

## Marching into the Great Wall of State

Many of the unofficial advocates for states-in-waiting, for nationalist insurgent movements claiming statehood, were individuals affiliated or identified with the international peace movement. At times, these transnational advocates found themselves championing independence struggles in states-in-waiting that were situated within newly decolonized postcolonial nation-states. While some within these postcolonial state governments may themselves have relied on these advocates during their own independence struggles, they opposed such advocacy after they won their independence, since it had the potential to undermine their own state sovereignty. The 1963 Friendship March – launched by the World Peace Brigade, a transnational civil society organization set up to find peaceful solutions to global decolonization, exemplified this contradiction. The Friendship March started in New Delhi, India, and intended to cross the Chinese border in the immediate aftermath of the 1962 Sino-Indian War.

### SINO-INDIAN WAR ZONES

Following Indian independence (1947) and the victory of the Chinese Communist Party in the Chinese civil war, which resulted in the establishment of the People's Republic of China (1949), an uneasy truce between India and China allowed each to build military installations in the regions where their borders remained unresolved: Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh/North East Frontier Agency (located in Northeast India, the same region as Nagaland, a territory struggling for independence from India). In October 1962, Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian prime minister, announced that India would clear what he considered Indian territory

of Chinese military incursions, and China invaded India.<sup>1</sup> The Indian army was already stretched thin, with peacekeeping commitments to the UN in Congo (due to Katanga's attempted secession from Congo) as well as with its ongoing "pacification" efforts in Nagaland.<sup>2</sup> The Chinese invasion completely routed the Indian military. After making a statement of borderland dominance, China declared a ceasefire and withdrew from most of its military advances so that it did not have to respond to the international pressure that would have accompanied a more permanent occupation.

For Indians, the defeat stung bitterly. In the words of Nehru's biographer, Sarvepalli Gopal, "No one who lived in India through the winter months of 1962 can forget the deep humiliation felt by all Indians."<sup>3</sup> The 1962 Sino-Indian War is often considered an end date – of nonalignment, of *hindi-chini-bhai-bhai* ("India and China as brothers," a 1950s Indian catchphrase for diplomacy with China); of domestic Nehruvianism (the balance between state-planned economic centralization and individual freedoms); and, eventually, of Nehru himself, who died in May 1964.<sup>4</sup> While his health had been unstable throughout the 1960s, it is possible that the trauma of defeat accelerated Nehru's death. The 1962 war highlighted and exacerbated the many acute challenges facing the Indian central government, instantiating the frame of national security around India's "fissiparous tendencies" – its regional autonomic demands – especially in regions that had experienced Chinese invasion: the Indian Northeast and Kashmir. The 1962 war lasted just over a month, but it had ongoing effects in securitizing and nationalizing borderlands regions, especially as it did not resolve the disputed border between India and

<sup>1</sup> Nehru statement, from A. S. Bhasin, *Nehru, Tibet and China* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2021), 294. This is a very brief retelling of a contested subject for which most of the official records on both sides remain classified. Accounts for the broader context of the Sino-Indian War include Amit R. Das Gupta and Lorenz M. Lüthi, eds., *The Sino-Indian War of 1962: New Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2017); Paul M. McGarr, *The Cold War in South Asia: Britain, the United States and the Indian Subcontinent, 1945–1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill Press, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Manjari Chatterjee Miller, *Wronged by Empire: Post-Imperial Ideology and Foreign Policy in India and China* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 63.

<sup>3</sup> Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, Vol. 3 (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984), 232.

<sup>4</sup> Most famously, Ramachandra Guha, *India after Gandhi* (New York: Macmillan, 2007); also, Shashi Tharoor, *Nehru: The Invention of India* (New Delhi: Arcade Publishing, 2011 [2003]).

China.<sup>5</sup> Three thousand Indian citizens of Chinese origin were interned in camps in India, and tribal peoples in Northeast India came to be racialized as “chinki” – foreign, and visually linked to a national foe.<sup>6</sup>

Neville Maxwell – an Australian journalist who visited Nagaland in Northeast India as part of a 1960 reporting mission and who was a contributing writer to the Minority Rights Group, a nongovernmental organization originally set up to address the Nagas’ nationalist claims – wrote the formative revisionist account of the Sino-Indian War.<sup>7</sup> This account was revisionist because Maxwell blamed Nehru for deliberately provoking the Chinese: the “Indian side is impaled on Nehru’s folly of declaring India’s boundaries fixed, final and non-negotiable ... A boundary dispute is soluble only in the context of negotiations.”<sup>8</sup> A harsh critic of Nehru, Maxwell considered India not only “the product of the British imperium,” but also more fixed-boundary-centric than empire had ever been.<sup>9</sup> He concurred with the belief that decolonization internationalized imperial boundaries, making the more permeable border zones of empire into hard borders between nation-states. From this perspective, the ambiguity of empire had allowed for more political flexibility for some subject peoples, at least from a perception that did not focus on the extreme violence and disenfranchisement of most forms of imperial rule.

Maxwell’s critique of India as “Bharat” (or political India) – that it was postimperial rather than anticolonial – remains an important corrective to visions of India that overlook continuities between empire and

<sup>5</sup> Bérénice Guyot-Réchart, *Shadow States: India, China and the Himalayas, 1910–1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> On internment camps, see Joy Ma and Dilip D’Souza, *The Deoliwallahs* (New Delhi: Pan MacMillan India, 2020). On racism directed at Northeasterners, see Duncan McDuie-Ra, “‘Calling NE People Chinki Will Land You in Jail’: Fixing Racism,” in McDuie-Ra, *Debating Race in Contemporary India* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 82–103.

<sup>7</sup> Neville Maxwell, *India’s China War* (New York: Random House, 2000 [1970]). Maxwell also wrote a report on the Nagas for David Astor’s Minority Rights Group: *India, the Nagas, and the Northeast* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1973). (Astor was the editor of the newspaper the *Observer*.) Other accounts of the Sino-India War that are more balanced yet still critical toward India include Dibyesh Anand, “Remembering 1962 Sino-India Border War: Politics of Memory,” *Journal of Defense Studies* 6, no. 4 (2012): 229–48; and Srinath Raghavan, “A Bad Knock: The War with China, 1962,” in *A Military History of India and South Asia: From the East India Company to the Nuclear Era*, ed. Daniel P. Marston and Chandar S. Sundaram (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 157–74.

<sup>8</sup> Neville Maxwell, interview with Venkatesan Vembu, *Daily News and Analysis*, June 6, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Neville Maxwell to Michael Scott, October 31, 1973, Box 35, GMS Papers.

independence.<sup>10</sup> Yet his focus on the constitutional, juridical mode of Indian politics as its defining feature ignored the India that had become independent in popular understanding by embracing Gandhi's saintly idiom of politics, which had served as an inspiration for the postwar international peace movement and had been enmeshed in transnational anti-imperialism during the interwar era.<sup>11</sup> This India had achieved independence through nonviolence (at least, in the general view), with transnational advocacy and support from many of Maxwell's own colleagues and friends, and had held an internationalist political vision that stretched beyond India's territorial borders.<sup>12</sup> Gandhi himself had argued that his "ambition is much higher than independence. Through the deliverance of India, I seek to deliver the so-called weaker races of the world."<sup>13</sup>

#### THE FRIENDSHIP MARCH'S FOUNDATIONAL DISAGREEMENTS

In response to growing tensions between India and China, the World Peace Brigade began planning a "friendship march" scheduled to cross the Indian Northeast on its planned route from New Delhi to Peking. However, the spring of 1963 was not a felicitous moment to attempt a peaceful crossing of the Sino-Indian border to improve Sino-Indian

<sup>10</sup> Rajeev Bhargava, "History, Nation and Community: Reflections on Nationalist Historiography of India and Pakistan," *Economic and Political Weekly* 35, no. 4 (January 2000): 193–200, provides an overview of imperial and nationalist historiographies in the wake of the creation of independent India and Pakistan. It is also important to note that India as "Bharat" can refer to the idea of a Hindu India not "defaced" by British colonialism or Mughal (Muslim) conquest. For example, Aatish Taseer, "In India, a Name Is Rarely Just a Name," *New York Times*, July 26, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> For a synthesis on the multiple forces that underpin the history of Indian international relations, see Pallavi Raghavan, Martin J. Bayly, Elisabeth Leake, and Avinash Paliwal, "The Limits of Decolonisation in India's International Thought and Practice: An Introduction," *International History Review* 44, no. 4 (2022): 812–18. On South Asian interwar internationalism, especially on the political left, see Ali Raza, Franziska Roy, and Benjamin Zachariah, eds., *The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds, World Views, 1917–1939* (New Delhi: Sage, 2015). Also Michele Louro, "'Where National Revolutionary Ends and Communist Begins': The League against Imperialism and the Meerut Conspiracy Case," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 33, no. 3 (2013): 331–44.

