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Into Asia

Lucy had been crossing borders for a long time. Since her 1911 meeting with the Robinovitz family to her 1946 work with the Woman's Charter, the New Education Fellowship and UNESCO, she had come to imagine a new world without discrimination against women. Her focus was no longer on the old world, where discrimination persisted, but on the new world of socialist revolutions and emerging nations. This was where sudden and complete ruptures after World War II had ushered in a new order where discrimination against women was outlawed.

Lucy crossed many more borders in the first few years after her retirement. Some of them were international borders and others were cultural borders inside Australia. Many were political borders, impossible to traverse while she was employed. This chapter tells the story of Lucy's first visit to Asia – travelling to China, Japan and India. This journey had a major impact on her work once she returned to Australia, an impact that is traced in the following chapter, 'Peace and Prejudice'.

Lucy's involvement in the Peace movement had intensified her desire to travel the routes of emerging equality for women. The long and terrible years of World War II had culminated with the horror of the atomic bombs in Japan, bringing home the vulnerability of people all over the world to the effects of warfare. For Lucy, the issue of discrimination was directly linked to warfare – ending inequality was an inextricable part of the commitment to peace. Her failed attempt to travel to Peking for a Peace conference in 1952 only sharpened her determination to explore

this emerging world. When she finally managed to leave the country on 15 June 1954, she planned to go to very different places than her first trip in 1927.

In 1954, the atomic threat was uncomfortably close to home for an Australian like Lucy. Not only had the first hydrogen bomb test just been carried out in March 1954 by the United States at Bikini Atoll in the South Pacific, but, not long before that, in 1953, Australia had experienced the first British nuclear blasts on the mainland at Emu Junction in South Australia. In this trip, Lucy was a delegate for the NSW Peace Council and reported regularly to them while she was away.¹

Yet, despite this focus on the Peace movement, her commitments to women's rights and to union organising were never far from her thoughts. Lucy had already told the United Associations of Women (UA) in March 1954 that she would be able to spend more time working in the organisation now that she had retired. She gave an insight into her vision of emerging nations leading the way forward:

In this year of 1954, Australian women face an interesting challenge. Women in other parts of the world, during a few short years, have achieved an equality far greater than we have. We owe these women a debt. It is for us to make our women conscious of what can be done when women band together. We are inspired when we consider how the women of some countries have progressed. Who would have dreamed that a woman would have aspired to the greatest international position in the world today – Presidency of UN?²

Lucy went straight to the Stockholm Gathering on International Understanding as an observer, alongside the Australian delegate, the Reverend Norman St Clair Anderson, whose passport to travel to Sweden had been only grudgingly approved. *Peace News* had commented: 'Far from menacing Australia's security, peace conferences help relax tension and build up international friendship.'³ Such cross-cultural interactions were

1 The *Peace News*, NSW Peace Council newsletter, for 1954 and early 1955, which was publishing Lucy's reports, was apparently only a typed and roneod document. Copies have not survived, unlike the later and more professionally printed NSW Peace Council newsletter, *Peace* (now held in the SLNSW), which was launched in April 1955. The Sydney *Tribune* scoured the 1954 issues of *Peace News*, however, reporting on and quoting many of its articles.

2 UA *Newsheet*, March 1954, 2.

3 *Tribune*, 23 June 1954, 10.

Lucy's goal as she pointed out in her introduction to Helen Palmer's report on the visit to the Peace conference in China to which Lucy had hoped to travel.

After Sweden, and despite the Australian Federation of Women Voters (AFWV) disendorsement (discussed in Chapter 10), Lucy spent time in London at the Open Door International Conference, delivering a UA report. The Open Door International was closely associated with the 'Six Point Group', with which the UA was affiliated, and focused on equality for women on six basic grounds: political, occupational, moral, social, economic and legal. Jessie Street had been an active participant in the Six Point Group during her time Britain.⁴ The report was realistic, acknowledging successes in Australia but also the many problems women continued to face.

Lucy then travelled to the Soviet Union and Asia, first to China then Japan and India. She travelled with Jessie Street, with whom Lucy had formed a close friendship since first approaching the UA in an alliance in 1932 to restore the right of married women teachers to work. Despite their very wide differences in class and status, Lucy and Jessie found they shared a sense of humour, an interest in working-class and socialist politics and a deep commitment to the full equality of women as citizens.

