CHAPTER VII

REKINDLING OF AMERICAN INTEREST

During the political stalemate resulting from the suppression of Quit India, there was a change in the Viceroyalty, Linlithgow was succeeded by F.M. Viscount Wavell. The appointment of a Viceroy had always been a delicate and grave task. Besides the statutory requirement, several considerations of Imperial, Political and Personal nature governed it. Wavell's appointment was formally made public on June 15, 1943. The official press note extolled Wavell's qualities, administrative ability and resolution of spirit, capacity for leadership and his understanding of the implications of the total war. It was reiterated, that the appointment did not mean any change in policy towards India and constitutional issues - the goal remaining the same, namely self-governing dominion within the Commonwealth.¹

The Viceroy designate Wavell at a reception of the Overseas League tried to convince the Indians that

he understood their problem. He commented, "I know from personal experience that how very great the contribution of India to the war effort has been." We should not have held the Middle East but for India. I go to India with no illusion as to the great difficulty of my task, but with a very great love for India and a very great liking and sympathy for the Indian people and their aspirations. 2

In a speech before the Pilgrim Society Wavell declared, "all classes and sections of opinion in this country are firmly united in the desire to give every possible assistance to India in her aspiration to full freedom". 3

Lord Wavell's appointment it was assumed would have a favourable reaction in the United States. The British paper Daily Herald remarked, "It is clear that great effort and great care is being directed by the British Government, towards taking advantage of the designation of Lord Wavell as Viceroy, to improve relations with and concerning India. It is noteworthy, that since his designation, he has been pushed forward here so that

2 The Tribune, September 10, 1943, p.8.

the Americans can get an impression of him. The impression which he makes on people is almost always extremely favourable ... ... It would seem probable that a major purpose of the British Government in selecting Wavell is the desire to bring about a more improving American public opinion, with regard to the British handling of the Indian question.⁴ The appointment was well received by the Americans. They believed that Wavell's Viceroyalty would help the prosecution of war in the eastern front.⁵ William Phillips in a letter to President Roosevelt, on Wavell's appointment remarked, that while Wavell may not be, and probably is not, carrying an olive branch from Churchill, there was nothing in his attitude to indicate the same rigidity of policy as that of Lord Linlithgow.⁶ While the Officer-in-Charge at New Delhi, George R. Merrell informed the Secretary of State that by Indian views, the appointment of Wavell whom they regarded as a reactionary of the old School was all that was required to convince them, that Britain had no intention of trying


⁵ Jauhari, R.C., "Linlithgow to Wavell: A Study of the Succession to the Viceroyalty", *Journal of Indian History*, p. 194.

to reach a settlement with the national leaders. Opinion appeared equally divided between those who thought Wavell would do nothing but follow Linlithgow policy and those who believed, he may make some half hearted offer such as complete Indianization of the executive council, which would be acceptable to no representative party but rejection of which would enable Britain to say, particularly for American consumption that its official cooperation had again been spurned.  

That there would be no change in the Indian policy became clear from a memorandum issued by Churchill. Churchill asserted, that the successful progress of the war against Japan, had removed the danger of invasion for the time being and the improvement in Europe had further weakened the position of Japan. India had therefore, been spared the horrors of Japanese subjugation. The measures taken against the Congress leaders restored internal order .... their action in the crisis had greatly discredited them not only in India, but among the allies and particularly the United States where, except for Clare Luce Movement there was no demand for further British surrender of executive powers at that time. Gandhi's fast

unto death to intimidate the Government of India brought further ridicule upon him. In all his visits to America he had never been asked a single question about India. They were now preparing important offensive operations from India against Japan, for the campaign of 1944 and large British and American resources were being employed. There could hardly be a less suitable time for raising again the political ... agitation on its old and well known lines, and for trying to form a responsible Government based in the main on Gandhi's views. If such a course was adopted they could expect a renewal of agitation throughout India, the future of every race, creed and party being thrown into the melting pot at a time, when there was a serious food shortage in some provinces and the enormously swollen Indian army was of a lower quality than ever seen before. The fact that a new Viceroy was going out to India afforded no reason for running such risks. If they had to be run, they should be upon broad and solid grounds of public policy, and not at a time fixed by the movements of an individual. On the contrary, the Viceroy would do well to establish himself in his new responsibilities and this would be a matter of several months and not merely weeks. If after six months or a years time he received from Lord Wavell the advice that he felt unable to maintain conditions in India, satisfactory to the military operations against
Japan, without negotiating with Gandhi, and the Congress, a very grave crisis would arise which they would have to consider on its merits. By then they would probably be in a stronger position in Europe and the offensive against Japan would have been launched. It would therefore, be a very serious step to jeopardize the situation by themselves opening the whole constitutional issue at this juncture. Victory is the best foundation for great constitutional departures.  

Churchill seemed to sound correct in his estimation of United States attitude for Roosevelt also declared, "The American objectives in India or elsewhere in continental Asia are to expel and defeat the Japanese, in the closest collaboration with our British, Chinese and other allies in that theatre. Our task in expelling the Japanese from Burma, Malaya, Java and other territories is military. Nobody in India or anywhere else in Asia will misunderstand the presence there of American armed forces if they will believe as we do at home, that their job is to assure the defeat of Japan, without which there can be no opportunity for any of us to enjoy and expand the freedom for which we fight." In the fourteenth

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8 War Cabinet Papers, Vol. IV, October 6, 1943, pp. 161-162.
report to the Congress on Land Lease agreement Roosevelt stated "Our strategic policy towards India has been determined by the importance of India's strategic and geographical position in the Far Eastern part of the world. India is a major supply centre for the war against Japan. From India extends the air supply line into China,. Furthermore, India is a military base for operations against the Japanese in Burma".  