<sup>12</sup> Manu Bhagavan, *The Peacemakers: India and the Quest for One World* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2012); in international civil society spheres, see Carolien Stolte, "'The People's Bandung': Local Anti-imperialists on an Afro-Asian Stage," *Journal of World History* 30, no. 1–2 (2019): 125–56.

<sup>13</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 3, ed. Raghavan Iyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987 [1928]), 255.

relations: before the march could start, war broke out between the two countries on October 20, 1962, ending a month later.<sup>14</sup> Regardless, the Brigade went ahead with the march on schedule.

In India, the march was predominantly identified with Jayaprakash Narayan (JP), the leader of the Brigade's Asian Regional Council, and led by his lieutenants Siddharaj Dhadda, Suresh Ram, and Muthukumaraswamy Aramvalarthanathan (M. Aram). JP was an Indian civil society organizer with a significant national and international profile who played a leadership role in India and abroad through the Sarvodaya movement, a civil society program that continued Gandhian nonviolent activism after Indian independence.<sup>15</sup> Alongside Dhadda, Ram, and Aram (who were also important members of the Sarvodaya movement, as were most all Indian Brigade members), JP directed the march with Americans Ed Lazar and Charles C. (Charlie) Walker of the American Friends Service Committee, a US-based Quaker civil society organization. The enterprise totaled 19 marchers – 11 Indian and 5 American, with Japanese, Burmese, and British members of the Brigade cycling in and out.<sup>16</sup> Echoing Gandhi's strategy for peaceful political change and mass mobilization, it charted its course through Sarvodaya ashrams, holding meetings and rallies along the way that drew 1,500–4,000 interested local participants.<sup>17</sup> JP's three lieutenants were dedicated Gandhians whose efforts preceded and exceeded that of the Brigade. Ram had recently closed up the Brigade's Africa Freedom Action Project in Dar es Salaam; Dhadda had become an anti-capitalist campaigner, taking on both the Indian government and multinational

<sup>14</sup> Tansen Sen, *India, China, and the World: A Connected History* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), 435–51.

<sup>15</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, the World Peace Brigade's South Asia office shared its leadership and mailing address with the Indian Sarvodaya movement. Sarvodaya ("universal uplift" or "well-being of all") celebrated manual labor, the voluntary equal distribution of wealth, and small-scale self-sufficient communities. After Indian independence (1947) and Gandhi's death (1948), the idea of "sarvodaya" transformed into the Sarvodaya movement, which aimed to rectify social, economic, and political injustice within India – an Indian civil rights movement that remained outside of government or electoral politics and espoused nonviolence as an operating method and a source of legitimacy. Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) was one of its main leaders, with Vinoba Bhave.

<sup>16</sup> Sen, *India, China, and the World*, 440, has slightly different figures (13 core marchers, of whom 10 were Indian). In any case, the Friendship March was small in number and large in the distance they sought to cover.

<sup>17</sup> Sen, *India, China, and the World*, 442.

corporations in Indian court;<sup>18</sup> and M. Aram went on to champion peace in Nagaland.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, symptomatic of the rift in the Brigade community between its Western and Sarvodaya members, Ram, Dhadda, and Aram's views on strategy and their deep experiences with the political realities in India did not seem to drive the Brigade's own organizational dialogue concerning the march.

Before it even left Delhi, controversy hindered the Brigade's transnational mission. Western pacifists sharply disagreed with Indian Gandhians who refused to condemn Indian state violence during the 1962 Sino-Indian War as well as in Nagaland and Kashmir. The Chinese government, viewing the march as "a group of Indian reactionaries in collusion with US imperialists" instead of as a neutral, international peace project, pressured Burma, Pakistan, and the British in Hong Kong to deny the marchers visas.<sup>20</sup> In addition, two of the Brigade's leaders were also engaged in transnational advocacy on behalf of nationalist movements in Nagaland and Tibet, territories, respectively within India and China, who strongly opposed such struggles for independence.

Descriptions of these various controversies come through mostly in the correspondence of the Brigade's Western members, for several possible reasons: The march had a strong American presence and the Brigade's North American chairman, A. J. Muste, remained in New York and therefore needed to be notified in writing of his lieutenants' activities. In addition, since many of the controversies swirling around the march dealt with questions of Southern Asian security, Western members of the Brigade needed to receive extensive background to understand them, while the political contexts encompassing Tibet, Nagaland, and Sino-Indian border disputes were well known to Indian Brigade members. It may also be that the Brigade's disagreements and divergences concerning these geopolitical hotspots were less important from the primary perspective of Indian Brigade members, who wrote about them more

<sup>18</sup> *Siddharaj Dhadda v. Union of India*, High Court of Delhi, Civil Appeal No. 4362 of 1994, Civil Miscellaneous Appeal No. 7865 of 1994.

<sup>19</sup> After leading the closing rally for the march in Ledo, Assam, M. Aram spent eight years in Nagaland (1964–1972) attempting to maintain a ceasefire agreement between Naga nationalist insurgents and the Indian government.

<sup>20</sup> *Peace News*, April 19, 1963; *Liberation*, May 1963. *Liberation* magazine issues are housed in the Swarthmore College Library Peace Collections, while *Peace News* is housed at the University of Bradford (UK).

obliquely and with seemingly less vehemence.<sup>21</sup> Conversely, because the questions of Tibet, Nagaland, and the Sino-Indian border concerned Indian national security and state-building, these issues could have been too politically charged for Indian Brigade members to feel comfortable addressing them directly in writing. Indian Brigade members, particularly J. P. Narayan, had domestic influence and responsibilities – therefore, a lot more at stake during the march than did their Western counterparts.

In addition, the Cold War hedged in the narrow path of transnationalism. In theory, human rights and development, as well as activism for disarmament, peace, and racial equality, were realms where the Cold War's binary (which demanded that a state or organization identify as either capitalist or as communist) did not have to bind political action.<sup>22</sup> However, on the Delhi-to-Peking Friendship March, the Brigade found itself caught in the Cold War trap. While the Brigade saw itself as unaligned, the Cold War context still mattered – but not in terms of an us-versus-them dualism. Disentangling the impact of the Cold War on the Brigade's Friendship March is not a question of “taking off” or “reading through” a “Cold War lens.”<sup>23</sup> Rather, it is the recognition that the neutrality of an allegedly apolitical transnational movement was not value-neutral. The Brigade could not escape politics, whether they be

<sup>21</sup> The papers of the North American Regional Council are at the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin (which houses a large repository of collections related to left-wing US civil society activism). Those of the European Regional Council are among Devi Prasad's papers at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam (whose collections include a focus on European social movements). Those of the Asian Regional Council are among JP Narayan's papers in the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi (the repository of papers of prominent Indian figures from the post-independence era).