Whereas Jessie was most active on the diplomatic level, influencing politicians and diplomats, Lucy was focused on educational strategies and industrial activism. Jessie's autobiography covers the many high-level diplomatic meetings she attended during the time they travelled together. Lucy's reports to the NSW Peace Council and her later speeches about the same trip are brief and concentrate on the person-to-person conversations with working women, trade unionists and, in Japan, the victims of radiation exposure. Both of their perspectives are needed for an appreciation of their journey.

4 Chloe Ward, 'Activism without Discrimination', in *The Transnational Activist: Transformations and Comparisons from the Anglo-World since the Nineteenth Century*, eds Stefan Berger and Sean Scalmer, Palgrave Studies in the History of Social Movements (New York: Springer, 2017), 227–56.



Figure 11.1: Jessie and Lucy sharing a drink and a laugh during this 1954–55 trip.

This uncharacteristic photograph of Lucy reflected the warm bond she shared with Jessie as well as her relaxed attitude to alcohol.

Source: Courtesy of National Library of Australia, Jessie Street papers, Box 30, Series 11, folder 4.

The China leg of this trip was the start of Lucy's exploration of Asia. She had been actively involved in the Australia–China Friendship Society from 1952 and, as she later said:

In China, women are fully conscious of the part they are playing in the shaping of their country's future; there is a complete acceptance of women's right to do the job and a calm confidence that they can do it. And so you find the engineer in charge of the great dam construction works is a woman, the superintendent of one of the biggest State factories – a woman – and the head of the Teachers' Training College at Nanking, with its 12,000 students, is Mdme Wu Liu Feng.⁵

5 UA *Newsheet*, October 1955, 4.

Lucy commented frequently on the approach to education and the training of teachers in China, as an ASIO officer noted in a report on her speech to a 1956 Union of Australian Women (UAW) meeting:

She described her visit to China where she said women were taking a very prominent part in the re-building of their country. Education in China, she stated, was playing a greater part than in any other country in the world. Teachers in China, notwithstanding their University degrees, undergo a special 2 or 3 year course to fit them for their role in education.

The ASIO operative added derisively that ‘Miss Woodcock stated that the special course undertaken by teachers fitted them for education “on the right lines”’, implying that this phrase could have only one meaning. In this and other speeches, however, Lucy suggested that ‘the right lines’ involved fostering friendships and tolerance across races and cultures. Lucy had gone on to contrast education in China with the very different situations she observed in Hong Kong and Japan, differences she felt were caused by the presence of large numbers of Allied troops and business people with the result that ‘education is neglected and child immorality is rife’.⁶ The more high-profile element of this visit was the meeting Jessie Street held with the Chinese Minister for Public Health, also a woman, shown in a photo published in the *Tribune* on 27 October 1954.⁷

AUSTRALIA'S Jessie Street (centre) and Lucy Woodcock (right) talk to China's Minister for Public Health during their stay in that country as guests of the China Peace Committee.



Figure 11.2: The focus of Jessie's reports: the high-level diplomatic meetings during the trip.

Here are Jessie and Lucy with the Chinese Minister for Public Health.

Source: *Tribune*, 27 October 1954, 11. Trove, National Library of Australia.

6 Ibid.

7 *Tribune* (Sydney), 27 October 1954, 12.

