberties for those accused of political terrorism), Amritsar Massacre, and arrest of Mahatma Gandhi in 1922 failed to stir American public opinion.

Disinterest or overwhelming pro-British sentiment was not behind a lack of American public opinion on India. Unlike other Asian nations such as China and Japan, America had few historical, economic, or political ties with India, and the few it had ran directly through London. Nevertheless, nationalists were encouraged by America's anti-imperial sentiment and long record of discomfort with the British Empire. As hostilities began in Europe in 1939, Jawaharlal Nehru sensed an opportunity to attract Americans to the cause of *swaraj* (self-rule for India):

What of America, that great land of democracy, to which imperialist England looks for support and sustenance during this war? Does Britain think that the people of the United States will pour their gold and commodities to make the world safe for British imperialism? . . . The aims and objectives of this terrible war are clear at last . . .³

Nehru proved to be correct. With Washington-Tokyo relations deteriorating in the months leading up to December 1941, the US State Department began to fear a Japanese assault on Southeast Asia and therefore pressured London to grant Indian political concessions. These concessions, US diplomats argued, would strengthen Asian nationalist forces against Japanese and German aggression.⁴ India only really entered American foreign policy considerations after the Pearl Harbor attack and ensuing offensive that put Japanese forces deep into Burmese territory.

1942 brought about a rapid turn of events as Japanese forces swept through Malaya and up past Rangoon. Chaos began to overtake the formerly impregnable fortress that was British India. Churchill himself recalled how close India had been to defeat:

Our resources were slender and strained to the full. Our armies had surrendered or were recoiling before the devastating strokes of Japan. Our Navy had been driven out of the Bay of Bengal, and indeed out of most of the Indian Ocean. We had apparently been outmatched in the air.⁵

British forces were caught absolutely off-guard, with virtually no anti-aircraft guns, searchlights, or radar sets. As the Orissan coast became subject to intermittent bombings, the Royal Air Force discovered that none of its airfields in India could service modern airplanes. Only in Calcutta – an important supply center for the Burma Road to China – could the RAF deploy eight “serviceable Mohawks” at the city's civilian airport.⁶ Sensing that odds were against them, British and Indians alike prepared for imminent invasion. In Madras, which faced the Japanese-controlled Bay of Bengal, an estimated 130,000 out of the total population of 650,000 made hasty plans to abandon the city and move inland.⁷ In the easternmost provinces of Bengal and Assam, British authorities began implementing a “limited denial policy,” whereby they ordered the reduction of rice production and had all surplus agricultural goods shifted as far away as possible from the Burma front. Plans were circulated to destroy Calcutta's port and the strategic Digboi oil refinery in Assam.⁸ The government's panicked response to the Japanese threat, to say the least, did little to boost the morale of Indians.

With the situation in India critical, Winston Churchill was under tremendous pressure to offer political concessions to nationalists so as to improve the fighting spirit of the Indian population. This pressure emanated from within Parliament as well as from the United Kingdom's wartime ally across the Atlantic. Both the British and American governments regarded India as strategically important in Axis war plans. Writing in 1942, American war analyst Kate Mitchell claimed that India was

“the focus of a giant pincer movement by the armed forces of Hitler and Japan.” Were the Japanese to capture India and the Germans to march into Iran, the Axis powers would have a wide belt of territories “so rich in basic raw materials, food, labor power, and strategic military and naval bases that the position of the United Nations [Allies] would be highly critical, to say the least.” India, therefore, had to be defended at all costs; above all India had to be mobilized quickly against Japanese forces that had proven their speed in Malaya and Burma. For Americans, Mitchell argued, war had finally made India “become a real nation, suddenly and urgently important [. . .] India, perhaps more than any other factor in recent years, has once and for all destroyed whatever isolationist illusions the United States may have harbored.”⁹