<sup>22</sup> Petra Goedde, *The Politics of Peace: A Global Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); John Munro, *The Anticolonial Front: The African American Freedom Struggle and Global Decolonisation, 1945–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); David Engerman, *The Price of Aid: The Economic Cold War in India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018). Stephen J. Macekura and Erez Manela, eds., *The Development Century: A Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Steven L. B. Jensen, *The Making of International Human Rights: The 1960s, Decolonization, and the Reconstruction of Global Values* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Lawrence S. Wittner, *Confronting the Bomb: A Short History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> Titular allusions to Matthew Connelly, “Taking Off the Cold War Lens: Visions of North–South Conflict during the Algerian War for Independence,” *American Historical Review* 105, no. 3 (2000): 739–69; and Monica Popescu, “Reading through a Cold War Lens: Apartheid-Era Literature and the Global Conflict,” *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa* 24, no. 1 (2012): 37–49.

the nationalist politics of its leaders' advocacy, the national politics of the countries in which it operated, or the international political environment in which their endeavors were embedded. Instead, the march and the personal and ideological conflicts it roused became a new forum for how these structural politics played out.<sup>24</sup>

The controversy over the correct understanding of nonviolence arose at the march's launch, when some Western supporters of the Brigade challenged the march for not adhering to its apolitical, nonviolent, non-national aspirations. Particular Western members of the Brigade community felt that the Indian state was not living up to its Gandhian promise of peaceful political action and that the Sarvodaya movement did not properly condemn the Indian government's violence in the Sino-Indian War and against Naga nationalist insurgents within the Indian state. For example, Bertrand Russell, the elder statesman of the international peace movement, was deeply "saddened" that the Gandhi Peace Foundation (one of the parent organizations and funders of the Brigade) had not spoken up for the peaceful resolution of the Sino-Indian dispute and "for an end to the cruel war against the Naga."<sup>25</sup> Russell argued that "peace should be [the] object" of the Sarvodaya movement instead of the organization's being run as an arm of Indian "government policy."<sup>26</sup> As with many Western supporters of the Brigade, Russell did not fully comprehend or sympathize with the domestic political challenges facing Sarvodaya movement members; it was significantly easier to criticize the Indian government when one was not an Indian citizen. That reality also gave Russell space to compare what India considered its own nation-building project with European colonialism: "It is no more justified for India to seek to set up puppet spokesmen for the Naga while she uses her army to destroy villages and torture people, than it was for the French in Algeria."<sup>27</sup>

At the same time, Indian Gandhians themselves valued British march organizer and Brigade member Reverend Michael Scott's gift for empathy and moral sensitivity, which crossed cultural boundaries. Shankarrao Deo, a Sarvodaya member of the march, was struck by Scott's "simple" and "noble" heart.<sup>28</sup> Writing in the march's first month of progress, Deo

<sup>24</sup> Thank you to David Engerman for help articulating this point.

<sup>25</sup> Bertrand Russell to Suresh Ram, September 21, 1963. Bertrand Russell Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

<sup>26</sup> Russell to Suresh Ram, September 21, 1963.

<sup>27</sup> Russell to Suresh Ram, September 21, 1963.

<sup>28</sup> Shankarrao Deo to A. J. Muste, March 27, 1963, Box 2, WPB NARC Papers.



appreciated Scott's "friendliness and readiness to understand" the complexity of the pacifist position for Indian Gandhians in the wake of the Sino-Indian War.<sup>29</sup> This same acceptance, with shades of gray, that allowed the explicitly nonviolent Sarvodaya movement to support its government during wartime mirrored Scott's support for nationalist claimants, such as Nagas, who engaged in violence.

Marchers from the United States, however, found the position of Indian Gandhians frustrating. For Brigade member Ed Lazar, the top-down control of the Gandhian movement and its "centralized decision-making apparatuses" were exasperating: "Two men – Vinoba [Bhave] and JP – make the decisions (with rare exceptions), all important matters are referred to them for 'blessings.'"<sup>30</sup> Lazar thought that this centralization meant that peace "workers' initiative has been snuffed out." If "sainthood" became "a requirement for nonviolent action" then "bold non-violent experiments" would never get off the ground.<sup>31</sup> His criticism of the Sarvodaya movement contained elements of chauvinism, negatively contrasting Eastern "saintly" passivity to Western "bold experiments." Part of Lazar's discomfort with the culture of Sarvodaya peace workers was that in his "own group" (meaning among the Americans – a revealing possessive for an allegedly international endeavor), he was "dealing" with a fair amount of "guru phobia."<sup>32</sup>

The US battalion of the Brigade found the "saintly idiom" of Indian politics an uncomfortable fit. Born during the Indian independence movement, that idiom was the political mode that Gandhi used to bridge the gap between the elite Congress Party and the mass movement.<sup>33</sup> Saintly politics focused on voluntary sacrifice, appealing to a person's best self. It promoted nonviolence even at the potential cost of the individual's life and livelihood. In theory, the saintly idiom attempted to reform politics not through the exercise of power but by remaining at a distance from the functions of government. This form of political expression inspired the World Peace Brigade's creation. It also provided an impossibly high

<sup>29</sup> Deo to Muste, March 27, 1963.

<sup>30</sup> Ed Lazar to A. J. Muste, March 24, 1963, Box 2, WPB NARC Papers.

<sup>31</sup> Lazar to Muste, March 24, 1963. <sup>32</sup> Lazar to Muste, March 24, 1963.

<sup>33</sup> W. H. Morris-Jones defined three distinctive idioms or languages of Indian politics – modern, traditional, and saintly. The modern idiom as articulated in the Indian constitution, law courts, and administration/civil service; the traditional idiom as the language of village organization, caste system, and tribal groups; and the idiom of saintly politics, referring to the politics of Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, and JP; Morris-Jones, *The Government and Politics of India* (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1964).

standard and burden on its individual members: that they behave like twentieth-century saints.

Another Western criticism of the relationship between the Sarvodaya movement and the Indian government was reflected in the debate on whether Brigade leaders could publicly take personal political stances that undermined the march's overarching purpose. In January 1963, two months before the march set off, one of JP's lieutenants, Siddharaj Dhadda, wrote to Muste on the edits the Brigade's Asian Regional Council had made to the march's "aims and objectives" document:

Two things have been omitted. One, the reference to the exclusion of China from the UN ... The other clause omitted is where you had said that "Individual Marchers should be free to voice opposition to war etc." We thought that no distinction need be made between what individual marchers could say and what the group could say.<sup>34</sup>

The Asian Regional Council's (i.e., the Indian) revisions highlighted the ongoing division within the Brigade between members who supported pacifism as the abstention from violence and those who did not disavow violence for the purpose of self-defense or political justice. The second position justified Indian state violence against alleged Chinese aggression during the 1962 Sino-Indian War. Dhadda's comments to Muste on the march's aims and objectives articulated, then elided, the differences between the individual person and the collective Brigade as the unit of political action. The members of the Brigade preferred to operate as individuals rather than as an organization, because doing so allowed for more freedom to speak out on issues – but for less cohesion. Yet, in spite of its inclination toward individual political freedom, the Asian Regional Council did not want to be the sponsoring organization for Westerners who actively criticized the Indian government, and experience the repercussions for that criticism.

#### TRANSNATIONAL ADVOCACY VERSUS STATE SOVEREIGNTY

As with most postcolonial states, when India gained its independence in 1947, it forcefully opposed the independence of any territories within its newly sovereign boundaries.<sup>35</sup> Post-independence, India made the case

<sup>34</sup> Siddharaj Dhadda to A. J. Muste, January 18, 1963, Box 1, WPB NARC Papers.

<sup>35</sup> Srinath Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India: A Strategic History of the Nehru Years* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2010), describes this process for Hyderabad, Junagarh, and Kashmir. Other regions such as Manipur and of course Nagaland epitomize these processes.

for self-determination for nation-states, not for their subsidiary units.<sup>36</sup> This practical ideological transition from anticolonial nationalist movement seeking independence to postcolonial state working to govern its territory highlighted the tension between transnational advocacy and state sovereignty: on the one hand, the decolonizing world gained statehood and international recognition through membership in the state-centric United Nations; on the other, liberation movements and advocacy networks practiced politics beyond the forms and boundaries of nations and states.<sup>37</sup> Transnational movements sought to transcend the necessities and controls of the state as the constituent unit of international order. Yet, as the contradictions faced by the World Peace Brigade and other transnational advocates made clear, such transcendence was impossible. Instead, transnational movements themselves became conduits for conflict about the nationalizing process – about which grouping of political “selves” would be “determined” a state, and by whom.

Post-independence India was riddled with what Nehru called its “fissiparous tendencies” – the destabilizing questions of Kashmir, Sikh and Tamil nationalisms, linguistic movements particularly (but not exclusively) in South India and in Assam, and labor/class/caste unrest. For Nehru, “separateness has always been the weakness of India. Fissiparous tendencies, whether they belong to Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians or others, are very dangerous and wrong tendencies. They belong to petty and backward minds.”<sup>38</sup> They threatened the rule of the Indian Union government and the fundamental project of an independent India, the creation of an Indian nation.