More important for Lucy than the publicised meetings, however, was meeting women activists as well as getting to know Rewi Alley, the New Zealander who had come to China in 1927. Alley had assisted in setting up industrial cooperatives in Shanghai's factories (involved in forming the Chinese Industrial Co-operative Movement, known as CIC) and from 1945 to 1952 was headmaster at the Shandan Bailie School, set up to train workers for the cooperative movement.⁸ In his socialism, his educational role and his involvement in the Peace movement, Alley was very like Lucy. In another way, too, his life resonated with hers. Rewi Alley was a homosexual man who found an acceptance of his lifestyle in pre-1949 China that had not been available to him in New Zealand. Yet he was always extremely reticent about his personal life, and left most observers, even those who were more openly homosexual, with only glimpses of the relationships that sustained him. The coming to power of the Communist Government in 1949 marked a significant step towards modernisation as well as its other impacts. Brady argues that such modernisation in the People's Republic after 1949, just as it did in Taiwan or Japan, led to a rejection of traditional Chinese acceptance of ambiguous and homosexual relationships and instead an embrace of Western puritanism about sexuality and an intolerance of homosexuality. Alley had to make choices in order to stay in China. He took up the role offered to him as an official 'Friend of China' and an NZ representative based in Peking of the China Peace Committee, the same group who had invited Jessie and Lucy to China. His reticence about his sexuality deepened and Brady argues he probably chose celibacy rather than risk being ejected in the way his former CIC colleague, Max Bickerton, had been. His commitment to China and its working people led Alley to stay there throughout his life, despite his frustrations with many aspects of the new People's Republic after 1949 and the severe difficulties he later faced during the Cultural Revolution.⁹

When Lucy met him in 1954, Alley remained optimistic that labour cooperatives and education could improve the lives of Chinese people, as well as being committed to promoting peaceful international relationships.

8 Anne-Marie Brady, 'West Meets East: Rewi Alley and Changing Attitudes towards Homosexuality in China', *East Asian History*, 9(June 1995): 98, 111. In his letters to Lucy, Rewi Alley spelled 'Shandan' as 'Sandan' and so this was how Lucy spelled it in her letters. The Bailie Schools, run under the CIC, were named after Joseph Bailie, and American missionary friend of Alley's with progressive ideas on the education of Chinese youth.

9 *Ibid.*, 97–120; Anne-Marie Brady, *Friend of China: The Myth of Rewi Alley* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003).

He asked her – as he probably did with many who visited China – to write to him to keep him updated with their local and international politics as well as on the progress of the Peace movement. Lucy was one who did not disappoint him – she wrote to him twice or three times a year over the next decade, in letters just as reserved about her private life as he was about his. Yet her letters were full – she crowded into aerograms as much detail as she could about Australian politics and world affairs, not only in relation to the Peace movement but in terms of how China was seen in the world. In return, Alley wrote to her with his latest diary entries and poems, much of which was later published, giving her a vivid – if too optimistic – account of the course of life in China. Although they shared so little overtly about their personal lives, Alley valued Lucy's letters, as shown in the letters from Alley, which were among the very few items that Lucy kept.¹⁰ Rewi wrote to her late in 1955 that 'your letters are grand to have' and 'I look forward very much to your accounts of how you find things', finishing another letter to her with:

Do tell us what you are all doing. Australian mail quite weak these days. Despite the many promises of people when they are here. I have no complaint about you though. You have been most kind.¹¹

After leaving Peking, Lucy travelled with Jessie and an interpreter, Ms Chou Ien Fong, (known to Rewi) seeing 'much of the new China and its developments'. But Lucy had other priorities. 'I was most interested', she wrote, 'in the progress being made in China so far as education is concerned.'¹² Lucy sought out a number of educators, including the Reverend Ting, Head of the Theological College in Nanking, and Miss Wu, head of a middle school in Shanghai, who spoke to her largely about the horrors of the old regime.¹³ But it was when they left China to spend three weeks in Japan that Lucy had the experiences that left her most shaken.

She had already made inquiries in Europe about the effects of atomic weapons. She wrote to the NSW Peace Council, for example, that she had met Professor Nishiwaki from Japan, who believed the abnormally rainy weather in Europe had been caused by the US H-bomb and feared that

10 Lucy's few papers and books were conserved after her death by Kit Edwards and are now held in his personal collection.

11 Rewi Alley to Lucy, 17 October 1955; 6 November 1955. Kit Edwards collection.

12 Lucy Woodcock to Rewi Alley, 3 December 1954, Rewi Alley Papers, MS-Papers-6533–307, NLNZ.

13 Ibid.

it might be followed by a dry spell that would ruin the world's harvest. He explained that the blast had thrown 100 million tons of pulverised coral dust into the upper atmosphere and this dust would act as a barrier to solar radiation. Her letter, published in *Peace News*, was reprinted with concern in the *South Australian Farmer* before being cited by *Tribune*.¹⁴

Lucy was still unprepared for the four days she spent in Hiroshima. She spoke to a group of young people in Perth on her return about how deeply moved she had been by what she saw there.