Great Britain proved to be receptive to American pressure over India; indeed, its very survival was now largely credited to American Lend-Lease aid. As early as 1940, British War Cabinet member Ernest Bevin was advising Churchill to offer negotiations with the Indian National Congress party because “you are concerned about the effect on the United States of this step.”¹⁰ Indian nationalists were very cognizant of the tremendous pressure that Washington could exert on their behalf. One such nationalist was Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. On January 2, 1942, Sapru sent a message to Churchill, outlining in telegraphese the urgent need for resolution of the India issue. “Bold stroke far-sighted statesmanship . . . without delay,” he argued, would transform “entire spirit and outlook administration India.” As Churchill had argued that granting immediate Indian independence would be harmful to the war effort, Sapru suggested the formation of an intermediate, semi-autonomous national government and the guarantee of a constitution after hostilities ceased. “Is it not possible,” Sapru asked the Prime Minister, “for you declare this juncture that India no longer be treated as dependency to be ruled from Whitehall, and henceforth her constitutional position and powers identical with those other units British Commonwealth?”¹¹

Such proposals were likely to meet the quick rejection of a Prime Minister who had vowed not to preside over the breakup of the British Empire. Sapru therefore needed the intervention of a sympathetic third party to bring pressure upon Churchill. Hence the timing of his telegram: his message was addressed to Washington, DC rather than London, for in January 1942 Churchill was in the United States formulating war strategy with Roosevelt. Sapru felt obliged to send copies of his telegram to the American media; Roosevelt shortly received these copies and turned his conversation with Churchill toward the Indian issue. The President subtly reminded Churchill of America’s stated intention to grant the Philippines

independence after an Allied victory and inquired why Churchill could not make a similar promise to the Indians. All reports from the meeting indicate that Churchill became irate at the first mention of India; Sapru’s telegram was dredging up an issue he thought would have faded away in the grand scheme of the war. While Roosevelt – sensing the Prime Minister’s discomfort – quickly dropped the topic at their meeting, Sapru had achieved his goal: over the course of the next year India would become an important policy consideration in the United States’ war relations with the United Kingdom.

The events of February 25 dramatically demonstrated Washington’s growing involvement in Indian affairs. Singapore and Rangoon had recently fallen to the Japanese, and in order to deal with the new situation in East Asia, Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle recommended that “the first item on the list ought to be to tackle the Indian problem in a large way.”¹² That day, Roosevelt received a message from Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek in which the general reported his impressions of India to the President. “I am personally shocked by the Indian military and political situation which are in such a state that I could never conceive of before I arrived in India,” he declared. “In a word the danger is extreme. If the British Government does not fundamentally change their policy toward India, it would be like presenting India to the enemy and inviting them to quickly occupy India.”¹³ Later that day, Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long reported “a serious undercurrent of anti-British feeling” in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He summarized the proceedings to the Undersecretary of State:

Concerning India, the argument was that we are participating on such a large scale and had done so much for England in Lend-Lease that we had now arrived at a position of importance to justify our participation in Empire councils and such as to authorize us to require England to make adjustments of a political nature within the framework of her Empire. 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. Gandhi’s leadership in India became part of America’s military equipment and it was necessary for the United States to participate in guiding the British Empire in such a way as would result in the realization to the Allied cause of the manpower of India, which could only be obtained by accepting the thesis of Gandhi’s political objective.¹⁴

These pro-independence remarks were exceptional for a nation that had been so detached from the India issue just months before. Echoing

Chiang's concerns, American legislators were fearful of India's imminent collapse due British intransigence on political reforms. Like Churchill, Roosevelt was now under both international and domestic pressure to present a solution to the India problem.

With the Prime Minister back in London, Roosevelt began to press Churchill via telegram. Churchill responded by having the Indian government forward statistics and analyses to the White House intending to prove India's sheer inability to be independent at the present moment. The Americans, Churchill grumbled in his memoirs, "had strong opinions and little experience."¹⁵ Roosevelt was persistent. On March 10, the President sent a lengthy telegram to 10 Downing Street in which he actually did present a political solution for India. In his suggestions, Roosevelt drew from the immediate post-independence experience of America. "Perhaps the analogy of some such method to the travails and problems of the United States from 1783 to 1789 might give a new slant in India itself," he commented. Roosevelt was suggesting a political system similar to that found in the Articles of Confederation: the immediate creation of an independent Indian political unit – loosely knit together to reflect still simmering communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims – and the promise of a constitutional convention after the war. "Such a move is strictly in line with the world changes of the past half century and with the democratic processes of all who are fighting Nazism," the President concluded.¹⁶ Sapru's influence upon Roosevelt was unquestionable: historical comparisons apart, the President's suggestions were not much different from those of the Indian nationalist. Churchill lost no opportunity to disparage Roosevelt's American colonial analogy, but understood well that American pressure to act on India could no longer be ignored. In addition, Parliament, the War Cabinet, and the British public in general were insisting for some break in the Indian impasse. On March 11, therefore, Churchill rose in the House of Commons and half-heartedly announced the Cripps Mission to New Delhi.