These claims of difference or separateness – linguistic, ethnic, religious, etc. – could overlap and exacerbate each other. For example, representatives from “tribal” or hill peoples in Assam (which included the Naga Hills until 1963) argued in 1961, “[I]f Assamese becomes the sole official

<sup>36</sup> India was certainly not alone in the postcolonial world in this focus: the Bandung Conference of 1955 insisted on self-determination at no lower than the national level. Robert Vitalis, “The Midnight Ride of Kwame Nkrumah and Other Fables of Bandung,” *Humanity* 4, no. 2 (2013): 261–88.

<sup>37</sup> Capturing this tension: John D. Kelly and Martha Kaplan, “My Ambition Is Much Higher than Independence: US Power, the UN World, the Nation-State, and Their Critics,” in *Decolonization: Perspectives Now and Then*, ed. Prasenjit Duara (London: Routledge, 2003), 150.

<sup>38</sup> Nehru speech, Srinagar, Kashmir, July 19, 1961: *Jawaharlal Nehru Selected Speeches*, Vol. 4 (New Delhi: Government of India Publications Division, 1964), 132.

language of the [Indian] State [of Assam], the people of the Hills in particular will suffer from serious handicaps”; therefore, they continued, the Assam Language Act of 1960 needed to be repealed, or “Separate States created.”<sup>39</sup> Lack of respect for linguistic differences inflamed ethnic differences. While demands for autonomy were usually mobilized around a single claim of difference – of nation, language, ethnicity, religion, etc. – multiple strands of difference could underlie each particular claim.

Not all of these fissiparous tendencies were presumed to be equally dangerous to the Indian state. In the Northeast, the Indian government usually squashed or ignored tribal peoples’ claims when they were mobilized along religious lines (often around particular Protestant denominations) – the shadow of the 1947 India–Pakistan partition meant that religious mobilization threatened the ideological foundations of independent India – but listened to some degree when they framed claims of resistance on the basis of ethnicity or language.<sup>40</sup> Linguistic or ethnic claims in the Northeast were constructed around anti-Assamese or anti-Bengali sentiment, rather than against the Indian central government; tribal claims in Northeast India were appealed to the Indian central government for support against the State of Assam. As a nationalist leader, Nehru had been influenced by the Soviet pattern of managing a multiethnic polity during the interwar era.<sup>41</sup>

Nationalist movements within nation-states maneuvered across geopolitical scales – that is, between spheres of local, national, regional, international, or global politics – to find support for their claims. For example, they might seek backing from the central government to

<sup>39</sup> “Non-Cooperation Movement by the Council of Action of the All-Party Hill Leaders Conference,” June 20, 1961, TAD/Com/24, Assam State Archives, Guwahati Assam.

<sup>40</sup> “Report of Mizo District for First Half of December 1961,” TAD/Com/24, Assam State Archives; “Unstarred Question in Lok Sabha re Anti-National Activities of Tribals from the Chin Hills Area (Indo-Burma-Border),” Paite National Convent Council, July 26, 1963, TAD/Con/6/63; “Non-Cooperation Movement.” On “tribe” as a political unit within South Asia and international relations, see Elisabeth Leake, *The Defiant Border: The Afghan-Pakistan Borderlands in the Era of Decolonization, 1936–1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 12.

<sup>41</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986 [1946]), 534. Regarding the Soviet Union’s nationality question, Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001). This contrasts with the ethnic classification schemes of the People’s Republic of China in the 1950s: Tom Mullaney, *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California, 2011).

circumnavigate the immediate oppressive rule of local authorities.<sup>42</sup> (Interestingly, this strategy paralleled how activists in the US civil rights movement called on the US federal government to intercede to end the legal discrimination of US states against Black American citizens.) Taking this strategy to a different political arena, some minority nationalists then sought to “jump” past their ruling national government to petition the United Nations if they felt that their central government was not a viable negotiating partner. These processes were far from unique in the Indian (or the US) circumstances. Nationalist movements and minority groups made self-determinist claims on local, regional, national – and international – bases as a matter of practical policy.<sup>43</sup>

The 1962 Sino-Indian War placed the rubric of national security over India’s fissiparous tendencies. Some of India’s internal demands for autonomy have had an obvious international dynamic, such as the demands made by Kashmir, the subject of multiple wars between India and Pakistan. Others, like Nagaland, held latent international dimensions. Still others, such as the Dravidian and Tamil demands in Madras State/Tamil Nadu and for a Sikh Khalistan in Punjab during the early 1960s, were more domestically separatist, though later they drew upon significant diaspora support. Nevertheless, they all composed the brew of “anti-national” movements (in the terminology of India’s central government) with which the Indian Union had to contend.<sup>44</sup>

At the moment of India’s international-legal creation in 1947, the British Raj’s colonial sovereignty over that country was divided into two parts and handed over to the Congress Party and the Muslim League, who led the new governments of India and Pakistan, respectively. Decolonization did *not* mean that postcolonial India dissolved into its many constituent pieces (Princely States, Frontier Agencies, Excluded Territories, the remaining French and Portuguese colonial enclaves, etc.) that then had an opportunity to decide what their postcolonial political

<sup>42</sup> Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010 [1984]), utilized the concept of the “politics of scale” to interrogate how scales are constructed and then how that construction is contested.

<sup>43</sup> This is analogous to “forum shopping” in political science scholarship; Hannah Murphy and Aynsley Kellow, “Forum Shopping in Global Governance: Understanding States, Business and NGOs in Multiple Arenas,” *Global Policy* 4, no. 2 (2013): 139–49.

<sup>44</sup> For an example of this policy language, see “Anti-national Activities,” TAD/Con25/64, Assam State Archives, Guwahati, Assam. “Anti-national” continues to the present day to be an epithet attached to people and movements that criticize the Indian central government.

form would be.<sup>45</sup> Instead, decolonization meant a power transfer from one authority to two others, newly created. The negotiations that might have happened in a hypothetical constitutional convention occurred in the ways that the independent government of India (and Pakistan) dealt with their fissiparous tendencies. Into this violent and potentially violent situation, the Indian Gandhians of the Sarvodaya movement stepped, with their international allies from the World Peace Brigade, seeking to revitalize India's nonviolent political roots by tackling its postcolonial conflicts.

The 1960s decolonization crises on the African continent – in Congo, South West Africa, Zambia, Rhodesia, and elsewhere – may have seemed far removed from India; however, regional political elites in the Northeast were aware of the similarities between those crises and their own tense political environment. The *Assam Tribune*, an English-language daily tied to the ruling Assam State Congress Party, repeatedly gave significant page space to the UN intervention in Congo (1960–1965) to halt the secession of Katanga.<sup>46</sup> There was great regional interest in and attention to questions of secession in postcolonial states because Assamese elites felt threatened by the prospect of insurgency from “tribal” peoples in the Naga Hills and elsewhere who demanded autonomy or independence. For those in Northeast India – and in India in general – questions of “sub”-nationalist insurgency and claims-making were both a national and a global phenomenon, despite ruling governments' efforts to localize them.

Two weeks after Dhadda's note to Muste on the march's goals, the latter wrote to Michael Scott on the question of whether Scott was “free to raise the Naga matter,” on the Friendship March<sup>47</sup> – meaning, whether

<sup>45</sup> On the Congress Party's support for Partition, Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994 [1985]), especially 245–50, and Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2011), 137–58. On the violent incorporation of the Princely States into independent India, Srinath Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*. On the Franco-Indian enclaves' attempted rejection of both empire and Indian state, see Akhila Yechury, “Imagining India, Decolonising l'Inde Française, c. 1947–1954,” *Historical Journal* 58, no. 4 (2015): 1141–65; and on their ongoing, contested forms of belonging and exclusions, see Jessica Namakkal, *Unsettling Utopia: The Making and Unmaking of French India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021).

<sup>46</sup> For example, the front pages of the *Assam Tribune* issues of July 10, 1964, October 9, 1964, November 26, 1965, and January 6, 1966. Assam Tribune Archives, Guwahati Assam.

<sup>47</sup> A. J. Muste to Michael Scott, February 1, 1963, Box 1, WPB NARC Papers.