This negative attitude of Britain and United States towards India at this time was criticized by the British and American public. Deemeree Bess in the 

Saturday Evening Post wrote, "It is time the Americans quit pretending about the shape of the post war world ... all our European allies who possess empires have made it clear, before we entered the war, that they expect to emerge from the war with their empires intact. When we accepted allies who had that aim our Government never asked and apparently never expected them to re­nounce it. Americans who cling to the notion that we are fighting to undermine imperialism in general and European Empires in particular, are altering all evidence to the contrary."

10 The Hindustan Times, March 13, 1944, p.1.

11 Reported in The Hindustan Times, December 15,1943,p.1
In Britain a Council for International Recognition had been founded. Its Chairman, William Cove, Labour Member in a statement declared, "The Council emphasises that Indian independence is a world issue... the responsibility of realizing in actual facts, the independence and self determination of a Nation rests as much upon America as upon Britain ... United States have directly entered Indian politics. She has directly been involved in the Indian economy." The Council of International Recognition of Indian Independence decided to send a delegation, to the United States to contact individuals and organisations.12

Meanwhile Britain once again reiterated its suggestion and tried to prove to the United States that it was keen for a settlement, when L.S. Amery declared that the Cripps offer still stood. He said that Britain's offer to India through S.S. Cripps had been most generous that any nation could have made. He declared that he had been told, that in many quarters in India, it was held that they only made their offer at the time of their reverses and would no longer stand by it when victory was once assured. There could no be no more complete misunderstanding of their whole outlook and purpose.13

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Some of the Indians like C. Rajagopalachari made a plea for organizing national acceptance of the Cripps offer of April 1942. Rajagopalachari stated, "if something like the Cripps offer was made Congress leaders including Pandit Nehru, if not Mahatma Gandhi were prepared to cooperate with the allies, in the coming offensive against Japan.  

Mahatma Gandhi however, made it clear that he was not prepared to accept the formation of an interim Government with the Viceroy maintaining his existing reserve powers.  

Leland Stowe in his book *They shall never Sleep* dealt with China, Burma and India. Dealing with the American comments on the failure of Cripps Mission, Stowe said, "I do not think that any objective observer of the Cripps negotiations can absolve the British Government from the major responsibility of its failure. One can grant that India constituted just about the most competitive political, social and religious problems that can be found anywhere on earth. One can grant that Indians who have never known the responsibility of freedom or self Government


are excessively sensitive and are often difficult people, for the Westerners to deal with or understand. One may even grant that Mahatma Gandhi for reasons with which I personally have very little sympathy may have secretly wanted to prevent agreement. Nevertheless the British Government had all the physical powers in India and as a consequence it had the chief responsibility for offering the proposal which events have proved, was riddled by several debatable loopholes ... Among the errors and abuses Stowe mentioned primarily, the maintenance of Amery-Linlithgow in India Office, delay in making any offer which when finally made was "take it or leave it" kind. The fact that Indians were taken into war without being consulted, ignoring Chiang Kai Shek intervention urging the British to give Indians real political power, so that they might realise that their participation was a turning point in their struggle for freedom."16

At this time an important question which the British tried to settle in the hope of gaining United States Public Opinion, was the status of the Agent

General, G.S. Bajpai in the United States. Sir R. Mudaliar had during Linlithgow’s Viceroyalty suggested to the Secretary of State and Viceroy designate Wavell that the Agent General in Washington should have the full status of a Minister and should be independent of the British Embassy. This change would have a good effect on American opinion, though it was less important from the Indian point of view. The Secretary of State agreed that the change might have advantages but thought that in India, it would be recognized that whatever the nominal status of the Agent General might be, Indian Foreign Policy would still in the last resort be controlled from London. Linlithgow commented, "I would only say, that the change suggested by Mudaliar would constitute disharmony so long as India remains subordinate to His Majesty’s Government in Foreign Affairs." Meanwhile Wavell was appointed as the Viceroy and the discussion on the status of Bajpai renewed. L.S. Amery in his letter to Wavell disclosed, that Viscount


Halifax, British Ambassador in Washington was very anxious that Bajpai should be made a full Minister and not merely a member of the Ambassador staff with personal ministerial rank. He held this view for quite sometime but Linlithgow was strongly opposed, being afraid of Delhi becoming the centre of number of foreign legations. Personally the Secretary of State felt that he would rather have definite foreign diplomats than roving representatives of presidents, with no clearly defined function and with an inclination to put their fingers into every pie. In any case it might work better if the foreign diplomats were in Delhi, before constitutional changes took place, instead of flocking to the new Government afterwards. The Government of India external affairs department also responded with the view, that it would be far better to take the present opportunity to train Indian diplomats and to direct Indian thought from present introvert tendencies towards foreign affairs, than to be rushed at a later stage when conventions between His Majesty's Government and India would be more difficult to establish... They agreed that this step would

not impress political opinion in India, but regarded it as of small consequence. They were aware, that reciprocal demand would be made by America. China would follow suit. However, in publicity field, they had reasons to think that the new status would add weight to the contribution which Bajpai would make.  