We can only talk about atomic war. But when you actually see the imprint of a man's shadow in the stones of Hiroshima, you know what the Japanese people experienced and why they say never again.¹⁵

Jessie's notes, incorporated later into a Peace conference speech, documented the meetings she and Lucy had with survivors of the Hiroshima blast – people who had lost everyone, were scarred physically and emotionally for life and had been marginalised by Japanese and later Allied governments for embodying inconvenient truths. These survivors told them that before the Imperial surrender, there was already a strong popular opposition to the continuation of the war.¹⁶

In early December 1954, as soon as Lucy had reached their next stop, in New Delhi, she wrote to Alley about her experiences in Japan, where she 'found the Japanese people very firm in their resolve for peace'. Lucy explained that she had met a Chinese Government representative, Madame Li The-Chuan, who attended a huge meeting in Kyoto where Lucy saw 'a most enthusiastic crowd' receive Madam Li very well. 'There is a growing feeling of friendship for China in Japan', Lucy assured Rewi. The Peace movement was of most interest to Lucy, who told Rewi about the Japanese signature campaign against the hydrogen bomb. '20,000,000 signatures have been gathered already by the women, so they mean to stop the bomb if they can.' While this was a hopeful sign, Lucy was disturbed by 'the cancer of the American occupation', which she believed had led to widespread corruption, prostitution and gambling.¹⁷

14 *Tribune* (Sydney), 27 October 1954, 3.

15 Clipping annotated *Tribune* 10 August 1955, in Lucy Godiva Woodcock ASIO file, Vol. 1, f 194, A6119, 2030, NAA.

16 Jessie Street, 'My interview with the victims of Hiroshima and Bikini', Typed notes, Jessie Street Papers, MS 2683/4/1271, NLA.

17 Lucy Woodcock to Rewi Alley, 3 December 1954, Rewi Alley Papers, MS-Papers-6533-307, NLNZ.

A little later in December, Lucy reported to the NSW Peace Council about the Japanese women's Peace campaign and their meeting with the Lucky Dragon survivors:

Miss Woodcock says that over 20 million Japanese have signed a petition for the outlawing of the Hydrogen Bomb. With Mrs Street she had visited the 22 surviving Japanese fishermen who were injured by the Bikini explosion last March. One died and the others remain in hospital. Miss Woodcock said that the men greatly appreciated the Australians' visit.¹⁸

Lucy believed that trade unions were crucial in building that Peace movement. She told young people in Western Australia that unions in Japan and India were playing most important roles. As *Tribune* summarised her speech:

Herself an old Trade Unionist with ACTU experience, she went to the Unions in every country she visited. She emphasized particularly the work of the unions in India and Japan. 'Japanese rearmament is being held up by a great people's movement against war and the unions are in the thick of it', she said.¹⁹

Yet Lucy reported to the United Associations of Women that she found the conditions of women in Japan troubling. She was impressed that equality was written into the constitution and that there were 41 women in the *Diet*, but was concerned that these goals of equality were not met in practice. Women working in Japanese factories were forced to take three days unpaid 'sick leave' for menstruation. Lucy 'advised them to go in a body and demand pay for the enforced sick leave'. In schools, Lucy continued, there were no cleaners, so women teachers – not male! – had to stay behind to do the cleaning. Lucy was happy to find that the general secretary of the teachers' union was a woman,²⁰ but her main concern was about the general neglect of education. Lucy believed that this too was due to the influence of the large numbers of US troops there in the country, which led to the prioritisation of their needs and the widespread existence of 'child immorality'.²¹

18 *Tribune* (Sydney), 21 December 1954, 2.

19 *Tribune* (Sydney), 10 August 1955.

20 *UA Newsheet*, October 1955, 3. 'The Diet' is the national bicameral legislature of Japan.

21 *Tribune* (Sydney), 10 August 1955.