Scott could bring up the issue of the nationalist movement in the Naga Hills to break free of postcolonial India, a struggle supported by Scott and others associated with the march. Muste did not want “special” political concerns, such as the Naga question, and their public discussions to distract from “one’s fundamental attitude toward the issue of war and violence.”<sup>48</sup> Brigade member Bayard Rustin, whose 1930s membership in the Communist Party and 1950s prosecution for homosexuality had sidelined him within the US civil rights movement, brought up fears that Indian public opinion against Scott’s “intervention” on “the Naga question” would “effect [Scott’s] usefulness” to the march. In response to Rustin’s concerns, Muste decided that Scott’s role should be up to the Brigade’s Indian members, who resolved that Scott’s Naga advocacy did not make him ineligible to participate. However, Muste warned Scott, “this should not be taken to indicate complete freedom.” The same rules that applied to Scott would apply to Indian members of the march, who “were deeply concerned about the release of Sheikh Abdullah,” the Kashmiri leader imprisoned in India.<sup>49</sup> Muste danced around the hot-button issue of individual positions in contrast to group identification and cohesion. By comparing Scott’s Naga advocacy with that of JP for Sheikh Abdullah and Kashmir, Muste showed that Scott’s nationalist sponsorship was not an isolated issue but one of many contentious political positions taken by the Brigade’s leadership.

In the end, pressure from the Indian press rather than the Brigade’s Asian Regional Council made Scott leave the march within its first week. Indian critics argued that Scott was using the cover of international peace politics to meddle in Indian domestic affairs.<sup>50</sup> This criticism had merit. While in Delhi planning the march, Scott was acting as a go-between between Angami Zapu Phizo, the Naga nationalist leader in exile, and Indian prime minister Nehru. Using Scott as a messenger, Phizo proposed to return to India in order to broker a ceasefire agreement between Naga nationalists and the Indian government.<sup>51</sup> Scott hoped that once the Naga “hostiles” (the term used by the Indian government for Naga nationalist insurgents) accepted a “Nagaland within the framework of the [Indian] constitution, ... Phizo’s followers would run for office,” which would reintegrate them into Naga politics without violence.<sup>52</sup> Then, once the

<sup>48</sup> Muste to Scott, February 1, 1963.      <sup>49</sup> Muste to Scott, February 1, 1963.

<sup>50</sup> Y. D. Gundeia, *War and Peace in Nagaland* (Dehra Dun: Palit & Palit, 1975), 104.

<sup>51</sup> Ed Lazar to A. J. Muste, March 8, 1963, Box 2, WPB NARC Papers.

<sup>52</sup> Lazar to Muste, March 8, 1963.

region had achieved peace for a transition period of approximately five years, a revision of the political status of Nagaland would be up for negotiation.<sup>53</sup> This plan provided a carrot for Naga nationalists to engage in peace politics, without stating the degree of autonomy or independence for Nagaland that might be up for debate in five years.

Nehru refused this proposal. Phizo's offer as relayed by Scott would undermine Nehru's own negotiations with the "moderate" Nagas, the new leadership of Nagaland, the proposed Indian state to be established in December 1963 within the Indian Union. According to Ed Lazar, writing from the road in the march's first week of progress, there seemed to be "little hope for the Nagaland question" since the Indian government was planning an offensive against Naga nationalist insurgents involving 20,000–40,000 troops.<sup>54</sup>

#### IN PURSUIT OF ELUSIVE CHINESE VISAS

From the start, the Indian and Chinese governments opposed elements of the Brigade's wider politics in which the Friendship March was embedded. Certain Brigade leaders supported particular nationalist claims of states-in-waiting – specifically, JP for Tibetan claims against China and Scott for Naga claims against India. Therefore, ultimately China refused to give the marchers visas and the Indian press forced Scott off the march.

Although the marchers never received Chinese visas, they did spend six months walking across Northern and Northeast India. At first, they encountered significant local hostility. The government of the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh considered putting them in prison for disturbing the peace, and they repeatedly met Hindu nationalist counter-demonstrators on their route.<sup>55</sup> When they reached Patna in JP's native Indian state of Bihar, they drew large crowds for their public meetings, as well as positive news reporting.<sup>56</sup> However, the international-territorial aims of the march – providing a physical, human connection in the form of individual bodies between the capital cities of dueling nations – remained unfulfilled.

JP himself was a focal point for much of the controversy surrounding the march. While Western Brigade members might have perceived him and the Sarvodaya movement as too supportive of the Indian

<sup>53</sup> Lazar to Muste, March 8, 1963. <sup>54</sup> Lazar to Muste, March 8, 1963.

<sup>55</sup> *Peace News*, July 5, 1963; *Gandhi Marg*, July 1963; Sen, *India, China, and the World*, 442.

<sup>56</sup> *Peace News*, October 4, 1963.



government, JP had many public Indian detractors. These critics were strongest among Hindu nationalists who vehemently rejected JP's critique of Hindu nationalism as communalism and therefore as anti-national.<sup>57</sup> However, it was his support of an independent Tibet that created insurmountable international complications for the Brigade. Ed Lazar noted:

The presence of JP [on the March] highlighted the most complex question the group has faced thus far... JP had requested the government [of India] to recognize the Dalai Lama as the head of the émigré government in exile of Tibet. JP, as you know, feels that Tibet is an independent nation in which the Chinese have committed cultural genocide. At the time of Sino-Indian fighting JP called for the liberation of Tibet by the Indian army (he has retracted this particular plea now that the actual fighting has ceased).<sup>58</sup>

JP's support for international (and Indian) recognition of and liberation for Tibet compromised the third-party integrity and practical logistics of a march whose members needed visas from the Chinese government. JP believed that Tibet had never been Chinese and held that "the Tibetan people are as much entitled to freedom as the Indian people or the people of the Congo." On the issue of negotiation over the contested India-China border, he argued, "It can only be private individuals and not States or their Officers who can be entrusted with arbitration."<sup>59</sup> While Tibet was necessarily off the agenda for the Friendship March, which proclaimed impartiality between India and China, this issue hovered over JP's and Indian Gandhians' participation in the march, calling into question – at least to Chinese authorities – the march's allegedly nonpartisan motives.

The Brigade tried to work through unofficial channels to procure their elusive Chinese visas. In particular, they hoped Ida Pruitt could facilitate this task.<sup>60</sup> Pruitt was the child of American Baptist missionaries. She was born and raised in China and worked with the Chinese resistance against the Japanese, eventually joining with Communist Chinese forces. Throughout her career, she was active in social work, social justice, and

<sup>57</sup> Hindu nationalist protests against the march described in *Gandhi Marg*, July 1963. *Gandhi Marg* issues are housed in JP Narayan's Papers, NMML. An example of JP's critique of Hindu nationalism is JP Narayan, "National Conference against Communalism," 1968, JP Papers, Speeches and Writings, Installment III. While Hindu nationalists would support JP against Indira Gandhi during the Indian Emergency, that was in a very different political context; Christophe Jaffrelot, in *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*, ed. C. Jaffrelot (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 177.

<sup>58</sup> Ed Lazar, Report on the Beginning of the Friendship March, March 6, 1963, Box 1, WPB NARC.

<sup>59</sup> JP Narayan, "Address," April 9, 1960, JP Papers, Speeches and Writings, Installment III.

<sup>60</sup> A. J. Muste to Siddharaj Dhadda, March 15, 1963, Box 1, WPB NARC Papers.

development circles.<sup>61</sup> According to A.J. Muste, she advised the Brigade that since “relations between China and India are ‘delicate,’” they should make it clear that there was “interest and support for the March outside India.”<sup>62</sup> She recommended that Muste should be sure to emphasize the Brigade’s general “anti-US militarism” stance.<sup>63</sup> In particular, she suggested that he reach out to the Chinese Peace Council – the Chinese branch of the World Peace Council, which was a Soviet Cominform “peace offensive” aimed at linking up with international peace and disarmament activists against US militarism.<sup>64</sup> Pruitt had been “invited to go to China as a guest of the Chinese government in 1959”; upon her return, US authorities confiscated her passport, deeming her a flight risk and a potentially dangerous conduit to Communist China.<sup>65</sup>

While Pruitt was not able to procure visas for the Friendship March, she guided their submission materials and, like so many international advocates, endured some of the same visa/passport difficulties as those on whose behalf she worked. Her suggestion that Muste reach out to the Communist Peace Council – and Muste’s inability to take it up since it fell outside of his network of contacts – illuminated the presence of an international communist peace movement distinct from the Brigade community’s orbit.<sup>66</sup> The total separation between the Brigade community and their communist counterparts in the international peace movement made it hard for the Brigade to claim independence from Cold War politics, even as the Brigade believed itself to be neutral and apolitical – a feature of the Cold War trap.