Viscount Halifax continued to emphasise to L.S. Amery the need for a change in Bajpai's status. In another letter to L.S. Amery, Halifax emphasised that the change in Bajpai's status would only formalise a situation that already existed. In his letter of January 29, 1944, Halifax wrote, "apart from the general advantage that would accrue, such action as I have repeatedly urged would lessen the validity of any allegation that he was merely a creature of this Embassy and of His Majesty's Government. Moreover, such a change would only formalise a situation which already exists largely, as direct access by Bajpai to the State Department is concerned. From the constitutional point of view, I should have thought that His Majesty's Government could very reasonably judge this matter, in the same fashion.

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that they judged the matter of Indian representations at the League of Nations. The fact that we choose to let India have independent representation in public does not seem to effect one way or the other, the question of internal relations between Great Britain and India, unless indeed the authority with which we wish India to be separately represented, in this case the United States, itself raised it."  

Ultimately the Secretary of State informed the Government of India that even the Foreign Office agreed with the suggestion that the Agent General should be made a Minister who would be independent of the Ambassador. However, publicity for this change would require careful consideration, as United States Government might make difficulties owing to fear that they might be exposed to criticism of countenancing in some way partition of India. After discussions with the War Cabinet in April 1944, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs came to the conclusion that consideration on the status of Agent General could be postponed until Lord Halifax visited Britain again.  

The proposed


Besides the question of elevation of Diplomatic status of Indian Mission, United States Government took note of Bengal famine. A report on the food crisis revealed to the people of United States, that in Bengal people were dying of starvation daily in the streets. The Chief Minister of Bengal had publicly admitted that the only reason for not declaring Bengal a famine area was the impossibility of carrying out the Government's responsibilities under the Famine Code. President of the Calcutta Rotary Club had written to the local newspapers, urging that the starving people were not to be turned away. While the situation in Bengal had been aggravated by floods, conditions of that sort had likewise begun to exist in Madras and Bombay. Repercussions could therefore, be expected upon Military operation in an area where the population was both hostile and starving.

William Phillips from London wrote to the President how hard hit India was due to the famine in

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Bengal. "While it is true that the political unrest largely affected only the more educated Indians, there was in addition a disturbing and alarming situation developing among the uneducated masses, particularly in Bengal on account of the famine. It should be borne in mind that the frontiers of Bengal touch those of Assam, where American forces are being concentrated in great numbers ... it is therefore, important that the attitude of the people near and around our principle base should continue to be friendly and cooperating. If only from the point of view of strategy, should we not avoid having a hostile population close to our important base and to our line of communications. And yet so far as I know nothing has been done by the British Indian Government, to remedy this situation, which in my estimation has become serious."25

From Delhi, Merrell informed the Secretary of State that Bengal famine was in large measure avoidable and the situation could be improved, by realistic administrative measures. According to him even Louis Fisher agreed, that aside from any effect on military situation,

disturbances or economic dislocation in Eastern India might seriously interfere American procurement and shipping of jute, Mica and commodities such as Tin and Tungsten from China. That the Axis powers were trying to take advantage of the situation rife in India was clear from the Azad Hind News in Tamil relayed from Germany on 14th August, 1943, "It is reported that the Indian independence League at Bangkok has decided to enlist the help of Japan, Thailand and Burma to export rice to India and thus, improve the food situation. Though it is normally impossible to send rice to India from Japanese occupied territory, the League is prepared to do it so, if the British Government approved the proposal and give an undertaking, that the food so sent will not be reserved for military consumption or exported from India. This gesture of the League is expressive of the sympathy of the Indians in East Asia and their desire to relieve the suffering of their Indian brethren. If the British do not accept this generous offer, they will be betraying their true intention."27


United States Public came up with strong criticism against the British Administration in India. *Times* the Weekly News Magazine criticised Wavell's policy towards India as being one of short sightedness. Wavell had announced an Indian policy, in which the gradual transfer of political power to Indian hands was listed last. Wavell declared "Times" had failed to realise that India was an important Allied Military base, as well as a shaky pillar of the Empire". But the same bluntness was bound to alienate many Indians before Wavell had mounted the throne. Indians could and did point out that a starving India could be neither an efficient base nor a willing ally. 28

Pearl Buck and Richard J. Walsh signed an appeal by the Indian Famine Relief Committee putting out the urgent necessity to aid Bengal and reporting that China had already sent a million rupees, while the British press had been urging relief collection. "What is America doing about India? America's people who have in the past always opened their heart and purses to the suffering everywhere, should not miss

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28 *Time The Weekly News Magazine*, November 1, 1943, p.34.
this great chance to show friendship for India's peoples. We must act quickly". David Mckenzie press analyst of war pointed out that India was suffering from a severe food crisis. It was a matter of concern not only for the Indians and the British but also for Americans. Food crisis had added to the Indo-British political crisis. America was concerned with the fact that India was the Eastern store of their ammunitions. Any chaos would result in the shifting of these armaments to Japan, who could use it against the Allied forces. If the British Government continued with this attitude and leaders like Gandhi were kept behind bars, it would have a very bad effect. There was risk of an ultimate detachment of crores of Indians.