Lucy had more background for the last leg of their journey, in India, where Jessie had been born, where Elsie Rivett's sister had been working and about which there had been regular reports in the Teachers Federation journal *Education*. Having written her letters to Rewi Alley and the Peace Council about the Japanese experiences, Lucy spent three weeks with Jessie in and around the capital, Delhi, where they met with women activists, including Anasuya Gyan Chand, a leader in the newly formed National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW), who was an educator from the western state of Maharashtra. One of the few photographs of the visit shows Jessie, Lucy and Anasuya taken at the Red Fort.

Then Lucy and Jessie began visiting communities and particularly working people in Uttar Pradesh, the state in which Delhi was located. Lucy later recounted an experience that had moved and inspired her. At Amritsar, in the north-west towards the Pakistan border, she and Jessie had spoken to 25,000 textile workers, both men and women. They asked to meet with women workers and had been taken 'to one of the back streets, where they talked to 400 women who were amazed that a white woman should be anxious to meet them'. Lucy explained that she and Jessie had 'brought a message about how women could help themselves', to which 'the response of those women of Amritsar was most inspiring'.²² Typically, it was Lucy who wrote about this visit in her report to the UA, rather than Jessie whose accounts had focused more on leadership meetings.

Yet while reporting on the strength of Indian unions, Lucy was uneasy about the conditions women workers faced in India. She felt that much of the 'development' she was being shown in the 'new India' was 'only a façade'.²³ She and Jessie were with Dr Andrea Andreen, the medical doctor from Sweden who was well-known as a Peace activist and prominent member of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF). Lucy wrote to Rewi:

India needs [the] co-operative movement and she needs help of a positive nature! I am writing for all three of us because we think of what the Sandan [Shandan] experiment could do here ... The contrast between China and India is most marked.²⁴

22 UA *Newsheet*, September 1955, 4.

23 Lucy Woodcock to Rewi Alley, 3 December 1954, Rewi Alley Papers, MS-Papers-6533-307, NLNZ.

24 *Ibid.*



Figure 11.3: Lucy, Jessie Street and Anasuya Gyan Chand, Maharashtrian NFIW leader and cooperative advocate, in Lodhi Gardens, New Delhi, 1954.

Source: Courtesy of National Library of Australia, Jessie Street papers, MS 2683, Series 11, Box 30, folder 4.

This is particularly interesting as an insight into Lucy's attention in all things to education – in this case, she saw cooperatives as a means to deliver training for justice in employment, both industrial and agricultural, as well as efficient development, like the Shandan Bailie cooperative school with which Rewi Alley was involved in China.

Lucy and Jessie had expected to be involved in other speaking events, but some state-level officials opposed their strongly left-wing messages. Jessie appealed to Prime Minister Nehru who interceded and they found officials more cooperative after that.²⁵ Lucy was nevertheless sceptical about Nehru. She told a meeting of the Union of Australian Women in May 1956 that although Nehru was proceeding with plans for socialism, 'they cannot be a success because he himself is a millionaire several times over'.²⁶

25 W.R. Crocker, Aust High Commissioner, to Sec External Affairs, 6 December 1954, Jessie M.G. Street ASIO file, f 29, A6119, 363, NAA; NSW Teachers Federation ASIO file, Vol. 3, ff 54–56, A6122, 2477, NAA, referring to discussions at a national teachers meeting held in Canberra, May 1958.

26 Lucy Godiva Woodcock ASIO file, Vol. 3, ff 17–18, A6119, 2032, NAA.

After leaving Delhi on 6 December, they travelled to Nagpur to stay with Mithan Lam, the barrister who had come to Australia in 1946. Jessie spoke at the Rotary Club about her background in India and her work for Peace. Both Jessie and Lucy spoke to tertiary students and staff at the Shri Binzani City College, explaining the world movement for Peace and praising India's role in international peacekeeping, in particular the 'Five Principles'. These were (1) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, (2) mutual non-aggression, (3) mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, (4) equality and cooperation for mutual benefit, and (5) peaceful co-existence. Articulated first in the World Peace Council, these principles had been debated among emerging decolonising nations, becoming by late 1954 associated particularly with Nehru and Chou En Lai.