After JP’s position on the Tibet question emerged as the sticking point for the denial of Chinese visas, Muste tried to pin down JP’s stance precisely: “The one thing [that] I am eager for now is to get from you . . . material relating to your own statements and activities in re[gards to] the Tibetan situation.”<sup>67</sup> Muste pressed JP on what *exactly* was the

<sup>61</sup> Pruitt’s papers are at the Schlesinger Library, the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University.

<sup>62</sup> Muste to Dhadda, March 15, 1963. <sup>63</sup> Muste to Dhadda, March 15, 1963.

<sup>64</sup> Melissa Feinberg, *Curtain of Lies: The Battle over Truth in Stalinist Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 32.

<sup>65</sup> George Willoughby to A. J. Muste, March 14, 1963, Box 1, WPB NARC Papers.

<sup>66</sup> On the difficulties of crossing between communist and non-communist-oriented organizations within the international peace movement, see Günter Wernicke, “The Communist-led World Peace Council and the Western Peace Movements: The Fetters of Bipolarity and Some Attempts to Break Them in the Fifties and Early Sixties,” *Peace & Change* 23, no. 3 (1998): 265–331.

<sup>67</sup> A. J. Muste to JP Narayan, March 15, 1963, Box 1, WPB NARC Papers.

Tibet for which he advocated: "I recall your alluding to the setting up of a Tibetan government 'in exile.' Does this mean a conventional 'government in exile' which would be working toward violent change in the existing regime and engaged in subversion, sabotage etc. in pursuit of that objective?"<sup>68</sup>

The question of whether violence could ever be a justified response to political injustice returned as contested ideological terrain for the Brigade. Ed Lazar wondered if a statement by the Brigade leadership – JP, Scott, and Muste – "on the attitude of the March towards the Sino-Indian dispute might be necessary and useful" for settling the Brigade's internal debate between total pacifism and nonviolent interventionism.<sup>69</sup> Such a joint statement never emerged. It would have required Muste to get from JP "on the one hand, an accurate picture of positions he has taken and statements he may have made and, on the other hand, a clear idea about his present views and the kind of statement he is prepared to make" on the question of Tibet.<sup>70</sup> This clarity was not forthcoming.<sup>71</sup>

With JP embroiled in politics over Tibet and Scott entangled in the Naga question, JP's lieutenant Siddharaj Dhadda recommended that Muste handle the marchers' route to China.<sup>72</sup> Looking for Pakistani or Burmese alternatives, Muste worked through Clarence Pickett, who was a close friend of Zafarullah Khan (a Pakistani, he was at that time the president of the UN General Assembly) as well as of the US ambassador to Burma.<sup>73</sup> Muste also pushed British Member of Parliament Fenner Brockway to advocate for the Brigade at the Far Eastern Desk at the British Colonial Office in order to facilitate possible passage to Hong Kong; so that, even if the march could not cross the Sino-Indian border, it could sail to Hong Kong and call attention to its aims in a liminal Chinese locale.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Muste to JP, March 15, 1963. <sup>69</sup> Muste to JP, March 15, 1963.

<sup>70</sup> Muste to Dhadda, March 15, 1963.

<sup>71</sup> A. J. Muste to JP Narayan, April 19, 1963, Box 1, WPB NARC Papers.

<sup>72</sup> Siddharaj Dhadda to A. J. Muste, April 11, 1963, Box 1, WPB NARC Papers. Symptomatic of its muddled internal compass and as if the Brigade unconsciously knew the impossibility of its goal, the Friendship March did not have a predetermined route. Its route was a practical, ad hoc matter, determined by where the Indian members of the Sarvodaya movement would accommodate the marchers overnight and provision them on their trek. If the marchers could have entered China, it is unclear where and with whom they would have been housed.

<sup>73</sup> A. J. Muste to Siddharaj Dhadda and Ed Lazar, April 25, 1963, Box 1, WPB NARC Papers.

<sup>74</sup> A. J. Muste to Siddharaj Dhadda, September 27, 1963, Box 1, WPB NARC Papers.

Though these efforts were futile, they showed the reach of the Brigade community into national governments and international institutional circles, illuminating the historical constellation of the international peace movement and the wider reaches of those sympathetic to it. Brockway had been the founding chair of War Resisters' International (the Brigade's parent organization) back in the 1920s; and Pickett, the executive secretary of the American Friends Service Committee from the same period. Brigade members attempted to operate through a web of transnational activism that had its roots in the interwar period. However, the structures of empire that had facilitated that activism (even anticolonial), in terms of travel and the ambiguity of border movement and regulations, no longer existed.

#### INTERNATIONAL VERSUS NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS

Another factor that undermined the Friendship March was the competing demands for time and resources that other political justice projects placed upon the Brigade. While there was a strong American contingent on the Friendship March, key American members of the Brigade were absent because the Delhi-to-Peking Friendship March was not the most imperative piece of political justice activism for the United States in 1963. More urgent was the US civil rights movement's March on Washington (scheduled for August 1963), planned by Brigade member Bayard Rustin (who had been central to setting up the Brigade's Africa Freedom Action Project in Dar es Salaam during the winter of 1962). The presence of two ambitious marches on opposite sides of the world in the same year, both organized by Brigade members, highlighted the diffused attention of the Brigade community. Even as late as April 1963, Rustin was having difficulty getting leave from the War Resisters' League to organize the US march, then billed as a prospective "Emancipation March on Washington for Jobs."<sup>75</sup>

In his refusal to release Rustin to focus on the US civil rights movement, Muste argued: "Civil rights, economic issues, including abolition of unemployment, and peace – are all one cause."<sup>76</sup> As a way to justify the constraints on personnel, time, energy, focus, and resources under which

<sup>75</sup> John D'Emelio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 330–31.

<sup>76</sup> A. J. Muste to A. Phillips Randolph, April 15, 1963, Box 7, Folder 6, Bayard Rustin Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

he operated, Muste contended that all endeavors of the Brigade community fit within the same overarching mission. However, protests in Birmingham, Alabama, in May 1963 and the Kennedy administration's decision to send a civil rights bill to the US Congress changed Muste's political calculation; in June 1963 Rustin was able to turn his attention and efforts to organizing the March on Washington.

Muste's initial hesitancy for Rustin to focus his total attention on US civil rights deserves further explanation. The bundling of various political justice causes (anticolonial nationalism, nuclear disarmament, US civil rights, minority rights) under the mantle of "international civil rights," or "international political justice," or the "international peace movement," or indeed all three, formalized the connections – and the tensions – between the individuals who worked on these causes. The World Peace Brigade was an attempted instantiation of this bundling. These causes did not always align ideologically, and even when they did, they still bled time, energy, focus, and finances from each other. Yet this interwoven conglomeration of activisms – religious, labor, pacifist, etc. – was what allowed Rustin to build the March on Washington "out of nothing."<sup>77</sup> Rustin captured this contradiction when he described the process of building consensus within this combustible arrangement that shared goals if not priorities: "Consensus does not mean that everybody agrees. It means that the person who disagrees must disagree so vigorously ... that he is prepared to fight with everybody else."<sup>78</sup>

In the eyes of mainstream contemporary commentators, the March on Washington conferred conventional legitimacy on mass action and public protest.<sup>79</sup> The liberalist presentation of the marchers as a "gentle," "polite," "orderly," "cordial," "law-abiding" "army" aided this perception.<sup>80</sup> It was the first of many iconic marches on the US capital, creating the march on the center of the US federal government as a symbol for civil society mobilization that criticized the state. In contrast, the Friendship March passed through a region that had been made into a political periphery by war and postcolonial state-making, and marked the demise of the World Peace Brigade as an organ of the international peace movement.

<sup>77</sup> William P. Jones, *The March on Washington: Jobs, Freedom, and the Forgotten History of Civil Rights* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), 170.

<sup>78</sup> Bayard Rustin interview in Columbia University Oral History Collections; D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 342.