I.F. Stone in his article in The Nation entitled "The Indian Skelton at Atlantic City" reported that the closing days of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Conference at Atlantic City provided another instance of the way in which India haunted the Anglo-American entente. India was asked to give one

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per cent of its National Income to relieve the hungry, in liberated areas but it was denied the right to speak of its own starving millions. Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai India's delegate to the Conference, with a propriety becoming in a servant of the British Raj, declined to raise the question. J.J. Singh of the India League of America, threatened to disrupt these convenient diplomatic niceties by disclosing to the correspondents that the Chinese, Mexican, Chilean, South African and Australian representatives were prepared to support India if the question of famine was raised. Dr. T.F. Tsiang, Head of the Chinese Delegation made a public statement supporting J.J. Singh. I.F. Stone contended that many factors had played an important part in the shortage, but the basic cause was imperialism. Britain had drained India of goods, paying for them in blocked sterling accounts in London against which paper was issued in India. India's new found wealth in sterling, was only a reflection of its improvement of the war efforts. The genuine solution for inflation was greater production in India of consumer goods, but this would cut into Britain's post war market. The other way to make the situation bearable would be to give India a responsible and representative Government and make its people feel that this was their war. In normal times the heavy burden of debt and taxes forced the
peasant to turn a portion of his scanty crop into cash. With the rise in prices this burden was reduced and it was difficult to hold him to a near starvation diet. If Gandhi and Nehru were in office instead of in jail, they might appeal to his idealism. That task is beyond the power of the Viceroy and his kept Indian's.\textsuperscript{31}

Even in Britain criticism broke out against His Majesty's Government, in handling the Indian situation. Labour Member of Parliament W.G. Cove addressing the Indian Famine Committee of which he was the Chairman came to the conclusion, that the only way of solving the Indian problem was by recognising the right of self government, self determination and independence. The real Indian problem was not over population, but an alien government governing India. Social and economic conditions could be changed if India obtained political independence.\textsuperscript{32}

In the House of Lords debate on the Food crisis, Lord Huntington declared that if the British wanted to cope with the food crisis in India, the problem of India should be brought out of the cold storage. "We should" he said "thaw Indian mistrust by sympathy and generous

\textsuperscript{31}Stone, I.F., "The Indian Skelton At Atlantic City", \textit{The Nation}, December 11, 1943, pp.686-687.

\textsuperscript{32}The Tribune, November 30, 1943, p.1.
"understanding in this crisis." Once they won the confidence and friendship of the Indian people, half the problem connected with the famine would be solved. In a conference of the London District Communist Party, a resolution demanding the release of Congress leaders was passed. They also urged the opening of negotiation with a view to setting up a Provisional Government of Indian people. The resolution called for measures to end the food crisis in India and control over stocks and prices by increasing imports from outside and production in the country itself, and by severe measures against speculators and hoarders.

The Indian's appealed to the United States to help her in this crisis. Syed Babru Adiya, Mayor of Calcutta wrote to the President "Acute distress prevails in the city of Calcutta and Province of Bengal due to shortage of foodstuffs, the entire population being devitalized and hundreds dying of starvation. Appeal to you and Mr. Churchill in the name of starving humanity to arrange immediate shipment of foodgrains from America or Australia and other countries." There was no speedy

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33 The Tribune, October 22, 1943, p.1.
34 The Tribune, September, 14,1943, p.1.
action seem to be taken by the United States. Some efforts were made by officials of the Near Eastern Division of the State Department, but they were frustrated at every turn. Their Chief Cordell Hull, Secretary of State was in full possession of the true facts of the Indian situation. To George R. Merrell, Officer-in-Charge of the American Mission in New Delhi, he dispatched a telegram which read "For your confidential information, it is thought that American ships will not be available to assist unless the matter is taken up by the American Military Authorities in India". Precious days passed, as the department awaited words from New Delhi about the attitude of American Military Authorities. The latter had all along remained insulated from contact with India's domestic problems and therefore, were not much effected by the tragedy around them. The army's realisation on any issue could be speeded up, if only there was some unmistakeable nudging from the White House. In this case, there was no indication that the President desired some American gestures to famine stricken India. Roosevelt passed the cable along in routine fashion to the State Department. Officials of the Near Eastern Division tried to find out whether the Military Authorities would permit the utilization of some space on Army Ships bound for India, for the despatch of wheat.
The War Shipping Administration bluntly opposed such a move. "If the army could spare space for grain on its ships bound to India, the army had vessels which the War Shipping Association would be obliged to take from it to meet other needs." The State Department's task became one of ensuring that American prestige in India was not adversely effected, as a result of the absence of any American assistance. To cover up, what both Merrell and Phillips had described as "indifference" it became necessary to create the impression, that the top leaders of the United States were paying the closest attention to the situation in India. Acting on the instruction of the Secretary of State, the United States Consul General informed the Mayor of Calcutta three weeks after the latter had despatched his cable to Roosevelt "the responsible officials of the Government of the United States have not been unmindful of the situation described by you, but that as you must undoubtedly realise, the shipment of grains is a matter dependent upon many factors complicated by the war. As you are perhaps aware, British officials in the United States are engaged in efforts which it is hoped will be helpful in alleviating the situation and you are assured that the American Government will facilitate these efforts, in every appropriate manner." 36

The Indians felt the United States attitude was not positive. To remove this impression the Secretary of State informed Merrell at New Delhi, that the Government was prepared to render any assistance which was practicable and the exigencies of the war made possible. However, the shipment was not possible as shipping between the United States and India was under British control, and it rested with the British to determine to what extent available space may be utilized, for the transportation of foodstuffs which could be sent from the United States. Secretary of State, Cordell Hull tried to vindicate the position of United States. He said that United States could do little towards furnishing supplies, which could not be done better from other sources. There was no rice source in the Western hemisphere that was of any significance to the Indian requirements. Nor was there any large source in the Eastern hemisphere. Consequently, relief from famine situation he felt, ought to come from equitable distribution of foodstuffs, rather than importation of wheat. There were large supplies of wheat in Australia. Australia was nearer