Jessie was reported as saying that 'Asia must give the lead to the world on the path of peace' by frustrating the plan of those (implying the United States) who would have 'Asians fighting Asians'. Lucy, described as an 'eminent educationalist', warned that the world was 'drifting to a dangerous misunderstanding' that would bring in its wake the use of 'heinous weapons of mass destruction'. As always, however, Lucy advanced solutions. She insisted that the way to avert this grave threat was not the amassing of arms but 'the conquest of poverty and ignorance'.²⁷

Spending time with Mithan Lam in Nagpur gave Lucy and Jessie more insight into the split in the Indian women's movement. Lucy had met Kapila Khandvala and Mithan herself in Australia in 1946, when they visited as representatives of the All India Women's Conference (AIWC), established in 1927 in Poona. This active and energetic body had been grappling with major problems facing Indian women, but it represented predominantly northern and western India. In some ways, the AIWC elite and middle-class membership mirrored that of the earlier Australian feminist organisations like the AFWV.

By 1953, however, some AIWC members, including Kapila, had come to feel that the AIWC had not addressed the needs of working women – professionals like nurses and teachers or industrial and agricultural workers. These AIWC members broke away to form the NFIW, which was, in many respects, comparable to the Union of Australian Women,

27 Cuttings from *Hitavada* (*The People's Paper*, Nagpur), 9 December 1954, 11 December 1954, in Jessie M.G. Street ASIO file, Vol. 4, ff 31–32, A6119, 363, NAA.

formed in 1951. Communist Party of India (CPI) members made up a substantial proportion but not all of the membership of the new Indian break-away body, although all the members of both Indian and Australian organisations were left-wing. Anasuya, for example, was never in the CPI nor was Kapila Khandvala, although she was strongly sympathetic to socialism. Both took leadership roles in the NFIW. Anasuya became the first NFIW secretary (with CPI member Hajrah Begum) in 1954 and then its president in 1957.

Both the UAW and the NFIW accused earlier feminist groups of addressing only the concerns of middle-class women and tried to solve this by turning attention onto working-class women.

As a unionist, Lucy had built her initial alliance in 1932 with the United Associations of Women (UA), a middle-class feminist organisation whose founder, Jessie Street, was a member of the Australian political and economic elite. Yet as Lucy demonstrated, by also becoming a member of the UAW when it formed in 1950, there was much in common between the UA and the UAW. The predominantly professional women in the UA, particularly after they split with the older and more conservative feminist groups like the AFWV, were sympathetic to the same economic and legal goals as the UAW.

Many of the Indian women who decided to remain with the AIWC were similar to those in the UA – professionally trained women including Mithan Lam. One woman who remained in the AIWC but retained close relationships with women in the new NFIW was Rameshwari Nehru. Similarly, in Australia, Lucy continued to hold office in the UA, as well as holding her membership of the UAW, keeping in contact with UAW groups, attending many UAW meetings and certainly publicising issues through the professional UAW publicity structure such as its journal *Our Women*. In the same way, in India, Mithan Lam in the AIWC and Kapila Khandvala in the NFIW remained in contact with each other. These contacts were important in later years when they each became president of their respective organisations, Mithan of the AIWC, from 1961 to 1962, and Kapila of the NFIW, from 1962 to 1967.

After Nagpur, Lucy and Jessie travelled to Madras on the south-east coast of India for the All-India Peace Congress. This region, however, was very different, culturally and politically, to the north. The configurations of both the Peace and the women's movements were probably surprising

for Australians, who were more familiar with women's politics in northern India. In both movements, India was widely respected for its active role at the United Nations in negotiating a ceasefire in the Korean conflict and the appointment of a woman, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, to head its diplomatic mission to the United Nations. Australia's conservative Menzies Government had openly supported the British in Malaya, but the Peace movement in Australia had sent a 'Friendship Letter' with a thousand signatures to the 1954 All-India Peace Congress. Lucy and Jessie probably expected that international relations, including those with Australia, would be a major theme of the Peace Congress.



Figure 11.4: Jessie Street, Lucy and Padma Narasimhan, Madras women's activist, (possibly) during the Madras Peace Conference, 25 December 1954.