Cripps in India: American Assistance and Churchillian Failure

The premise of the Cripps Mission was simple: Sir Stafford Cripps, the left-leaning Leader of the House of Commons who was phenomenally popular with Indian nationalists, would present leaders of the Indian National Congress with a Churchill-approved formula for a future Indian Dominion, with a constituent assembly and constitutional convention after the war. The difficult task would be negotiations with Congress; there was much in the Cripps proposal that was either vague or knowingly disliked by Nehru, Congress president Maulana Azad, Gandhi, and others. Nehru

commented in his memoirs:

I remember that when I read those proposals for the first time I was profoundly depressed, and that depression was largely due to the fact that I had expected something more substantial from Sir Stafford Cripps as well as from the critical situation that had arisen. The more I read those proposals and considered their many implications, the greater was my feeling of depression.¹⁷

Similarly, the announcement of the Cripps Mission had triggered vehement protests from Tories in Parliament and from the British administration in New Delhi. Roosevelt clearly sensed the herculean task that Cripps faced. It was therefore no coincidence that on April 3 Louis Johnson, a middle-aged colonel from West Virginia, arrived in New Delhi to take up his post as Personal Representative of the President of the United States in India. Officially, Johnson was supposed to head a newly created American mission for coordinating wartime industrial production, but as Cripps knew, "it was clear . . . that he had been sent post-haste . . . in order to lend a hand in achieving an Indian settlement."¹⁸ Roosevelt was putting a direct stake in the success of the Cripps Mission.

Johnson immediately conferred with Sir Stafford and began meeting with Nehru and Azad. At Cripps' request, Johnson became involved in negotiations over a key nationalist demand: the immediate appointment of an Indian defense minister to replace British General Lord Wavell. A marathon series of talks – Johnson held 19 with Cripps and 16 with Nehru¹⁹ – ensued over the next few days and by April 9 Cripps could write to Churchill, "Largely owing to very efficient and wholehearted help of Col. Johnson, President Roosevelt's personal representative, I have hopes the scheme may now succeed. I should like you to thank the President for Col. Johnson's help on behalf of HMG (His Majesty's Government) and also personally on my own behalf."²⁰ Similarly, Johnson could smugly report to Roosevelt that "the fact that they (Nehru, Azad, and Cripps) have not already failed has been due to the efforts of your personal representative."²¹

Just when an agreement between Cripps and Congress seemed possible, Churchill cabled instructions to New Delhi that effectively wrecked the Mission: Cripps had no authority to modify and negotiate on the agreement approved by the War Cabinet; Indian nationalists had the simple choice of accepting the proposals as they originally stood or rejecting them entirely. Congress of course chose the latter alternative, and on April 11 Cripps cabled back to Churchill that the Mission had failed. For the Prime Minister, however, failure was the preferred alternative. Despite the exigencies of war, Churchill remained determined not to grant politi-

cal concessions to India: in Nehru's own words, Cripps had merely been used by Churchill to pull off a propaganda stunt meant for Washington's consumption.²² The British Government would prove its desire to begin dialogue with Indian nationalists while carefully avoiding the successful conclusion of an actual agreement. Furthermore, Churchill expected to gain the moral high ground by being able to blame Congress for rejecting a political solution. Confident of his success, the Prime Minister wrote to Cripps, "You must not feel unduly discouraged or disappointed by the results. The effect throughout Britain and in the United States has been wholly beneficial."²³ The White House, however, was in a state of shock. In the immediate aftermath of the Mission's failure, Roosevelt personally intervened by cabling Churchill:

I am sorry to say that I cannot agree with the point of view set forth in your message to me that the public opinion in the United States believes that the negotiations have failed on broad general issues. The general impression here is quite the contrary. The feeling is almost universally held that the deadlock has been caused by the unwillingness of the British Government to concede to the Indians the right of self-government, notwithstanding the willingness of the Indians to entrust technical, military and naval defense control to the competent British authorities. American public opinion cannot understand why, if the British Government is willing to permit the component parts of India to secede from the British Empire after the war, it is not willing to permit them to enjoy what is tantamount to self-government during the war.²⁴

Roosevelt lobbied for Churchill to extend Cripps's stay in India, hoping that a new round of negotiations with Congress could begin. The Prime Minister cabled back that Sir Stafford was due to leave New Delhi in ten minutes, and urged Roosevelt not to create a point of contention during this critical phase of the war:

You know the weight which I attach to everything you say to me, but I did not feel I could take responsibility for the defense of India if everything had again to be thrown into the melting-pot at this critical juncture. That, I am sure, would be the view of Cabinet and of Parliament . . . Anything like a serious difference between you and me would break my heart, and would surely deeply injure both our countries at the height of this terrible struggle.²⁵

The Cripps Mission was officially dead.

Aftermath: India, Great Britain, and the American Public

After Congress communicated its rejection of the proposals to Sir Stafford, one of the first tasks that Nehru undertook was writing a detailed letter to President Roosevelt. The failure of the Cripps Mission, he declared, was demoralizing for India but would not deter it from defending its borders against Japanese aggression. Having spent decades fighting for freedom, Indians "would prefer to perish than submit to a new invader."²⁶ Such words buoyed Roosevelt's hopes that India would remain a steadfast war ally and an important partner for America in the post-conflict years. The idealism of Nehru and other prominent nationalists had captivated the President during the early months of 1942; by the end of the year, it would win over the sympathies of a broad spectrum of the American public.

The Cripps Mission's failure had two main consequences that helped transform the Indian nationalist cause from a governmental wartime consideration to something popularly supported by the American public and media. First, the Mission introduced many Americans to the nationalist movement, which they found appealing due to its democratic ideals and eloquent leaders. Following the Mission's failure the American media tended to support the Indian nationalists; Louis Fischer publicly claimed that Cripps had been "stabbed in the back."²⁷ Pro-nationalist sentiment was well evident in the cables Johnson sent back to Washington. Instead of somberly breaking the news of Cripps's failure, Johnson informed Roosevelt that Congress's official rejection "is a masterpiece and will appeal to free men everywhere." Indeed, the President's personal representative seemed to have built up tremendous respect for Congress and its leaders. "Nehru has been magnificent in his cooperation with me," he stated. "The President would like him and on most things they agree . . . he is our hope here."²⁸ Johnson was also encouraged by the pro-American attitudes he encountered in India and amongst its leaders. "The magic name over here is Roosevelt;" he had cabled on April 9, "the land, the people would follow and love, America."²⁹

The second consequence was burgeoning anti-British sentiment. As the war reached a critical and decisive phase in spring 1942, the India issue caused relations between London and Washington to chill slightly. Graham Spry, an associate of Cripps who was touring the United States in late April, discovered the extent of this sentiment throughout the federal government. Johnson had fed intelligence to Washington about Churchill's last-minute cable to Cripps; thus Roosevelt tersely asked Spry, "Some people believe that the mission would have been successful if the instructions had not been changed during the later stages of the negotiations. Can you tell me if there is anything to that – were there any restric-

tions placed on Cripps' instructions?"³⁰ In addition, Assistant Secretary of State Berle, Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, and Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes all expressed their suspicion of Churchill in derailing negotiations. Johnson was so disappointed with London that he advocated that wartime cooperation with India be autonomous from the United Kingdom:

The Indian Ocean is controlled by enemy; British shipping from India has been suspended; according to plan determined many days ago, British are retiring from Burma going north while fighting Chinese go south; [British General] Wavell is worn out and defeated; the hour has arrived when we should consider a replotting of our policy in this section of the world. Association with British here is bound to adversely affect morale of our own officers.³¹