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37 Foreign Relations Papers, Vol. IV, October 9, 1943, p. 304.
to India than United States and in any case, shipping between United States and India was under British control. Despite these considerations, the Department of State had continually indicated its desire to assist in every appropriate way in alleviating the Indian food crisis. 38

Congressman Coffee spoke of the tragedy of starvation affecting India. He said that there was a limit to the silence which ought to be impressed upon the people of United States. A sense of justice and humanity, transcended diplomacy and adumbrated good manners. It may have been circumspect and politic, to refrain from indulging in criticism of their British allies, with regard to its negligent treatment of the starving people of Bengal in India. But it was part of a warm hearted, altruistic nation to register vigorously its protest, at continued starvation amid plenty, of the suffering millions of our fellow human beings who inhabit the unhappy sub-continent of India. One of the "Four Freedom" was the freedom from want. Were they giving it to the Hindus? Far from it. Coffee reiterated that "We cannot escape responsibility ourselves because we have

38 Foreign Relation Papers, Vol. IV, October 9, 1943, p.304.
hundreds of thousands of troops stationed in India and are ipso facto, indirectly a partner of this arrangement. Should we not insist upon the allocation of a minimum number of ships, for the shipment of rice and essential food stuffs into India. How can we expect to secure the goodwill of India's peace loving millions if we do not set the fires alight in dark places by first agitation and then following it by doing something about it ... Why don't we practice what we preach. How can the natives of India enthuse about the "Four Freedoms" or the Atlantic Charter when it apparently has no application for them? Are we fighting this war for a principle or for more power? Do we mean what we say when we proclaim our devotion to bringing of the benefits of freedom from want, to the people of the world."39

An article by I.F. Stone, in the New York Daily News as recorded by the Congressional Record clearly described the Indian situation. "I am sick of silence on India. A hundred thousand persons are dying of starvation there each week and we look the other way. Why is India starving? Because the British Viceroyalty so competent in repression, was incompetent in providing an expansion of production on India's ideal acres to replace her normal

rice imports from Japanese held Burma, Indo-China and Thailand. As the British owned, *Calcutta Statesman* remarked "throughout the unfolding of this tragedy, authority seems to have been at least three moves behind public to speak. Just plain decent concern for other human beings makes it our duty."40

Even Winston Churchill wrote to President Roosevelt indicating the seriousness of the crisis. "I am seriously concerned about the food situation in India and its possible reactions on our joint operations. Last year, there was a great famine in Bengal through which 70,000 people died. This year we are faced with acute shortage of wheat... I am impelled to ask you to consider a special allocation of ships, to carry wheat to India from Australia."41 The President's response was that he had on Churchill's telegram immediately directed the matter, to be taken up by the appropriate authority. The appeal had its utmost sympathy and there was a full realization of the military, political and humanitarian factors involved. The American Joint Chief of Staff had

40 Ibid.

reported however, that they were unable on military grounds to consent, to the diversion of shipping.\textsuperscript{42}

Notwithstanding its inability to relieve the food crisis, the United States Government, tried to show its sympathy with the Indian Nationalists when Cordell Hull, United States Secretary of State stated, that the United States encouraged subject people to strive for their liberty and would recognise them as soon as they gain freedom. Infact, American Statesman interpreted this as direct invitation to India's three ninety millions people to ask for liberty. His statement was considered as emphatic public warning that the United States was not moving towards post war imperialism.\textsuperscript{43} When United States Vice-President Henry Wallace declared that Asia could not exist "half slave" and "half free". The United State News Agency commented that what he implied was that the United States expected the British and Dutch to fix up dates for freeing their Far Eastern Colonies. It showed that under President Roosevelt the United States Far Eastern Policy was not imperialistic.\textsuperscript{44}


\textsuperscript{43} The \textit{Hindustan Times}, June 5, 1944, p.1.

\textsuperscript{44} The \textit{Hindustan Times}, June 23, 1944, p.1.
Indian leaders outside the jail continued to voice hopes of United States support. B.G. Mulherker, Indian Employers Delegate to the Philadelphia Labour Conference, gave an account of his experience in America. He was surprised at the anxiety felt and inquiries made by Americans, regarding the progress of the struggle which India had been carrying on for a place of honour and respect in the community of Nations. The ever growing desire of the American, for information regarding India's aspirations was being unfortunately met by persistent propaganda, carried on either by the British Government, or by the Government of India throughout the length and breadth of the States, which to his regret did not reflect much credit on the diplomacy and intelligence of either of these Governments.  

Jamna Dass Mehta, another representative at the Philadelphia Labour Conference in an interview with the Associated Press remarked, that there was universal support in America, for an early solution of India's political problems and every American was a Champion of India's independence.

45 The Times of India, June 24, 1944, p.5.
46 The Hindustan Times, June 9, 1944, p.4.
Indian Economic and Political aspirations were voiced by S.M. Ahmed in a speech at a luncheon given by the American Office of Supply and Exporters Association, when he spoke of Indian aspirations and her longing for higher economy, being equalled only by her desire for political independence.\textsuperscript{47}

\textbf{The Hindustan Times} in its editorial, "India and American Opinion" criticized British propaganda in the United States. It felt that sympathy for India was sought to be curtailed. The Editorial remarked, "The propaganda has been one of the planks of Government programme, ever since Lord Linlithgow started his "New Deal" in India. Among the chief instruments of that policy are G.S. Bajpai and others, who feel just like butterflies in a country too big for them. "But H.S. Polak who had befriended India on many occasions could not be dismissed as a mere propagandist. He revealed prejudices against India, which seemed the result of a liberalism inverted into injured innocence. H. S. Polak felt that United States interest in India may lead to sympathy with Indian aspirations, at a time, when United States Public opinion was extremely critical of British imperialism. The effort to educate Americans about India had