Source: *Jessie Street: Documents and Essays*, edited by Heather Radi (Broadway, NSW: Women's Redress Press Inc., 1990), p. 248. Courtesy of National Library of Australia, Jessie Street papers, MS 2683, and Women's Redress Press Inc.

In fact, the major Indian newspaper in Madras, *The Hindu*, viewed the Peace Congress entirely in terms of India's own interests and as having only male participants of any significance. Relations with Pakistan were its overriding concern.²⁸ *The Hindu's* only photograph of the congress shows the foreign visitors, most of whom were women, seated behind the male Indian speakers on the podium – but none of the international visitors were named.²⁹ The news pages of the paper were dominated by two issues: the venue of the Afro-Asian Summit, as the location in Bandung, Indonesia, had not been decided; and the concerns about Indians in Malaya and their relationship with nominally independent Malayan authorities.³⁰ The only mention of Australia was in Indonesia's demand that, due to Australia's unwelcome constraints on Indonesian fishing in contested waters, Australia should not be invited to the Summit.³¹

28 *Hindu*, reviewed from Wednesday 29 December 1954 to Monday 3 January 1955.

29 *Hindu*, 31 December 1954, 10. Indian newspapers of the period used far fewer photographs than did those in the West.

30 *Hindu*, 2 January 1955, (Editorial page).

31 *Hindu*, 24 December 1954, 4; 27 December 1954, 3.

There was, however, a strong contingent of women participating from the NFIW. The Peace Congress was written up far more extensively in its journal, *Women's News*, than in mainstream Madras newspapers like *The Hindu*. The article in *Women's News* was similar in tone to the reports of two other Australian delegates to Madras, Marion Hartley and Andrew Hughes, both of whom had missionary backgrounds in India and were active in the Australian Peace movement.³² It was notable that Hartley and Hughes aligned Australia with Asia, as did the *Women's News*: its article was titled 'Asians Will Stand with Asians', a theme continued in the text. This was in contrast to the position taken in *The Hindu*, in which Indonesian hostility positioned Australia with European colonisers. Jessie and Lucy met the NFIW women activists in Madras and had a photograph taken with one Madras activist, who is probably Padma Narasimhan, a social worker who continued to be active in Madras over many decades.³³ In all the coverage – from the *Women's News* through the Hartley and Hughes reports and Lucy's own speeches after her return – it was India–China unity that was stressed. Australia was a part of this Asia, but its central pillars were India and China, along with the 'Five Principles' they had endorsed.

The women with whom Jessie and Lucy had less contact were the southern Indian women who had taken a different activist path to the AIWC or NFIW. These were the women involved with the most influential movement in South Indian politics and overseas Tamil populations, the Self-Respect Movement led by E.V. Ramasamy (known to his followers as Periyar, meaning 'elder' or 'wise one'). This movement connected gender inequality directly to caste, class and racial inequalities.³⁴ The Theosophical Society, based in Madras, had brought many strongly feminist European women to India, including Margaret Cousins, but they remained committed to the AIWC. It was, however, the multidimensional

32 *Women's News* (NFIW Journal) 2, no. 7 (February 1955): 4, held in Sarla Sharma's personal collection, Delhi; Andrew Hughes, *Tribune* (Sydney), 23 February 1955, 9; Marion Hartley, *Asia Awakes: Return to India* (Melbourne: Australian Peace Council, c. 1955). Another Australian report by delegates from South Australia was George Hutchesson and Edna Hutchesson, *Venture in Goodwill* (Moonta, South Australia, 1955) published initially as a series of articles in the *SA Farmer*.

33 Image shown here scanned from Heather Radi, ed., *Jessie Street: Documents and Images* (Broadway, NSW: Women's Redress Press, 1990), 248. Original, with date in annotation on reverse, was misplaced in the Jessie Street papers and has not yet been located.