Pro-Indian sentiment in the American public grew while ill feelings toward Great Britain lingered and bonds between Washington and the Indian National Congress leadership strengthened. By mid-1942, the American public was actually pressuring the government to take a more active role in bringing about Indian self-rule. The United Auto Workers passed a resolution supporting India's independence. The India League of America organized a rally attended by 2,000 supporters and called for both Roosevelt and Chiang to restart negotiations between the British and the nationalists; hundreds more would-be attendees were turned away by police.³² In late July, rumors surfaced that Roosevelt was asking failed presidential candidate Wendell Willkie to undertake a goodwill tour through Asia; one of his stopping points would be India. British authorities in New Delhi were alarmed and feared that Willkie would be used by the President for another try at political negotiations.³³ Ultimately, Willkie chose not to visit India, but did nevertheless undertake the goodwill tour through dozens of nations on five continents. In his *One World* published after his return to Washington, Willkie commented that "I came home certain of one clear and significant fact: that there exists in the world today a gigantic reservoir of good will toward us, the American people." Willkie warned, however, that this reservoir could be rapidly drained if the United States did not establish a firm stance on Indian independence:

The wisest man in China said to me: "When the aspiration of India for freedom was put aside to some future date, it was not Great Britain that suffered in public esteem in the Far East. It was the United States." [. . .] He was telling me that by our silence on India we have already drawn heavily on our reservoir of good will in the East. People of the East who would like to

count on us are doubtful. They cannot ascertain from our attitude toward the problem of India what we are likely to feel at the end of the war about all the other hundreds of millions of Eastern peoples. They cannot tell from our vague and vacillating talk whether or not we really do stand for freedom, or what we mean by freedom.³⁴

Willkie's comments underlined just how much of a test India was becoming for American foreign policy idealism. This occurred despite the country's reduced importance in the war effort; as United States forces began island-hopping throughout the Pacific, Japan turned its attention away from the Burma front and toward its eastern flank. But by late summer the British Raj made another fateful decision that would put Nehru, Gandhi, and Azad even more prominently in the headlines. On August 9, the day after Gandhi launched his "Quit India" civil disobedience campaign, authorities arrested the entire Congress leadership. Days after the arrests, a Gallup poll found that 43 percent of Americans now supported Indian independence; only 17.2 percent opposed it.

American opinion, reported the British ambassador to Washington, Lord Halifax, was "becoming very restless."³⁵ Leading publications such as *The Nation*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and the *Washington Post* sided with the nationalist cause and encouraged Roosevelt to mediate.³⁶ In its August 24 edition, *Time* put Nehru on its front cover and carried a sympathetic article on his struggles for Indian self-rule.³⁷ *Life* followed suit and published "An Open Letter from the Editors of *Life* to the People of England." The editors, assuring readers that they did speak "for a large portion of our 134,000,000 citizens," warned Great Britain that "if you cling to the Empire at the expense of a United Nations victory you will lose the war. Because you will lose us." Emphasizing the importance of principles to Americans, the editors decried "any evidence of any principles of any kind" in the political concessions London had earlier offered to India. "This is a war by free men to establish freedom more firmly," they concluded.³⁸ According to British historian Henry Ryan, *Life's* letter "was taken very seriously in London."³⁹

Churchill was desperate to change American opinion toward the British perspective. Despite India's reduced wartime significance and a string of helpful Allied victories, the fate of Great Britain was still subject to continuing American goodwill and Lend-Lease aid. As 1942 drew to a close, Churchill struck upon an idea: requesting America to dispatch a more permanent, official diplomatic representative to New Delhi. Johnson, whose appointment was largely determined by Cripps Mission considerations, had long ago left India due to health problems. Now, the British

invited Washington to refill that post, confident that a more experienced diplomat would understand the situation from their perspective. Britain seemed to have its wish granted in late October when Roosevelt announced that the career Foreign Service officer William Phillips would take over Johnson's old post. The patrician former ambassador to Italy, Phillips was familiar with European-style diplomacy and had labored to reconstruct the State Department along lines similar to that of the British Foreign Office. When asked to describe him, Assistant Secretary of State Long remarked that Phillips was "always an Anglophile – of marked degree."⁴⁰ Churchill seemed to have found his man.