\textsuperscript{47}\textit{The Tribune}, May 26, 1944, p.6.
been particularly vigorous during the past two years and the extremely unjust United States Press comments, on the break down of the Cripps negotiations showed that the efforts were successful. However, at present there was a healthy suspicion of propaganda from any British quarter. Whether it was Kingley Martin or Bertrand Russel because at one time or the other they degenerated into apologists of British rule.\footnote{The Hindustan Times, May 10, 1944, p.3.} The President of India League of America Mr. J.J. Singh spoke out against British propaganda. In a letter to the Times, he expressed the fear that much damage might be done in India, through an interpretation of the recent "Times Editorial" which said, "Now India has spoken and taken a firm stand for the British against the Japanese. The British Empire stands firmer than before." J.J. Singh commented that no Indian worth his salt would encourage a new invader or a new conqueror. Indians had suffered from subjugation, exploitation, and mental and physical slavery for the last two hundred years at the hands of imperialists. They had no intention of having a ruthless totalitarian nation to conquer their country, because
having had experiences of imperialism, they could easily imagine what totalitarianism would be. But the Indians would not tolerate either the British or any one else to exploit and rule them. Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru, President of the Servants of India's Society who had been on a trip to the United States believed that United States understood that freedom of India would virtually sound the death knell of imperialism. There was hardly any American who in a general way was not on the side of India in her struggle, to be free and did not disapprove of British policy in India. Many Americans including some prominent men had spoken of American unwillingness to stress the importance of the Indian question, considering it was not right to embarrass an ally during the war. Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru was being frequently asked to answer arguments which were the stock in trade of British propagandists.

Meanwhile Mahatma Gandhi was released from jail on health grounds. This step was welcomed by the British Labour Party. The Labour Paper "Daily Herald" interpreted Gandhi's release, as a sign of change for the better in the

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50 The Hindustan Times, July 12, 1945, p.1.
Indian scene. It said "we are hoping that this event will inculcate a renewed attempt by British Government to end the political deadlock, which had existed for so long between Britain and major parties in India. L.S. Amery has spoken so many words to justify his attitude of self righteous action, that they could scarcely think that he would eat them all. And the Prime Minister in succession of Cabinet reshuffles had passed over many obvious opportunities of dismissing or transferring Mr. Amery, so it would have to be taken that he was endorsing the Secretary of State's complacency. It would therefore, not be right to give way to wild optimism."51 Following Gandhi's unconditional release, a number of British parliamentarians were inclined to view the chances of release of other Congress leaders optimistically. An Indian Office spokesman in London gave the hope of further constructive development.52 The British Communist Leaders Politt and Palme Dutt urged release of Nehru and other Congress leaders. "The Democratic opinion in Britain universally welcomed the release of Mahatma Gandhi and earnestly hoped, that he

would be speedly restored to health. "The most favourable opportunity now presents itself for taking new steps to end the deadlock. We in Britain are urgently pressing the Government to release Pandit Nehru and provide opportunities for him and Gandhji to consult the members of the Congress Working Committee."

Gandhiji's release was welcomed by United States Communist Party. Their leader Earl Browder sent a cable to Mahatma Gandhi. "We are happy to learn of your release and hope this means that India's people will soon be free. We are confident that cleansing the earth of Hitler and his allies, will be followed by the achievement of independence by all nations able to unite all living forces of their people." An American Press correspondent wrote that the Government had at last decided to mobilize India's war potential, and however, the announcement might be worded, this was its secondary motive. He foreshadowed a meeting between Gandhi and Wavell.

Mahatma Gandhi on his release from jail, put forward

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53 The Tribune, May 18, 1944, p.1.
54 The Tribune, June 7, 1944, p.8.
India's demands for independence. In a letter to Lord Wavell, Mahatma Gandhi wrote "The spirit of India demanded complete freedom and he would resist Japanese yoke equally". Warning the British against self satisfaction at the present state of affairs he observed, "Promises for the future are valueless. Present performance is the need of the hour, if a bloodier war is to be avoided in future. Therefore, real war efforts must satisfy India's demands." Lord Wavell replied that while he absolved the Congress of any deliberate wish to aid the Japanese, he felt that they must have been aware that the 'Quit India Resolution' would hamper the prosecution of the war, and in this, the greatest contribution that Congress could make towards India's welfare was to abandon the policy of non-cooperation. Gandhiji issued two statements to the Press, indicating his attitude and course of action. "I can tell you this that I have no intention of offering civil disobedience today, I cannot take the country back to 1942... It is my conviction that we cannot meet fully the situation

56 The Tribune, June 18, 1944, p.1.

and alleviate the suffering of the people unless power and responsibility are transferred from British into Indian hands". Gandhi said that he would be satisfied with a National Government in full control of Civil Administration. It was not so in 1942. Such a Government would be composed of persons chosen by the elected members of the Central Assembly. This would mean declaration of independence qualified as above during the war. The Viceroy would be like the King of England guided by responsible ministers. Popular Government would be automatically restored in all the provinces. So that provincial and central Governments would be responsible to the people of India. So far as the Military operations are concerned, the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief would have full control.58 About the Hindu-Muslim differences Gandhiji stated, if the British meant well there would be no difficulty. "Most of us believe that whatever the Viceroy may wish personally, he has not the authority in the political sphere, Mr. Churchill does not want a settlement".59 Wavell's response to


59 Ibid.
Gandhiji's statement was, that he would be willing to consider a definite, constructive proposal, if it was submitted to him. The British Government's irritation was obvious from a cable by Churchill, which declared that the Cabinet was very perturbed that Wavell had entered into negotiation with Gandhi, who should be dead - at least politically. Wavell wired back to Churchill that he was not negotiating with Gandhi, merely informing him that negotiation on his basis was impossible.  