34 V. Geetha, 'Periyar, Women and an Ethic of Citizenship', *EPW* 33, no. 17 (1998): WS9–WS15; V. Geetha and S. V. Rajadurai, *Towards a Non-Brahmin Millennium: From Iyothee Thass to Periyar* (Kolkata: Samya, 2007).

equality imagined by the Self-Respect Movement that drew many strong southern Indian women to it, including Dalits, who were not attracted to the doctrines of the AIWC. In its article, the NFIW *Women's News* tried to acknowledge the role of activist women from Dalit and backward castes by emphasising the speeches by sweeper women (a job undertaken by 'lower castes') at the conference as well as textile and peasant women workers.³⁵

Despite the constrained coverage in *The Hindu*, the Peace Congress was presented as a major event. There were around 1,400 delegates attending the conference, around 40 per cent of them being industrial or agricultural workers or students. During the procession through Madras on the final day, up to 200,000 people marched through the city.³⁶

Lucy sent a report to the NSW Peace Council about the Madras Peace conference, but she offered little to the UA about the conditions of women in Tamil Nadu. She appears to have been on more familiar ground in her analysis of working conditions and education in the north.

The final leg of their Indian journey was reassuring – Lucy and Jessie flew to Bombay, on 4 January 1955, and spent most evenings with Kapila Khandvala and her partner, C.M. Trivedi, at Nellville in Santa Cruz.³⁷ Kapila was able to fill them in on the developments in education in Bombay City. One of the photographs taken there with Lucy and Jessie includes the family of Reba Lewis. She was an American writer and Kapila had introduced her to the school system she was consolidating in Bombay. Such international contacts, including the book Reba later wrote about Bombay and its education system, were strategies that Kapila used repeatedly to gain support for what was then considered her unconventional approach to education.³⁸ She had pioneered progressive education in public schools prior to Independence. After Partition in 1947, when thousands of refugees came into Bombay, she ensured they were able to access education for their children. While Kapila could not singlehandedly dismantle the caste system, despite opposing it, she was able to bring caste and religious groups into contact with each other when she initiated regular gatherings, where all of the city's schools

35 *Women's News* 2, no. 7 (February 1955): 4, held in Sarla Sharma's personal collection, Delhi.

36 Andrew Hughes, 'India and Asia United, Say Aust Delegate', *Tribune* (Sydney), 23 February 1955, 9; Hartley, *Asia Awakens*; *Women's News* 2, no. 7 (February 1955): 4.

37 Jessie Street, Appointments Diary, 1955, MS 2683, Series 1, File 45, Box 6, NLA.

38 Reba Lewis, *Three Faces Has Bombay* (Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1957).

came together to celebrate Maharashtrian festivals, both traditional and contemporary. Kapila's close friend Mulk Raj Anand (also a Peace Assembly attendee) participated in these performances and readings with the children and their families. During the 1952 Family Planning conference in Bombay, Lucy organised for her friend Lotte Fink to meet with Kapila. Kapila introduced Lotte to the city and area facilities for women's health and education. Later, Lucy invited Lotte to speak to the UA about her trip to Bombay and the work in 'Family Spacing'.³⁹

This trip to Asia was immensely important for Lucy. It added the weight of experience to the vision for an end to prejudice about which she had been speaking since the 1930s. However impressed she was by developments in the Soviet Union, Lucy felt that the decolonising world was the way of the future. The final paragraph in the UA *Newsheet* report of Lucy's speech about her journey in Asia said:

that her travels has shown her that once women are conscious of their destiny, progress must follow. Women are coming together as they never have before on many matters – on the welfare of children, on women's status and on peace. She has come home full of inspiration, of hope and a desire to arouse Australian women to get ahead with the job they must do.⁴⁰

The following chapter, 'Peace and Prejudice', traces the impact that Lucy's experiences in Asia had on her work back in Australia.

39 Lotte's letters have been transcribed by her daughter Ruth Latukefu and are cited here courtesy of Ruth. Letters, each written in Bombay, and dated 26 November 1952, 5 December 1952 and 11 December 1952; UA *Newsheet*, June 1953, 4.

40 UA *Newsheet*, October 1955, 4.



Figure 11.5: Visiting Kapila Khandvala in Bombay, 1955.

From left, the elder Lewis son is obscured, then Lucy, C.M. Trivedi (Kapila's partner), then Jessie, Richard Lewis and Kapila, with younger Lewis son in front of her.

Source: Courtesy of National Library of Australia, Jessie Street papers, MS 2683, Series 11, Box 30, folder 4. Photo taken by Reba Lewis.

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