The Prime Minister was so elated at Phillips's appointment that he invited the new representative to 10 Downing Street before he departed for New Delhi. At his residence, Churchill presented Phillips with a copy of *Twenty-One Days in India*, a book he had been advised to read before he went to the subcontinent as a civil servant.⁴¹ Upon arrival in the Indian capital, Phillips was treated to a lavish welcoming reception by Viceroy Lord Linlithgow at the recently completed Viceroy's House. The British and Indian governments had made a tremendous impression upon the President's representative. Nevertheless, Phillips was bound to surprise them. He gradually began to talk about the Atlantic Charter's applicability to India and the British Empire, a taboo topic in Whitehall and Westminster. Having met with nationalists while touring the country, Phillips soon made a request Linlithgow had long feared: permission to meet an incarcerated Gandhi. The American representative came to the view that, because of its strong convictions on liberty and freedom, the United States had a definite role to play in resolving the Indian impasse. By the end of his tenure, Churchill's hope in New Delhi was cabling the following to Roosevelt:

It is time for the British to act. This they can do by a solemn declaration from the King Emperor that India will achieve her independence at a specified date after the war and as a guarantee of good faith in this respect a provisional representative coalition government will be established at the center and limited powers transferred to it.⁴²

To the dismay of the British, the American government and citizens remained in favor of Indian independence.

Conclusion

That a highly Europeanized, Anglophile career diplomat like Phillips could develop pro-independence sympathies underlined the depth of American sentiment in favor of India. Following Pearl Harbor, the

realities of war thrust the unfamiliar India issue into the foremost considerations of the United States government. In the early months of 1942 independence for India remained solely a matter of policy, with American war planners anxious and worried about failing Indian morale and advancing Japanese troops at the Assamese border. However, due to Washington's deep involvement in the Cripps Mission and the resultant publicity generated, by April 1942 *swaraj* had become an important issue with the American public. In the Indian nationalist struggle Americans found principles, goals, and ideals that appealed to them; there were also charismatic, progressive leaders battling a Churchillian orthodox imperialism that Americans had long disliked. Indian nationalist leaders noticed the trends in American public opinion and became hopeful for a long-term partnership with Washington: Nehru eagerly talked to Johnson about "hitching India's wagon to America's star and not to Britain's."⁴³

With the events of 1942 having transpired, how, then, did America not play a greater role in the Indian independence movement in the latter half of the decade? As the Burma front decreased in importance and island-hopping advanced US troops closer to the Japanese archipelago, India's importance to the war effort declined proportionally. North Africa, Italy, and the South Pacific began to draw American attention away from Nehru and Gandhi. Both the American government and public soon realized that they could do very little for the Indian nationalist cause; its leaders would be locked away in jail for the duration of the war and Churchill firmly maintained that no further negotiations or political efforts would take place until the Axis powers had been defeated.

While the American government continued to pressure 10 Downing Street on India through 1947, its efforts were much less serious than those of 1942. In Indo-US relations, therefore, 1942 was an anomaly. However, it proved to be an important turning point in international power dynamics and had lasting implications in Anglo-American relations. Great Britain found itself for the first time entirely at the whims of American foreign policy idealism, greatly at odds with the traditional diplomacy London had practiced for centuries. Other nations discovered how values, ideals, and principles could appeal to the United States government and ever-influential American public opinion; such a discovery would prove to be vitally important in the post-war era. Ultimately, the close ties forged with the faraway, unfamiliar country of India showed how World War II had made the entire community of nations fall within the diplomatic and national security considerations of the United States, a development that proved to be one of the greatest legacies of the conflict.

Notes

- ¹ *India and the War: An Analysis of the Cripps Mission and Its Aftermath*, ed. Kate L. Mitchell, New York: Amerasia, May 1942, 3.
- ² Gary R. Hess, *America Encounters India, 1941-1947*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971, 9.
- ³ *Nehru: The First Sixty Years, Presenting in His Own Words the Development of the Political Thought of Jawaharlal Nehru and the Background against Which it Evolved*, New York: John Day Co., 1965, 662 (quoted in Hess, 17-18).
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