In United States Gandhiji's statement evoked interest among the political observers. In some responsible quarters it was considered as an encouraging move, from the United Nations point of view. While authority stressed, that it was a move in the right direction but full understanding of its significance required the closest study of Mahatma Gandhi's phraseology. One competent authority said that amidst the war, the British might find it difficult to yield to such a matter as putting Military control in the hands of National Government even under the Viceroy. Some of the views as expressed were - Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee Sol bloom "A step in the right direction" while Chairman Millard Tidings of the Senate's Territories Committees stated, "It looks like progress towards the

60 Wavell, F.M.V., The Viceroy's Journal, pp. 81-82.
solution of the Indian problem". Republican Senator Gerald Nye commented, "It is gratifying to see a possibility to get together on the issue which is threatening to become most embarrassing". Democratic Senator Deniss Chavez declared "It is Indian Nation's problem. If they want to cooperate with the British that is fine, if they want to go against England, I won't criticize. Nations should be allowed to decide their own destinies." 61

The Herald Tribune editorial welcomed Mahatma Gandhi's concession to the Muslims with the promise, not to renew civil disobedience. Gandhiji had held out the prospect of candid consideration on the basis of self government, while the war continued... and orderly progress towards some kind of settlement which would permit the British pledge to Indians to take effect at the proper time with minimum strife and friction. 62

The British press was critical. The "Times" in its editorial expressed the view that certain suggestions recently ventilated, on the authority of Gandhi do not hold any promise of contributing to the

62 Ibid.
resolving of the political deadlock in India. Mahatma Gandhi's request to the Viceroy that he should be allowed to contact the members of the Working Committee in jail was turned down. That this attitude of the British was likely to have an adverse effect in the United States was pointed out by Sir R. Campbell in his letter to Anthony Eden. "At present the statement of Gandhi's proposals is immediately followed by an equivocal rejection of them. Probable adverse effect on United States public opinion of this form of representation would be mitigated if either before the statement of his proposal, or immediately after them there could be inserted an expression of His Majesty's Government's adherence to Cripps offer to struggle for early settlement on lines already offered. United States public at this time was sympathetic towards India's aspirations. Prominent Americans observed the second Anniversary of the arrest of India's political leaders. They addressed an appeal to Lord Halifax for their release. They requested that their appeal be forwarded to the British Government. American Magazine Common Sense

63 The Times of India, Bombay, July 17, 1944, p. 4.
66 The Times of India, Bombay, August 9, 1944, p. 5.
published the correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi and Wavell with the remarks, "The key to India's most immediate problem is Downing Street". What is happening in India is degrading to the people of India, who lack elementary human rights which American's take for granted. It is degrading to the intelligent English man who feels called upon to assent, that the Indian issue is not obvious but obscure. It is degrading to the Americans who are told that because Britain is our ally the problem of India is none of their business, and they are called upon to stifle their sympathies and stultify their intelligence, at the behest of Churchill and Amery. Major Meraj-ud-Din of the First Punjab Regiment after a three months trip to the United States disclosed that the audiences showed great interest in India. After his broadcast he would often receive letters asking for more information.

The British began to note the important part India played in Anglo-American relations. Casey pointed it out when he stated "I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that we have to weigh in the balance good Anglo-American relations or a neat and tidy Indian settlement.

67 Reported in The Times of India, Bombay, August 30, 1944, p.5.
68 The Hindustan Times, August 11, 1944, p.1.
If we are obliged to remain in India for another ten years, ill disposed Americans will use this as a heavy stick to beat us with and this would poison Anglo-American relations which is the most important matter in the post war world. Personally I would rather get out of India tomorrow, than risk the damage to Anglo-American relations. In fact, even Lord Wavell though he was following the instruction from the Home Government in his letter to the Prime Minister showed his dissent to the policy being followed. "I will begin by saying, that my primary reason for writing is that I think very strongly that the future of India is the problem on which the British Commonwealth and the British reputation will stand or fall in the post-war period. To my mind, our strategic security, our name in the world for statesmanship and fair dealing and much of our economic well being, will depend on the settlement we make in India. Our prestige and prospects in Burma, Malaya, China and Far East generally are entirely subject to what happens in India. If we can secure as a friendly partner in the British Commonwealth, a predominant influence in these countries,

India, we should have a voice in these matters. It is not right for the British to say 'This is none of your business'. When we alone presumably will have to play a major part in the struggle against Japan, if we do nothing and merely accept the British point of view that conditions in India are none of our business then we must be prepared for very serious consequences, in the internal situation in India which may develop as a result of despair and misery and anti-White sentiments of hundreds of millions of subject people. Suggesting that the British must act William Phillips added, "The people of Asia, I am supported in this opinion by other diplomatic and military observers, who cynically regard this war as one between fascist and imperialistic powers agree that a generous gesture from British to India would change this undesirable political atmosphere."71 *

Senator Chandler of Kentucky along with five other Senators demanded that the President make a full report on conditions in India. He said that the American


*Text of William Phillips's letter published by Drew Pearson given in Appendix II.
Political Adviser, William Phillips had been attacked by the British for his report on the Indian situation...