<sup>79</sup> D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 359.

<sup>80</sup> Words from the *New York Times* headlines, August 29, 1963.

Both marches were ambitious endeavors, but they were exact opposites in scale, duration, distance, focus, participation, and outcome. The March on Washington was a national, single-day event with approximately 250,000 participants who converged on the Washington Mall for a series of speeches by US civil rights leaders, including Martin Luther King. The Friendship March was an international six-month endeavor by nineteen walkers who crossed nearly 3,000 kilometers of territory, engaging with local populations by leading nonviolent civil-disobedience workshops in Gandhian ashrams en route. Political change is not easy at any scale, but the Brigade's dream of escaping national allegiances made its transnational activism an even more fraught enterprise than that of its American cousin.

The conceptual divisions between nationalist claims-making and transnational advocacy that emerged within the planning and execution of the Friendship March exacerbated the Brigade's interpersonal tensions. In May 1963, frustrated by the divergence between the Brigade's activism and his own projects, Scott floated his resignation from the entire organization, not just the march: "Unless the whole scope and concept of the World Peace Brigade can be changed I cannot continue to act as Chairman."<sup>81</sup> He still believed in the need for some "kind of an international [peace] force," though he made an illuminating typo, mis-writing "peace" force as "police" force. Scott followed "with intense interest" the "immensely significant ... developments in [the American] South," searching them for the "lessons" they might "imply for the situation confronting us in Southern Africa." Looking for the common thread, he still pinned his hopes on a peace force to force peace. "Organized separately from the UN itself," it would address the political justice questions of disenfranchised peoples within independent states, which the UN was not equipped to handle.<sup>82</sup> Scott searched for but did not find the organizational and analytical forms that would combine the political justice questions of US civil rights, apartheid Southern Africa, and minority issues in India. The World Peace Brigade could not provide the vehicle he sought. It did not successfully formalize the transnational advocacy of its leaders and members because the issues at play – nationalist claims-making (support for those demanding sovereignty) and civil or minority rights within states (limits on state sovereignty) – could not be bound together.

<sup>81</sup> Michael Scott to A. J. Muste, May 17, 1963, Box 2, WPB NARC Papers.,

<sup>82</sup> Scott to Muste, May 17, 1963.

Muste responded that it was not the Brigade that had failed Scott but, rather, Scott who had failed the Brigade. “The Naga matter was not one which the World Peace Brigade undertook,” he said to Scott, adding that Scott’s “preoccupation” with the Nagas “was a distinct disadvantage to the March.”<sup>83</sup> There were also “quite fundamental differences in the thinking of yourself and some of the rest of us about the nature” of the Brigade, that it should even be in the business of advocacy on behalf of nationalist claimants.<sup>84</sup> Muste’s riposte to Scott’s ruminations – and his refusal to accept Scott’s resignation – replayed Muste’s annoyance with what he considered to be Scott’s abandonment of the Africa Freedom Action Project in Dar es Salaam the previous year. He closed his letter with another, more tactful reason for the Brigade’s failings – political timing: what “the situation would now be if . . . the Kaunda freedom march had taken place, if the Sino Indian conflict had not erupted, would be difficult to say.”<sup>85</sup> While the early 1960s had seemed to be an opportune moment for the Brigade’s mission, events had overtaken them.

The same month as Scott’s threatened resignation, JP also offered to resign from the Brigade, did resign, and then withdrew his resignation. This was a pattern for him. Charlie Walker, one of the Brigade’s US marchers, wrote to Muste in May 1963: “JP ‘resigned’ from a number of organizations, partly because he did not wish to embarrass them, partly because he wished to be free to speak his mind, and in the case of [the Brigade] for both reasons plus the criticism from the Westerners.”<sup>86</sup> Alluding to Muste’s aggressive attempts to pin him down on Tibet, JP found this mode of criticism, particularly its “harsh” and “cross-examining” manner, disrespectful.<sup>87</sup> According to Walker, Julius Nyerere (a Tanganyikan anticolonial nationalist leader and, at that time, president of Tanganyika) also had difficulties with JP “on his work in East Africa” the previous year, 1962. These obstacles involved JP’s pattern of making certain statements that could be easily misconstrued, of not providing specifics about these statements, and of using the resulting tumult as a

<sup>83</sup> A. J. Muste to Michael Scott, May 22, 1963, Box 2, WPB NARC Papers.

<sup>84</sup> Muste to Scott, May 22, 1963.

<sup>85</sup> Muste to Scott, May 22, 1963. The Kaunda freedom march, discussed in Chapter 3, was an Africa Freedom Project plan to support the Zambian nationalist struggle; it fell through when Kenneth Kaunda, later first president of independent Zambia, withdrew his support when serious negotiations began with Great Britain for Zambia’s independence.

<sup>86</sup> Charlie Walker to A. J. Muste, May 15, 1963, Box 2, WPB NARC Papers.

<sup>87</sup> C. Walker to Muste, May 15, 1963.

justification for withdrawing when it did not seem that the shared endeavor would succeed.<sup>88</sup> Of the “big three” in the Brigade – JP, Muste, and Scott – JP was the most circumspect about what he left behind on paper regarding their internal disagreements, allowing him to portray himself as a bystander of interpersonal conflict rather than a direct participant. Scott and Muste’s disagreements about the Brigade’s role on the march, therefore, need to be read against the grain since they were a triangular conversation in which JP played a featured, if self-muffled, role.

According to Muste, it was the “injection” of the Naga question and Scott’s “insistence” on advocating for Naga independence that fractured unity between Indian and Western marchers.<sup>89</sup> Suresh Ram considered Scott’s 1963 attempt to bring the Naga claim to the United Nations “a painful surprise.”<sup>90</sup> For Muste, the Brigade “had clearly taken the position that the Naga matter could not be injected into the March,” but Scott “could not give [it] up ... [otherwise, he] would have been an extremely valuable asset.”<sup>91</sup> Muste wondered whether, if Scott had prioritized the endeavor, the march would have been able to procure its elusive Chinese visas. However, Muste said, the Brigade’s “experience in Africa, as well as India,” showed that Scott “is not capable of this” single-minded focus. He continued: “In a certain sense, this is his strength; but it also creates serious problems.”<sup>92</sup> What worked for an individual did not hold for an organization.

Scott’s rebelliousness – his addition of an *Indian* minority or civil rights concern into an *international* peace project – upset a delicate equilibrium. The Brigade saw itself as internationally apolitical, unallied with the interests of state power. It called into question the impenetrableness of national borders by attempting to cross them physically, and it deprioritized national security concerns by finding violence, state-sanctioned or otherwise, invalid. Yet the Brigade also respected tricky domestic political terrain, refusing to “inject” contentious political questions into – and seeing them as a distraction from – its transnational mission. There was also a tactical consideration to the Brigade’s annoyance with Scott’s Naga advocacy: in reality, he made it more difficult for Indian Gandhians to work behind the scenes on the Naga issue.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>88</sup> C. Walker to Muste, May 15, 1963.

<sup>89</sup> A. J. Muste to Devi Prasad, May 16, 1963, Box 2, WPB NARC Papers.

<sup>90</sup> Suresh Ram to A. J. Muste, May 11, 1963, Box 2, WPB NARC Papers.

<sup>91</sup> Muste to Prasad, May 16, 1963. <sup>92</sup> Muste to Prasad, May 16, 1963.

<sup>93</sup> Charlie Walker to A. J. Muste, June 6, 1963, Box 2, WPB NARC Papers; Muste to Prasad, May 16, 1963.



Back in the United States, Bayard Rustin was “almost contemptuous” toward “these anarchistic people who will not do what they are told” because they were “apolitical” purists.<sup>94</sup> He had found some of the Brigade’s endeavors, particularly in decolonizing Africa, “enormously worthwhile precisely because [they were not] just a kind of pacifist bearing witness [but] linked up with a major anticolonial movement.” In an Indian context, however, he felt that the Brigade’s remaining separate from minority-rights issues cast doubt on its support for matters of political injustice within the state – something of deep concern for a US civil rights activist.