"Only by knowing the truth of the conditions in countries not as we wish them to be but as they exist, can the American people in future organise and promote a policy of friendship with other nations, that will lead to lasting peace." Senator Chandler pointed out that the British allies had taken an incredibly harmful step by declaring William Phillips as persona non grata. The British foreign office had taken the action because Phillips had made a report on the conditions in India which the British did not like. "Is the Government of United States so weak, are our people so incompetent, has our sovereignty been so impaired that even the President is no longer permitted to know the truth about conditions in friendly countries".

The United States papers took up the issue. The journal *American* in its editorial declared that the Phillips incident was assuming serious proportions and indeed was a serious matter. It added that while the

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72 The Hindustan Times, September 4, 1944, p.2.

would I think be assured. With a lost and hostile India, we are likely to be reduced in the East to the position of commercial baymen, and yet I am bound to say that after years of experience in my present office, I feel that the vital problem of India is being treated by His Majesty's Government with neglect, even sometimes with hostility and contempt. I entirely admit the difficulty of the problem, I know the vital preoccupation of the European War. I agree in the main with what I think is your conviction, that in a mistaken view of Indian conditions and in an entirely misplaced sentimental liberalism, we took the wrong turn in India twentyfive or thirty years ago; but we cannot put back the clock and must deal with the existing conditions and pledges and I am clear that our present attitude is aggravating the mischief."

The ground had been prepared for a furore in Anglo-American relations over Drew Pearson's publication. Drew Pearson published a letter of William Phillips, President Roosevelt's Personal Envoy to India. This letter was highly critical of British rule in India and called the Indian army mercenary force. It read, "I feel strongly Mr. President that in view of our military position in

70Wavell, F.M.V., The Viceroy's Journal, pp. 94-95.
State Department had denied that William Phillips was persona non grata, there was no repudiation of his purported report on India. The significance of such a report would be great whether or not it is true. Earl Von Wiegand, the columnist of the journal Today said that William Phillips was pro-British and while American Ambassador to Rome did not welcome criticism of Britain. The British attitude therefore, was somewhat astounding. A half page advertisement in today's Washington Post quoted Ambassador William Phillips, Chiang Kai Shek, Senator Chandler of Kentucky and representative Calvin Johnson under the headline "India's freedom is essential for speedy victory over the Japanese and lasting world peace." Addressed to the people of America, the advertisement concluded, "India's four hundred millions believe in freedom and liberty as you do."

J.J.Singh, President of India League of America urged for further revelations concerning William Phillips position in India and demanded that Johnson's report on India be made public. Singh urged the lifting of British

74 Reported in The Tribune, September 8, 1944, p.1.
censorship from India. Representatives Chandler's publication of William Phillips report would be welcomed by Americans, English men and Indians interested in a just solution of the deadlock. Singh stated that news received by the Indian League showed, that he had made a sincere effort to gather all relevant data and be helpful. His report supported the view, that British policy in India was hampering the war by preventing a political settlement. The India League understood that upon his return from India, William Phillips had conversations with Churchill in which he stated his views. It was also understood that Phillips verbally made it clear that the British alone were unwilling to make a move towards a solution. This opinion was amply confirmed by rebuffs to Gandhi's offer for a settlement. Singh felt it would be helpful to know what Louis Johnson reported to the President after his return from India. The deadlock in India would not be difficult to settle when everyone was in full possession of all facts. But it would be made hopeless when Indians were prevented from knowing how Americans felt and Americans could get only fragmentary report of the real position in India. British censorship had to be lifted. Singh concluded that a solution of the Indian problem would mobilise India, give a new impetus to China and people under Japanese
The United States State Department sent its regrets to the British Government for the unauthorised publication of Phillips letter. British Government was disturbed by the adverse comments William Phillips letter aroused. In his conversation with the United States Under Secretary of State, Ronald Campbell stated that his associates in London were disturbed, and there were three points of William Phillips letter on which the Government wished either the President or Cordell Hull to comment - the damaging reference to the morale of the Indian army, the unfair reference on the part that Britain was going to play in the war against Japan. Churchill's reference to the fact that the Atlantic Charter did not apply to India. Halifax in another letter to the Under Secretary once again urged the United States to do something to mitigate the effects of Drew Pearson's article. "I think

76 The Tribune, September 5, 1944, p.1.


His views were not what they were entitled to expect, from a professedly friendly envoy. United States Senator Chandler and representative Johnson attacked His Majesty's Government, about the alleged recall of Phillips.

Churchill tried to dismiss the whole case lightly when he wrote to Halifax "I have of course followed the Drew Pearson incident and I cannot think it is of the slightest importance... We must beware of a tendency to worry too much about these minor jams. In the United States, there is so much free speech that one thing cancel's out the other and the great machine crashes on. I do not propose to trouble the President on these points when everything is going so well in all directions.


the most essential and urgent need is that something should be said publicly disassociating the United States Government from what William Phillips said about the morale of the Indian army and the future attitude of the British Commonwealth towards the Japanese wars. But when Sir Ronald Campbell asked the Secretary of State if a statement could be issued by the United States Government disassociating them from the views expressed in Phillips letter, Cardell Hull informed the President, "It is the Department's feeling that it would be impossible to issue a statement satisfactory to British in as we share in general the views expressed in the Ambassador's letter. ... I would appreciate that we consider it preferable to make no public statement &n the subject" And no statement was made. Halifax wrote to Eden that the designation of Phillips was still the President's Personal Representative in India, the views he has stated would make it impossible for them to do other than regard him as persona non grata.