Scott was not the only leader of the Brigade who thought that the organization might eventually take up the question of Nagaland. According to a letter from Charlie Walker to Muste, JP himself “was considering some specialized role for a few key people in regards [to] the Naga question.”<sup>95</sup> In conversations with Narayan Desai (an Indian member of the Brigade) in Patna in August 1963, the letter continued, JP “concluded this was a job for a highly skilled person or persons who understood both conventional political dynamics and had the imagination and ability to relate nonviolence to specific issues and choices arising within that context.”<sup>96</sup> Perhaps this proposed Naga peace project could be modeled on “the role Bayard [Rustin]” and Muste “played in East Africa” during the Brigade’s Africa Freedom Action Project. “The obvious difficulty is, as JP and [Narayan Desai] observed, such people are scarce and they are always needed where they already are.”<sup>97</sup> On the one hand, the Brigade community lacked enough “great men” to tackle all the interwoven political questions it sought to address. On the other, its individual leaders’ many causes and interests undermined the Brigade’s own activities. The Brigade community itself did not see an incompatibility. From its perspective, Scott’s advocacy for Nagaland (in India) and JP’s for Tibet (in China) proved that the Brigade was not aligned with either country. However, that was not the point of view of either the Indian or the Chinese government.

## CONCLUSION

As a practical matter, the Friendship March failed to have much measurable impact improving Sino-Indian relations, its primary goal. It never

<sup>94</sup> All quotes in this paragraph: April Carter quoting Rustin, in D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 312.

<sup>95</sup> Charlie Walker to A. J. Muste, August 2, 1963, Box 1, WPB NARC Papers.

<sup>96</sup> C. Walker to Muste, August 2, 1963. <sup>97</sup> C. Walker to Muste, August 2, 1963.

managed to get entry visas from China. Without travel documents, the marchers had to halt in Ledo, Assam, in January 1964. Yet the World Peace Brigade's "parts" – the individuals who composed the organization – were more significant than the whole. They were international Gandhian peace workers, soldiers in a global peace brigade, and their aim was political transformation: of norms (of war and peace), of definitions (of "state" and "non-state"), and of categories (of "national" and "international"). Their walk across North and Northeast India changed the international peace movement but not in the manner that they had hoped and anticipated. It was an end of the World Peace Brigade, rather than a beginning of further global intervention. The Brigade had "proved too grandiose in its ambitions, too lacking in resources and too reliant on key personalities in the USA and India (who had many other demands on their time)."<sup>98</sup> According to Muste, its leadership in India, the United States, and Britain were "separated by immense distances, ... one of the chief reasons for its difficulties."<sup>99</sup>

War Resisters' International, the Brigade's parent organization, blamed the latter's demise on a mismanagement of political scales: the Brigade had imposed "an international structure" instead of allowing its activities to grow from the local to the national level and then to the international. Brigade members had "been projected into alien situations without adequate preparation."<sup>100</sup>

While one difficulty of the Brigade's Africa Freedom Action Project in Dar es Salaam had been that it was *not* an African project, Ed Lazar, who stayed on the Freedom March for its full duration, thought that the fatal flaw of the Friendship March was that it became an Indian endeavor rather than an international one.<sup>101</sup> The Friendship March showed that an enterprise dominated by Brigade members who were Indians on a march through India could still walk into a set of difficulties – those caused *not* by their being "alien" to the country but by the collision between transnational advocacy and state sovereignty.

The theme of conflict between scales of political power – national, regional, international, local – enveloped Brigade activities. Advocacy

<sup>98</sup> April Carter, *Peace Movements: International Protest and World Politics since 1945* (London: Longman, 1992), 247.

<sup>99</sup> Muste to Scott, May 22, 1963.

<sup>100</sup> War Resister's International, "Report from Lansbury House," undated (probably 1966), Box 41, Folder 6, A. J. Muste Papers, Microfilm.

<sup>101</sup> Ed Lazar, Assam Friendship March Conference, January 1964. A. J. Muste Papers, Box 41, Folder 3. Available on microfilm.

worked between these scales, facilitating the movement of nationalist claims through international politics.<sup>102</sup> Advocates could operate at the interstices of these scales as individuals, personally, privately, and incrementally.<sup>103</sup> Navigating scales required long-term, in-depth, interconnected work of the sort that JP, Muste, and Scott had significant experience as individuals; in an organization, however, they floundered. Their inability to work together is of less surprise than that they came together in the first place, as the Brigade was a collection of outsized individuals whose causes competed for focus and funding.

The World Peace Brigade was misnamed: it did not represent the world, was not particularly peaceful, and lacked the cohesion and size of a military brigade. Its parts – the experience, passion, and work of A. J. Muste, Jayaprakash Narayan, Bayard Rustin, and Michael Scott, among others – were greater than its whole. The Brigade was an “army of generals not an army of soldiers.”<sup>104</sup> The history of the Brigade’s Delhi-to-Peking Friendship March became a narrative of internal organizational divisions around the issues of nationalist insurgency in India and China and the legitimacy of Indian state violence during the Sino-Indian War – questions that had a degree of geographical overlap with each other and with the march’s route across North and Northeast India.

These internal and external conflicts illuminated the mismatch between the Brigade’s aims and operations. In the words of April Carter, a member of the Brigade community who had friends and colleagues on the march, the World Peace Brigade “illustrated the pitfalls . . . of an international group publicly challenging nationalist sentiments” on questions of national security.<sup>105</sup> It was a transnational, apolitical organization, whose leadership held defined national-political stances and who functioned most efficiently *outside* of the organization. The Brigade sank under the

<sup>102</sup> Lydia Walker, “The Political Geography of International Advocacy: Indian and American Cold War Civil Society for Tibet,” *American Historical Review* 127, no. 4 (2022): 1581, discusses the key role played by advocacy in moving nationalist claims through different geopolitical scales; that is, in making a local or regional question one of international importance.

<sup>103</sup> How political processes are affected by spatial structures, also known as “political geography,” is usually shown by the use of a three-scale structure with state at the “center,” the study of international relations “above” it, and the study of localities “below” it; David Harvey, “Places, Regions, Territories,” in *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 166–201, considers these scales to be contextual rather than trans-historical or trans-spatial.

<sup>104</sup> Devi Prasad, “The World Peace Brigade,” *Peace News*, August 6, 1971, p. 2.

<sup>105</sup> Carter, *Peace Movements*, 245.

weight of these contradictions – between transnational advocacy and state sovereignty, between the individual versus the organization – which had been visible since its Africa Freedom Action Project in Dar es Salaam.

The Brigade's lifecycle – active from 1961 to 1964, officially dissolved in 1966 – reflected the diminution of its wider community's international advocacy on behalf of nationalist claimants as the accelerated decolonization of the early 1960s slowed.<sup>106</sup> (Emblematically, Muste died in February 1967, following his deportation from South Vietnam, as he attempted to negotiate between sides during the US war in Southeast Asia.) However, before the dissolution of this network of advocacy that worked to facilitate nationalist claims-making, JP and Scott had a concluding joint mission: a final journey to Northeast India to forge peace in Nagaland.

The individual tensions within the Brigade exposed and fed the contradictions between transnational advocacy and state sovereignty. The frictions on view during the Friendship March – between Western and Indian Brigade members, between the purpose of the march and JP's advocacy for Tibet as well as Scott's for Nagaland; and even, to a lesser degree, between Muste and Rustin concerning the morality and politics of focusing only on US civil rights – illuminated the fissures within the Brigade as a political project. These divisions were not only personal, they were also analytic, since they were symptoms of competing political priorities. They articulated the struggle to make transnational advocacy compatible with state sovereignty when these ideas operated on two different scales of political geography:<sup>107</sup> the first, crossing (and questioning) national boundaries as well as those within the state by supporting minority nationalisms; the second, shoring up the political unit (and unity) of the state.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Thirty-nine countries became independent between 1960 and 1966, while between 1966 and 1975 seventeen countries became independent.

<sup>107</sup> Itty Abraham, *How India Became Territorial: Foreign Policy, Diaspora, Geopolitics* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), 4, considers the “international in terms of the outcome of a multi-scalar process.”

<sup>108</sup> Jake Hodder, “Waging Peace: Militarising Pacifism in Central Africa and the Problem of Geography, 1962,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 42 (2017): 29–43, looks at conceptions of geographic scale with regard to transnational peace movements, using the Brigade's work in Dar es Salaam as a case study.